Living Cultural Diversity in Regional Australia: An Account of the Town of Griffith

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Acknowledgements

Many people have made this study possible. One person who has been pivotal is my Aunt and friend Pat McCubben. Her invitation for me to live with her while I was in Griffith not only furthered my ability to carry out fieldwork; it has enriched my life in many ways.

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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## Abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Country Women’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Griffith City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GGHS</td>
<td>Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMCC</td>
<td>Griffith Multicultural Community Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRAC</td>
<td>Griffith Regional Advisory Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSSM</td>
<td>Griffith Soldier Settlers Memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWM</td>
<td>Griffith War Memorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVC</td>
<td>Griffith Visitors Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMAC</td>
<td>National Multicultural Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPWS</td>
<td>New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPM</td>
<td>Griffith Pioneer Park Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL</td>
<td>Returned and Services League of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNSW</td>
<td>Tourism New South Wales</td>
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Abstract

Since at least the 1970s Australia has, as a nation, officially declared itself to be ‘multicultural’ and has adopted ‘multiculturalism’ as the approach to its increasingly culturally diverse population. Since then, multiculturalism in Australia, as elsewhere in the western world, has come under sustained critique by both those who think it has ‘gone too far’, and those who think it has ‘not gone far enough’. These critiques have left many wondering whether multiculturalism is still an appropriate and valuable response to cultural diversity for both governments/the state and the populations who contend with cultural diversity as part of their everyday lives.

This study attempts to move beyond these critiques and proposes a local place-bound study as one way in which we might further our understandings of multiculturalism in the Australian context and capture some of the complexities elided by these nonetheless useful critiques. The study draws on both textual and ethnographic research material, and employs discursive and deconstructive techniques of analysis to achieve this.

The population of the regional centre of Griffith in the Riverina region of New South Wales is culturally diverse. Griffith is located within Wiradjuri country and became home to large numbers of non-Indigenous people after the establishment of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme in the 1910s. It continues to be a destination of choice for immigrants, largely because of the availability of work, particularly in agricultural and related industries.

The study reveals that in Griffith multiculturalism is generated, negotiated and performed at the local level, in and through the everyday lives of local people, as much as it is through government intervention. It is part of the lived experience of people in culturally diverse Griffith. The kind of multiculturalism they live can be seen to be positive, pervasive and dynamic and it is something that is deemed to be of great value. They have embraced the idea of multiculturalism and of their community as multicultural to the extent that it is an important part of how they see themselves.

While Australian Federal Government conceptions of multiculturalism clearly inform local discourses, with all the limitations this can bring, the conservative understandings articulated federally are made redundant by local manifestations of multiculturalism in Griffith, where there is a desire to both foster and further multiculturalism. The case of Griffith suggests that there is hope for multiculturalism and that multiculturalism can still inform an ethical mode of engagement for people from diverse cultural and ethnic traditions. Australia, however, also has an Indigenous past and present and this continues to pose the ultimate challenge to and for multiculturalism, including in Griffith.
Introduction

“Yesterday, being the King’s birthday, Mr Cunningham planted under Mount Brogden acorns, peach and apricot stones, and quince seeds, with the hope rather than the expectation that they would grow and serve to commemorate the day and situation, should these desolate plains be ever again visited by civilized man, of which, however, I think there is very little probability.” That night, the southern horizon was seen to be in flames, the bush having been fired by the Aboriginals.\(^1\)

The Wiradjuri language is spoken differently all through- there are different dialects... although we’ve lost most of ours and that’s why they’re trying to bring it back by teaching the younger ones some of it...I’ve always regretted not knowing my language and that was stopped through the managers, and that, that were on the reserves at the time we weren’t allowed to, our people weren’t allowed to, the older ones, to teach us...and it wasn’t just being pushed onto the reserves and places like that, they were taken there for protection as well because of the way they were being treated and murdered...when we lived on the missions and reserves we were getting rations, and that wasn’t much...after the war broke out they cut all that out...so we went to work around the towns.\(^2\)

I am a proud Australian and I have a proud Italian heritage. I was born in Plati Reggio, Calabria, in southern Italy in September 1949. My father left Italy for Australia in late 1949 with the hope of finding a better land that would offer work and stability so that he could bring up his family. He later moved to Griffith and commenced working with the Water Irrigation Commission, now known as Murrumbidgee Irrigation, building channels and bridges from Griffith to Hay for the delivery of water to the farming communities and their properties. They camped in primitive conditions of four poles covered with a tin roof, Hessian bags for walls and a dirt floor. In 1956 my parents purchased a 25-acre mixed fruit farm at Yoogali. I am very proud to be a farmer and a representative of the Australian Labor Party, which

\(^{1}\) Extract from Richard Johnson’s *The Search for the Inland Sea: John Oxley, Explorer, 1783-1828* (2001: 66-67)

\(^{2}\) Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004
has contributed so much to Australian closer settlement, which, of course, is the creation of family farms. Out of the great diversity has been born a unity that has seen Griffith and the MIA being hailed as the birthplace of multiculturalism.³

This is a study of the regional centre of Griffith, located in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Griffith has a complex history of interwoven strands that is consistent with settler societies like Australia generally.⁴ In what follows I aim to further understandings of the history and geography of multiculturalism in Australia by looking at the ways in which ‘multiculturalism’ is constructed in discourse and manifest in everyday lives in Griffith.

Englishman John Oxley, a surveyor and explorer for the colonists in the 1810s, found the land around Griffith ‘uninhabitable’, and ‘so utterly destitute of the means of affording subsistence to either man or beast’ (Johnson, 2001: 66), perceptions which continue to resonate with many non-Indigenous residents of Griffith. Oxley’s observations, which are repeated in numerous sources related to Griffith, form part of the discourse of *Terra Nullius* (land belonging to no-one) in Australia which was used, along with other similar discourses, to justify the theft of Indigenous land. The land was, of course, spoken for, as even Oxley realised, and had provided subsistence for the indigenous Wiradjiri people for tens of thousands of years. Despite Oxley’s prediction, the English, and others, returned to this part of Wiradjiri country, and Wiradjiri people have suffered greatly as a result. Wiradjiri people have, however, survived, but now ‘share’ their land with the many migrants, from diverse backgrounds, that have subsequently made a life for themselves in Griffith.

Griffith, therefore, has many narratives, many ‘maps of meaning’ (Clarke, Hall et al., 1976: 10; Jackson, 1989), all of which have implications for the present and are the foundations on which multicultural Griffith has been and continues to be built. One of the aims of the study is to capture something of these overlapping discursive formations which collectively construct multicultural Griffith. Among these are the relatively recent ideas about Griffith as a pre-eminent example of the Australian

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³ Edited extract from the Hon. Tony Catanzariti, MLC’s inaugural speech to the NSW Legislative Council, 3 July, 2003
multicultural vision. We can get a sense of this from Tony Catanzariti’s claim that Griffith is the ‘birthplace of multiculturalism’. Griffith has also been described as ‘a lesson as to what can be achieved and how it can be achieved for the whole of Australia’ (Grassby, 1985: 11).\(^5\) Indeed Griffith ‘can easily become the model for an Australian multi-cultural community’ (Phillips, 1981: 12). These observations have been imbibed locally to the extent that the dominant collective identity of Griffith articulated publicly is one based on cultural diversity. These ideas are explored in greater detail throughout the following chapters.

This is, then, the production of a ‘situated multiculturalism,’ which draws on local understandings and dynamics (see Gunew, 2004). Gunew argues that what appear to be common terms, like ‘multiculturalism,’ need to be contextualised in relation to local as well as global geopolitical and cultural dynamics and require both detailed and comparative work (Gunew, 2004: 1). The kind of detailed local study undertaken here provides a platform from which to undertake comparative work. Griffith is an ideal place to carry out such a study given the cultural diversity of the town and the extensive local engagement with multicultural discourse. It is driven by a belief that multiculturalism in Australia needs to be revised, but not discredited and removed (see Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006). Some of the complexities of Australian multiculturalism can be better understood through a place-bound study, which employs understandings and approaches drawn from cultural studies, and which emphasises textual and ethnographic dimensions. This in turn might inform the kinds of revisions to multiculturalism that are needed to ensure its continued relevance to Australia.

The study of multiculturalism in Griffith is contextualised in part by the current conservative political climate in Australia. In the last decade there has been a withdrawal of support for multiculturalism by the federal Coalition Government to the extent that it is seen as ‘politically correct’, and as a threat to ‘our’ British heritage and ongoing Anglo-Celtic hegemony (see for example Stratton, 1998; Markus, 2001; Jupp, 2002; Ang, 2003; Hage, 2003; Jayasuriya, Walker et al., 2003; On settler societies see, for example, Stasiulis and Yuval-Davies, 1995a. Griffith’s cultural diversity, its multicultural nature, continues to be acknowledged in a range of spheres, both within the town (many of which this thesis attempts to account for) and from outside.\(^5\)
Coupled with a withdrawal of support at the ‘official’ level are a series of sustained critiques of multiculturalism by both left-leaning academics (for example Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998), as well as ‘right-wing’ commentators (for example the collection edited by Kramer, 2003). The so-called Cronulla race riots that took place in this suburb of Sydney in December 2005 also suggest the need for continued examination and debate around multiculturalism in Australia.\(^6\)

The aim of the study is to pose questions for multiculturalism in Australia; to extend our understanding of some of the outcomes of cultural diversity; and to critique official approaches to this diversity, claimed to be ‘multicultural,’ through an examination of Griffith. As Stuart Hall (1997a) has noted in relation to representation, we struggle over such meanings because they matter, and these are contests from which serious consequences can flow. It is the intention of this study to contribute to debates about multiculturalism in Australia on the understanding that they matter, and have consequences for people’s lives. This includes in relation to both policy-making and broader ‘community’ attitudes and values.

**Multicultural Griffith**

The town/city\(^7\) of Griffith has a population of around 15,000 in a Local Government Area (LGA) of around 24,000 (Griffith City Council, 2003). The local government authority is Griffith City Council. Griffith is located in the Riverina or Murrumbidgee region of NSW, a region known for its agriculture. It is about 600km west of Sydney, on Wiradjuri land. Wiradjuri people were and still are a diverse group, and Wiradjuri country, which is essentially a language region, encompasses over 80,000 square kilometres of central NSW (Macdonald, 2004: 22). The Indigenous population of the Griffith LGA is 3.6 percent of the total population, a figure which is higher than the national average of 2.4 percent (ABS, 2002). It now includes Indigenous people from elsewhere in Australia.

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\(^6\) There was extensive media coverage of these events around Australia and elsewhere in the world. The *Sydney Morning Herald* during December 2005 provided detailed coverage when tensions between young men from supposedly different ethnic backgrounds became public and violent.

\(^7\) Proclaimed a ‘city’ in 1987, this seems to be the preferred descriptor of the local authorities. I prefer to describe Griffith as a town, or a regional centre, and I use these two terms in the course of what follows.
The cultural diversity of present day Griffith is such that it was often noted as a significant feature of the town by research participants, as well as in many of the texts discussed below. 2001 Census data reveals that people from a wide range of countries of birth now live in Griffith. Around 77 percent of the population of the Griffith LGA were born in Australia and around seventeen percent were born overseas. This figure seems low when compared to Sydney, where some LGAs have an overseas-born population of above 50 percent, but it is significant when compared to other regional, that is non-metropolitan, NSW LGAs with overseas born populations that are more likely to be in the order of 4-6 percent (CRC, ndb). These are the kinds of figures that led Birrell and Rapson to claim that there were in fact ‘two Australia’s’, that ‘Sydney and Melbourne contain the generators and transmitters of the multicultural ideals’ and that ‘rearguard resistance to these images is largely based in regional Australia’ (2002: 21; cf. Ang, 2003: 66-67).

Benedict Anderson (1991: 164-170) provides insights into the role the census (along with the map) has played in shaping the ways in which populations are imagined and made possible by the state. In Griffith there is some correlation between the categories deployed by the state and the ways in which individuals describe themselves.

About six percent did not state their birthplace. See Appendix 1.
Griffith is the regional LGA in NSW with the highest number of people who were born overseas in ‘non-English speaking countries’ (DIMIA, 2005a). The case of Griffith not only undermines the claims made by Birrell and Rapson, it also suggests why Griffith is a useful site for studying multiculturalism in Australia. Griffith has attracted interest from a range of individuals, organisations and government departments interested in cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Most recently this includes research conducted by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (2005), and Macquarie University for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (GCC, 2005c); a PhD study of local Fijian people (M. Schubert, personal communication, October 2, 2004); and collaborative projects like those undertaken by the NSW Migration Heritage Centre and the Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre Committee (GCC, 2005d).

For people not born in Australia the main countries of birth are Italy, India, New Zealand, England, Fiji, Turkey, Tonga and Samoa (Appendix 1). The number of people born in Italy has decreased by around 9 percent since the 1996 Census, the number born in India has increased by about 47 percent, and the figure for New Zealand has increased by about 117 percent. Many of the New Zealanders are probably from the Cook and other Pacific Islands (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004).

People originating from the countries of the United Kingdom began to settle in the Griffith area from the mid-1800s although in relatively small numbers. In 1901 the number of English-born was proportionally lower than the national proportion, while the number of Scottish-born was proportionally higher in the Riverina region (Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, 2002: 34-35 & 54-56). After the development of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme (MIS) in the 1910s the numbers of people derived from this migrant group grew significantly (Kelly, 1988). The English are still numerically significant in relation to immigration to Griffith at around six percent, but this is less so for the other countries of the United Kingdom, each of which contributed less than one percent of the overseas born population at the time of the 2001 Census (Appendix 1).
People from Italy also settled in the Griffith area in significant numbers after the establishment of the MIS (Pich, 1975; Huber, 1977; Kelly, 1988). Like their counterparts from the United Kingdom, many came to the area because work was available, often becoming involved in farming (Pich, 1975; Kelly, 1988). Many of the first Italian-born settlers to Griffith were from northern regions of Italy, while later Italian migration tended to be from southern regions of Italy (Pich, 1975; Huber, 1977). In the 2001 Census, Italy was the country that had contributed the highest percentage of overseas born Griffith residents (Appendix 1).

Plate 1: A view of the town of Griffith from Scenic Hill with remnant bushland in the foreground giving a sense of what the landscape may have looked like prior to European settlement.
Plate 2: A view of the town of Griffith from Scenic Hill. The impact on the landscape by non-Indigenous people has been significant.

Plate 3: Farmland on the edge of the town. One can see where the description of Griffith as ‘an oasis’ comes from.
Plate 4: The main irrigation canal running through Griffith. A network of canals brings water to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area for use in farming.

Reading Griffith

The tools that one uses to make sense of reality are not neutral but come with a knowledge or ideology that that may make the ‘reality’ seem quite different (Saukko, 2003: 25). This study of Griffith and its people is informed by an epistemological position that sees knowledge as materially and semiotically constructed, and inherently limited and partial. Ontologically, the study adopts the position that individuals are constructed in and through discourse and attempts to describe an interactive reality.

The intellectual landscape that has nurtured this work might be described, then, as post-structuralist.\(^\text{10}\) It draws on cultural studies approaches, particularly the work of Stuart Hall, as well as ‘the labour of cultural geography’ (Jacobs, 1999).\(^\text{11}\) It employs Foucauldian discourse analysis as a key analytical tool (see Foucault, 1981; Poynton and Lee, 2000), while also paying attention to ethnographic dimensions,

\(^{10}\) For a general overview see Sturrock (1979), Lechte (1994) and Edgar and Sedgwick (2002). See also Young (1981: 8-12) and Poynton and Lee (2000).

\(^{11}\) On cultural studies see, for example, Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler (1992), During (1999), and for its particularly Australian configurations, Frow and Morris (1993). On cultural geography see, for example, Jackson (1989), Anderson and Gale (1999), Stratford (1999) and Anderson, Domosh, Pile and Thrift (2003).
after Clifford Geertz and James Clifford. It explores the relations between (culturally and ethnically inscribed) individuals and groups, and institutions and forms of knowledge and practice, including textual practice, in relation to multiculturalism (see Poynton and Lee, 2000: 6). This approach, one that combines the textual and the ethnographic, is part of the aim to produce a nuanced and complex reading of multicultural Griffith.

Post-structuralism recognises that all knowledge is inevitably positioned and post-structuralist approaches include a commitment to contextualisation (Poynton and Lee, 2000: 3). From post-structuralist theory it is understood that the processes whereby individuals take themselves up as persons are ongoing processes and that ‘the individual is not so much a social construction which results in some relatively fixed end product, but one who is constituted and reconstituted through a variety of discursive practices’ (Davies, 1989: xi).

Judith Butler (1997: 24-41) describes this constitution and reconstitution as interpellation. Expanding on and revising the work of Althusser (1971: 170-177), she describes how an act of recognition, a speech act, becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence (Butler, 1997: 25).

There are a couple of important points to make about interpellation in the context of the study of multicultural Griffith. Interpellation is an act of speech whose ‘content’ is neither true nor false. Its primary task is not to describe but to produce the social contours of a subject in space and time: the mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, it is inaugurative (Butler, 1997: 33-34). The subject is constituted or interpellated in language or through discursive means. But although a name constitutes one socially, this constitution may take place without one knowing and indeed ‘one may well imagine oneself in ways that are quite to the contrary of how one is socially constituted’ (Butler, 1997: 31).

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12 Cf. Hall below
13 And of course this study does more than just analyse discourses of multiculturalism in Griffith, I participate in such a discursive construction with all that this implies.
Culture and Identity
The conception of culture proposed by scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and later developed further by some of those who had been part of the centre, underpins this study of multicultural Griffith, as does the work of cultural theorist James Clifford. At the broadest level, the culture of any particular group can be conceived of as a way of life (Clarke, Hall et al., 1976: 10) and is about shared meanings (Hall, 1997a: 1). Cultures are not simply derived from an otherwise constituted social order but are themselves major elements in its constitution (Williams, 1981: 12-13; Hall, 1997a: 5-6). Indeed culture is never fixed or stable, but dynamic and changeable, an assemblage of codes and artefacts which are always susceptible to critical and creative recombination (Clifford, 1988: 12). Culture is thus a process, a set of practices, in which people are actively engaged (Hall, 1997a: 2; Anderson, 1999b). In the course of generating new meanings and decoding existing ones, people construct spaces, places, landscapes, regions and environments (Anderson, 1999b: 5).

The ‘different historical vision’ proposed by James Clifford (1988) also provides a frame of reference for the study. In keeping with Clifford’s vision, the position adopted here does not see Australian culture and identity, nor any of the cultures that might be said to comprise it, as an endangered authenticity (1988: 5). I attempt to account for a multiplicity of emerging notions of Australian culture and identity as they pertain to multicultural Griffith by being mindful of these in the analysis and offering multiple readings in the writing.

Acknowledging that the notion of fixed, stable, and unified cultural identities is problematical, Stuart Hall has reconceptualised identity in light of the deconstructive critique (1996b). Following Hall, the concept of identity that informs this work is one that sees identity as strategic and positional, not essentialist (1996b: 3). It accepts that identities are never unified and are increasingly fragmented and fractured, and multiply constructed across a range of discourses, practices and positions (Hall, 1996b: 4). Further, as Hall does, the term identity can be used to refer to the meeting point between the discourses and practices which interpellate us and the processes which produce subjectivities (Hall, 1996b: 5-6). Critically, in
relation to multicultural Griffith, identities, which are constructed within discourse, are produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, and by specific enunciative strategies, and emerge within the play of specific modalities of power (Hall, 1996b: 4). The implications are that there is a tension between recognising the constructed nature of identity, as well as its importance, political and otherwise, to individuals and groups who deploy it.

There is much at stake in the construction of identity. Cornel West draws out the significance when he says that identity is about desire and death (West, 1995). Identity is about our desire as human beings for recognition, association and protection, as well as being one of the ways in which we endow ourselves with significance, given our inevitable extinction (West, 1995: 16; cf. Taylor, 1994).

Griffith reveals a complex history which is the result of multiple processes of human movement and encounter and is itself sustained through them (see Clifford, 1997: 2-3). Intercultural connection is, and has long been, the norm (see Clifford, 1997: 5). Following Clifford, part of the interest is in processes of collective invention (1997: 2). This is critical to the attempt to produce a more nuanced reading of multiculturalism that recognises its potential as well as its limitations. Cultures, however, do not hold still for their portraits (Clifford, 1986b: 10) and therefore any attempt to ‘capture’ multicultural Griffith is inherently limited, partial and contextual.

**Representation, Discourse, Ethnography**

Representation is one of the central practices that produces culture (Hall, 1997a: 1). Hall goes on to explain that, in part, ‘we give things meaning by how we *represent* them— the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualise them, the values we place on them’ (1997a: 3). Representations or representational systems (like photography or museum exhibitions) construct and transmit meaning (Hall, 1997a: 5). Representation is conceived of as entering into

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14 See also Clifford (1988: 9)
the very constitution of things, rather than being simply reflective (Hall, 1997a: 5-6) and it is in this way that the concept of representation is significant to this study.

While events, relations and structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive, it is only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, that they have or can be constructed within meaning (Hall, 1995: 224). Discourse functions through practices of exclusion, through sets of internal procedures, and through those constituted as speaking subjects (Foucault, 1981). It is a means of both producing and organising meaning within a social context (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002: 117). The discourse of multiculturalism might be said to constitute a ‘discursive formation’ and as such provides ‘rules of justification for what counts as…knowledge within a particular context, and at the same time stipulate what does not count as knowledge in that context’ (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002: 117). Indeed society is constantly being created through discursive practices (Davies, 1989: xi). Both the critical and the genealogical analyses advocated by Foucault inform this research/writing (see Foucault, 1981). I grapple with how forms of exclusion, limitation, and appropriation develop, in response to what needs, how they have been modified and displaced, what constraints they have exerted and to what extent they have been evaded (Foucault, 1981: 70). The analysis employs genealogy to the extent that I consider how discourses of multiculturalism in Griffith came to be formed in light of these constraints, what their specific norms are, and what their conditions of appearance, growth and variation are (Foucault, 1981: 70).

Cultural studies in particular has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on the textual; on language, discourse and text, rather than on social action (see for example Jackson, 1989: 7-8; Cowlishaw, 2004). These critiques, however, fail to recognise the large number of studies to have emerged from within cultural studies that draw on ethnographic approaches and indeed the tendency in cultural studies to pay attention to the lived, the discursive and social/global dimensions of contemporary reality (Saukko, 2003: 12).15

15 One example of such work is that of Angela McRobbie (1991).
The empirical research that informs this study pays attention to the interplay between the lived experience of the research participants, the texts and discourses which collectively construct multicultural Griffith, and the broader social and political contexts. It has been my intention to try and do justice to the lived experience of people while at the same time critically analysing the discourses which form the very stuff out of which experience is made (see Saukko, 2003). As such, ‘new ethnographic approaches,’ as well as the textual/discursive and the contextual also inform this study which, in Saukko’s terms, might be described as a dialogic mode of doing research; combining approaches in such a way as to create a dialogue between them (2003: 34-35). Such a mode of research is attentive to the lived, cultural as well as social and material aspects of people’s realities, and acknowledges that there may be disjunctures between them (Saukko, 2003: 35).

Clifford Geertz’s (1973) meditation on Ryle’s ‘thick description’ in part informs the ethnographic dimension of the research. In his anthropological study of the Balinese cockfight, Geertz suggests that insights into a culture more generally can be gained from analysing particular cultural forms. The cockfight in Balinese culture is ‘a story they tell themselves about themselves’ (Geertz, 1973: 448). Such cultural forms can be construed as ‘texts’, and as creative agents, ‘colouring the experience with the light they cast it in’ (Geertz, 1973: 451). Such forms ‘say something of something, and to somebody’ (Geertz, 1973: 453). Geertz employs ‘thick description’ to produce his cultural analyses and describes cultural analysis as an interpretive science, in search of meaning (1973: 5). Importantly, cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete and ethnographic truths are inherently partial (Geertz, 1973: 29; Clifford, 1986b: 7).

Ethnography ‘decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion’ and ‘describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes’ (Clifford, 1986b: 2). Culture is composed of contested codes and representations, and ethnography is caught up in the invention, not the representation, of cultures (Clifford, 1986b: 2). Although ethnographic work may itself enact power relations, it is the potential for
ethnographic work to be counter-hegemonic that is part of its appeal here (see Clifford, 1986b: 9).

Jackson claims that ‘there is a world of difference…between those who employ the liberal vocabulary of agency, context, and interaction, and those who prefer the more radical language of structure, power, and struggle’ (Jackson, 1989: 8). Jackson may be overstating this difference given that the political commitment of the researcher/writer in either case may be quite similar. Here I have attempted to do both. Context, agency and interaction are always kept in mind, as are structure, power and struggle, all of which are necessary to a critical reading of multicultural Griffith that attempts to do justice to people’s lived realities. Emphasis in the study varies at times, as the research material suggests. The stock of stories for any place, however, depends largely on where and how you look (Bonyhady and Griffiths, 2002: 6).

**On Theorising ‘Whiteness’**

Although the study is not overtly conceptualised and language in terms of ‘critical whiteness’, and while the study is not about the social construction of whiteness *per se*, there is a significant overlap with the concerns of this body of literature. Whiteness as a concept refers to much more than physical appearance. Whiteness is characterised by silence, normativity and invisibility and has significant power in relation to the production of knowledge and representation (Moreton-Robinson, 2004: 75). In Moreton-Robinson’s account whiteness is exercised epistemologically. In her words, ‘whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West; it is an invisible regime of power that secures hegemony though discourse and has material effects in everyday life’ (2004: 75). Frankenberg describes whiteness as a ‘process’ rather than a ‘thing’ (1997: 1).

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16 Clifford (1986b: 25) sees the understanding of ethnography as complex, problematic, and partial as having the potential to lead to more subtle, concrete ways of writing and reading and to new conceptions of culture as interactive and historical.

17 This is not, however, the kind of libertarian commentary that attempts to ‘let the text speak for itself’, but rather it is done in such a way as to attempt to negotiate the spaces between a libertarian form of commentary on one hand and ‘mastery’ on the other (see Hodge and McHoul, 1992).
So while the concept of whiteness is relevant, and despite Hage’s fondness for the term, there are other ways of conceptualising multiculturalism in Griffith that sit more comfortably with, and are more appropriate to, the complex and nuanced relationships between groups, individuals and institutions in the town. Part of this appropriateness is derived from a desire to preserve local terminology and ways of talking about ethnicity, difference, cultural diversity and so on in the writing of Griffith. Thus the more salient terms in the Griffith context influence the language used, while the concern with discourse, representation and power relations remains the key driver of the analysis. Rather than conceptualise and analyse Griffith through the prism of ‘critical whiteness’ overtly I use concepts like dominant discourses, representation, hegemony, power, and interpellation, in relation to the ‘ethnic’ and ‘cultural’ delineations described in section ‘Describing and Ascribing Cultural and Ethnic Identity’ below.

The other way in which whiteness pertains to the study is in relation to my own positioning and this is elaborated below in the section ‘Positioning Myself’.

**The Research Material**

A range of specific methods were employed to generate the research material for the study. Much of 2004 was spent living in Griffith with family, when the bulk of the research material was collected. During these times I undertook archival research, mainly at the Western Riverina Community Library in Griffith, read and collected each edition of the local newspaper *The Area News* and other regular local publications like *Go Magazine*, and collected a range of other ‘traditional’ textual sources like brochures, pamphlets, postcards, information booklets, policy documents, promotional material, catalogues, flyers, programs, and literary and historical material. John Urry has claimed that taking ‘place’ seriously means taking writing, architecture, paintings, guide books, literary texts, films, postcards, advertisements, music, travel patterns, photographs and so on seriously (1995: 30). This insight has contributed to the wide range of material considered in this study.

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18 Key thinkers in this field include, for example, Richard Dyer (e.g. 2000); bell hooks (e.g. 1996); Ruth Frankenberg (e.g. 1993; 1997) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (e.g. 2004).
I also attended a wide range of events, festivals and other public and private functions, made repeated visits to sites of interest like Griffith Pioneer Park Museum and Griffith Visitors Centre, and spent time just ‘living’ (going grocery shopping, having a haircut, going to restaurants and cafes, sitting in the park, going to the theatre, and so on) all under the guise of ‘participant observation’ or ‘simple observation’ (see Kellehear, 1993). Participant observation was employed as a method of collecting research material on the understanding that valuable insight could be gained by listening and watching, systematically and with care (Kellehear, 1993). Material collected through these means was recorded in a number of ways including through detailed note-taking, the use of a journal, and photography where appropriate.

Inevitably decisions had to be made about which material would be included and which would not. To some extent the inclusions and exclusions emerged from preliminary analysis and were in part based on which sources shed the most light on, or had the most to say about, multiculturalism in Griffith. Places like Griffith Pioneer Park Museum and Griffith Visitors Centre participate overtly in the construction of local cultural identity and part of their rationale is to communicate ideas about what Griffith is like to both residents and non-residents. As such they are important sites for the consideration of multicultural Griffith. There are issues related to this selection process; not only are there omissions, but particular readings may come to the fore at the expense of other equally valid readings because of the choices made to include some things and exclude others. What follows, then, is a particular reading of Griffith that has been shaped by a wide range of factors that pertain to, but are by no means limited to, who has done the research, when they conducted it, how they conducted it, why they conducted it, what funding was available, the ontological and epistemological basis of the research, and the institutional framing of the research.

This material was supplemented by interviewing local people. Interviewing was staged and began in earnest after preliminary site assessments had allowed the

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19 As Clifford reminds us, however, ‘the discourse of the cultural analyst can no longer be simply that of the “experienced” observer, describing and observing culture’ (1986b: 14). It too has been shown to be problematic.
community of Griffith to be ‘mapped’ in a way that identified critical sites in which to investigate multiculturalism. This process was one that overlayed the areas of interest identified in the existing literature on multiculturalism in Australia (and that is outlined below and in Chapter One) with data from Griffith derived from cultural mapping undertaken during the first two field visits.

Initially a range of representatives of particular groups or organisations were interviewed. These included representatives of: Griffith City Council (GCC) such as the Cultural Services Manager, Tourism Manager, Pioneer Park Museum Manager and Curator, and the Deputy Mayor; Griffith Multicultural Community Council (GMCC); the Italian Museum; Rural Australians for Refugees; the Community Relations Commission Regional Advisory Council; and La Festa Inc, as well as: the Assistant Principal of Griffith Primary School; a local representative of the NSW Police; a former Mayor; a local representative of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA) and Church leaders from the Uniting, Presbyterian, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and Grace Christian Fellowship Churches. These interviews were all conducted by the author, throughout 2004, and were recorded either by hand or with an electronic recording device. They are referred to throughout as ‘personal communications’ and are summarised in Appendix Two.

The questions that were asked of this cluster of interviewees were all related to how Griffith was functioning as a culturally diverse community and were tailored to the particular occupation/area of expertise of the individual being interviewed. Thus, for example, the Cultural Services Manager was asked about how multiculturalism impinged on her work for council, what sort of programs and policies were in place given the culturally diverse nature of the community, and about specific projects the department had been involved in. The Church leaders were asked to talk about multiculturalism in Griffith from their perspective including the ethnic affiliations of the church, how, why and by whom it was established, what the issues were for their congregation that related to culture/ethnicity, how they thought Griffith functioned as a culturally diverse community, and what the implications of multiculturalism were for their ministry.
The aim was to engage each interviewee in a conversation about multiculturalism in Griffith, how they thought it was working, what the implications of cultural diversity were for their work, how they saw the success or failure of multiculturalism and what the issues were from their perspective. All were asked about their relationships with the Indigenous community and how they saw this in relation to multiculturalism. The intention was to get a sense of the discursive construction of multiculturalism in Griffith by engaging with a range of professionals and others for whom I anticipated multiculturalism would be an issue. I was, in the main, guided in the selection process through informal conversations and observations in the months leading up to the interviewing process. Given time and other constraints and the availability and accessibility of individuals, some areas were ignored. I had limited engagement with, for example, health professionals. This area, and indeed other areas of state government service provision are, at the least, supposed to be guided by broader government policies related to Equal Employment Opportunity and Ethnic Affairs Priority Statements.

These ‘official’ interviews were followed by fourteen individual interviews with people identifying as Koori/Wiradjuri, Anglo Saxon/Anglo-Celtic/Australian, Italian-Australian, Cook Island Maori, Fijian, Tongan, Sikh/Punjabi/Indian, Hindu/Indian, Turkish-Australian, English and Scottish.20 The number of people interviewed was based largely on time constraints. Individuals were approached to participate on the basis of a personal connection, their profile in the community, advice from those people who were interviewed in their official capacities, their presumed level of local knowledge, and/or other recommendations made by people with whom I had contact in the course of living in Griffith.

Key criteria included a minimum of two years in Griffith, so that the interviewee would have a degree of familiarity with the town, and English proficiency given that translators were not used. Indigenous people, Anglo-Celtic Australians, and people

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20 Individuals who participated in both the group discussion outlined below, and the one-on-one interviews all remain anonymous throughout the thesis. They are referred to as ‘interviewees’ and are each given a number. All of these interviews were conducted by the author during October 2004 and were recorded electronically. A range of other people contributed informally to the research material and these people are referred to throughout as ‘participants’ or ‘informants’ (as opposed to interviewees). See Appendix 2. On the naming conventions used here see the section below ‘Describing and Ascribing Cultural and Ethnic Identity’.
from each of the major migrant groups in Griffith were deliberately sought so that something of each of these perspectives might be captured. A series of questions were devised to get a sense of the discursive construction of multiculturalism in Griffith and the material and other consequences of this. The questions were designed to facilitate conversation about ‘life in Griffith’ in a relatively unstructured manner that allowed interviewees to stress what was important or significant to them about multicultural Griffith, if indeed that was how they described the town. Each participant was asked how long they had lived in Griffith; why Griffith; how they would describe their cultural identity; how they would describe Griffith; how they think Griffith compares to other regional centres; what life is like for their particular group or community; what they think life is like for other groups or communities; who they mix with socially; what kinds of social activities they participate in; which local places they go to; which local events they have attended. I intentionally didn’t describe Griffith as multicultural so as not to ‘put words in their mouths’. The interviews were conducted during the latter stages of the fieldwork so some of the questions were asked because I already had a sense of the way the thesis might take shape—hence questions about particular places and events.

A group interview/discussion was also conducted involving seven participants from Northern and Southern Italian and English and Irish backgrounds, all of whom were born in Australia with the exception of one person who was born in Calabria, Southern Italy. Those who participated all knew each other well prior to the interview. The aim of the group discussion was to allow these individuals to engage in dialogue with each other in the hope that a richer discussion than that derived from individual interviews would ensue. The idea came from witnessing several of those who participated in the group interview in conversation with each other about the kinds of issues the study deals with on routine social occasions. This approach was successful in that each individual embraced the activity enthusiastically and a rich and detailed conversation was recorded.

I had numerous unplanned and off-the-cuff conversations with many other residents of Griffith in the course of my everyday life in Griffith. Because of my reason for being in Griffith these were necessarily informed and shaped by my reason for being
in Griffith- to conduct ethnographic research. They have also influenced the outcomes of the research.

**Describing and Ascribing Cultural and Ethnic Identity**

The discursive approach sees identity as a construction, which is always conditional and ‘in process’, but also recognises its determinate conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it (Hall, 1996b: 2-3; see also Hall, 1996c). As Hall (1996b; 1996c) notes, identity can turn on any number of discourses. Given that this is a thesis about multiculturalism, I am specifically interested in aspects of identity, or identification, that relate to culture and ethnicity (see Hall, 1995; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996) given that these are critical aspects of multiculturalism.

Throughout the study I have been careful to be guided by local individual and collective self-identification (see Hall, 1996b: 2-3). I do so in an attempt to show respect for local knowledge and understandings as well as bring a scholarly critique to bear on these. There is also a certain ‘groundedness’ that doing this brings to the portrait of Griffith. The naming conventions adopted throughout the study, unless indicated otherwise, reflect the local conventions. Collective identities are understood in Griffith to comprise ‘communities’, which are in turn conceived of as part of the broader community of Griffith. 21 Shared historical experiences often provide part of the basis for identification and this is clearly evident in Griffith, particularly in relation to the identifier ‘Italian’. Identity is also often deployed strategically by individuals and groups, not least when they are being ‘researched’. An awareness of this has been brought to bear on the following analysis and critique of Griffith. 22

Shared ancestry links Wiradjuri people with their ancestors and with each other. This ancestry is necessary for individuals to claim Wiradjuri identity (Macdonald,

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21 On notions of community see, for example, Anderson (1991) and Delanty (2003). Unlike Anderson’s (1991: 6) description of community at the level of the nation, the communities that are constructed in Griffith are not ‘imagined communities’ in the sense of members not knowing or coming into contact with each other, at least at the local level.

22 See discussion on page 11
I use the term ‘Wiradjuri’ when I am referring to Wiradjuri people collectively or an individual who identifies as Wiradjuri. When I am referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians I use the word ‘Indigenous’. I use the word ‘Aboriginal’ to refer to Aboriginal Australians specifically, or ‘Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people’ to be clearer in relation to Griffith. I could have opted to use the word ‘Koori’, an identifier preferred by many Aboriginal people in parts of NSW and Victoria, more widely but have, on the whole, chosen not to adopt this level of familiarity in relation to Griffith largely because of my lack of a close personal relationship with local Aboriginal people. I capitalise ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’ in the same way I do, for example, ‘European’.

Non-Indigenous people who have an ancestry or heritage which is largely derived from the countries of the United Kingdom make up a significant proportion of the population of Griffith. Some of these people have been in Australia for several generations, while others are more recent migrants. What binds them is the relatively privileged position most of them have within configurations of Australian national identity. For some commentators their subject position would be described as ‘white’ and their privilege a function of their ‘whiteness’. The shorthand I use to refer to this ‘group’ is ‘Anglo-Celtic,’ acknowledging that this too is a problematic term. Such labels are always limited and limiting, with the potential to obscure differences and create a sense of a collective identity that in many ways may be

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23 On Indigenous Australian identity see, for example, the collection of essays in Part One of Grossman (2003).
24 The United Kingdom includes the countries of Great Britain: England, Scotland and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland. A number of things bear mentioning about this shorthand, which holds for my use of Anglo-Celtic as well. On one hand the people from these countries who came to Australia were the product of a range of groups who settled in the region including Angles, Celts, Danes, Dutch, Irish, Jews, Normans, Norseman, Saxons, and Vikings (Young, 1995: 2). Further, those who came to Australia from Scotland, for example, may have thought of themselves and been thought of by others variously as Highlanders or Lowlanders, to suggest but one set of possibilities for a breakdown of Scottish identity. On the other hand, early migrants to Australia from the countries that now comprise the United Kingdom, might be clustered together given that these earlier identities have largely been effaced, having been replaced with an ‘Australian’ identity, and given that these groups share similar historical trajectories in Australia whereby their descendants make up the majority of the population and in many ways have come to dominate in Australia. These British/English/Anglo-Celtic identities, however, remain both fragile and contested and indeed more recent British migrants have been involved in a process self-ethnicisation against an Australian identity (see Stratton, 2000).
25 Dixson (1999) describes these people as comprising Australia’s ‘core culture’. In relation to the Irish, this position of privilege has not always been the case in Australia. See for example O’Farrell (2000).
26 See for example Moreton-Robinson (2004) and Frankenberg (1993; 1997). Without adopting this language we are essentially talking about the same thing.
spurious. On the other hand, one needs a way to language the kind of analysis undertaken in a way that is both intelligible and coherent. Naming part of the Griffith community as ‘Anglo-Celtic’ or ‘Anglo-Celtic Australians’ is also an attempt to recognise people from these backgrounds as ethnically and culturally configured, just like everyone else (cf. Hall, 1995; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Stratton, 2000: 25-26; 29). And while it is possible to recognise differences when talking historically, it is very difficult to do this in relation to 3rd, 4th, or 5th generation Australians, for example, who probably have a mixture of both English and Irish ancestry, and quite possibly other ancestries as well; hence the usefulness of the vague term Anglo-Celtic (cf. Johnson, 2002).

The identifier ‘Italian’ also requires qualification given that it too refers to a diverse group of people whose sense of identity was/is just as likely to be based on the particular region in Italy that they were/are from as any kind of national identity (see for example Huber, 1977; Pascoe, 1987; Cresciani, 2003). Indeed Italy was not a nation as such until after 1861 and has itself been influenced by a range of ‘civilisations’ (Cresciani, 2003: 4). The use of the descriptor ‘Italian’ or ‘Italian-Australian’ is useful, however, for thinking about the shared historical experiences of many of these people in the context of immigration to, and life in, Australia. They also share a language, even when their first language may be a dialect. Further, ‘Italian’ is a key way in which people with an Italian heritage in Griffith today describe themselves and are described by others. Despite this, it is important to keep in mind that Italian cultural identity in Griffith is complex, multilayered and contextual, as will be seen. It is fractured along lines of income level, regional affiliation, gender, and age, to name but a few.27

Other individuals or groups who are significant to an examination of multicultural Griffith are named as being, for example, ‘Indian’, ‘Pacific Islander’, ‘Turkish’ or ‘Afghani’. Throughout the thesis I adopt these labels to describe individuals or groups based on either self-identification of the individual concerned or based on the dominant local constructions and understandings. Sometimes this seems to be a clear

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27 At the simplest level this regionalism appears in Griffith as a North—South divide but depending on the context it can also be broken down further to specific regions, for example Calabria, and even specific villages.
and strong choice to identify with a particular group made by an individual. At other times it may be a result of being slotted into an existing category by both others who belong to the group in question or by the wider Griffith community. It is probably usually both.\textsuperscript{28} None of these are simple constructions, and each has its own problematics related to history and geography. The Indian community, for example, consists of people from a range of different cultural and religious traditions. There are also ‘Indians’ in Griffith who are from Fiji and South Africa, disrupting this particular construction further. Similarly, the Turkish community in Griffith includes Kurds, to name but one possible set of differentiations. Perhaps because many of the people who identify with these heritages are not Australian born they are much less likely to adopt identifiers like Indian-Australian or Turkish-Australian (for example). This convention, where everyone becomes some sort of hyphenated Australian (whether they like it or not) has therefore not been imposed in relation to these groups or individuals in Griffith.

The implications for this study include an awkwardness, as well as a constant need for qualification, around the use of these labels/descriptors. Without them, however, the study becomes meaningless. Problematic and limited as they are, they are necessary to both being able to say something about multiculturalism in Griffith and in capturing something of the lived experiences of the people of Griffith (cf. Scott, 1995). There is a tension between deconstructing multicultural Griffith while at the same time participating in its construction.

**Positioning Myself**

I was born in Australia and am descended from migrants from England and Scotland. Among the earliest forebears to come to Australia were my great great grandparents, who came to Australia from Glasgow in the mid-nineteenth century and settled on Dharawal (Norongerragal/Gweagal) land in the Sutherland area of Sydney.\textsuperscript{29} Other forebears came from England and France, the most recent being my maternal grandmother in 1926, who was born just outside of Paris to English parents. This

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. Hall, 1996b: 13-14 and 1996c: 130; Docker, 1995. See also Chapter Six.
\textsuperscript{29} It was not uncommon for this particular group of migrants, that is urban Scots, to settle in this area and a pattern to this effect has been identified (Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, 2002: 67-71). On Indigenous affiliations with this area see Hinkson, 2001.
side of the family also made a home for themselves in Sydney. When I was born my parents were living in the Northern Territory, on Warumungu land, but as an adult I moved to Sydney. I think of myself as an Anglo-Celtic (or white, depending on the context) Australian, as the grandchild of migrants and in a sense as a migrant myself. I am a beneficiary of the dispossession of Indigenous people in Australia and continue to live on land that was acquired by means that are at odds with my own personal ethics. Further, any system of differentiation, including race, inevitably shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses (Frankenberg, 1993: 1).

Griffith became the study site for this research because of a family connection. Memories of my childhood visits to Griffith to spend time with family there are now quite faint. My uncle moved there from Sydney in the 1960s and occasionally, but not often, my sister and I spent time with our aunt, uncle and cousins in Griffith. I remember long bus trips to get there, my aunt spoiling us while we were there, and visits to doctors and chemists when my asthma flared up quite badly. I returned briefly as an adult in the 1990s when my uncle was dying of cancer. My connection to Griffith came about because some of my family lived there and I engaged with the town and community through them. In late 2003 I went back to Griffith for the first time in almost ten years, a trip which then led to the decision to engage with Griffith as part of my research.

The people in Griffith to which I had the most access, and therefore the closest contact, throughout the study were middle to high income-earning Anglo-Celtic and Italian Australians, generally without tertiary qualifications, who were, on the whole, politically conservative. These were the people with whom I was essentially ‘embedded’, my access largely the result of my association with the key family member who nurtured me while in Griffith. This person is well connected and introduced me to a wide range of people and made sure I was kept abreast of any local happenings that might have been of interest. It therefore needs to be acknowledged that access to other sectors of the Griffith population, outside of my own ‘unobtrusive observations’ (Kellehear, 1993), was confined to more formal, pre-arranged interviews, with all the limitations that brings.
I am part of what can be conceived of as the dominant group in Australia, albeit a female member, with all the privileges that can confer. I can choose whether or not I bother with issues that are deemed to be the concern of, or affect the lives of, so-called minority ethnic groups in Australia. My ‘white race privilege’ also allows me to choose whether or not I will bother with what are perceived to be ‘Indigenous issues’ in Australia (Tannoch-Bland, 1998). And to the extent that I can forget about how the land on which I live came to be acquired by those with whom I share a heritage, I can feel quite comfortable. I chose, however, to acknowledge this past and to ‘remember’. But while I may call my own legitimacy into question, to the extent that Australia is defined as being an Anglo-Celtic derived white nation, I am marked as ‘belonging’ (Bennett, 1998: 3). Issues of power therefore inevitably impinge on a project such as this. Ultimately, the success or otherwise of the thesis as an attempt to move beyond the reproductive force of my own whiteness can be judged by the reader (cf. hooks, 1996).

**Australian Multiculturalism: Critical Questions**

**Analysing Multiculturalism**

Ghassan Hage’s (1998) significant critique of multiculturalism in Australia, *White Nation*, forms an important part of the analysis of multiculturalism in Griffith undertaken throughout the thesis. This includes a concern with the maintenance of White Australian dominance and control, and the challenges to it. Hage’s book remains an incisive and salient critique of Australian multiculturalism and a useful point of comparison for multiculturalism in Griffith. An important set of questions pertaining to the study of multiculturalism in Griffith relate to issues of power and control fore-grounded by Hage and others (for example Anderson, 1999b). I consider whose voices we are hearing, and whose are made passive or are silenced altogether, and remain attentive to any cracks in the dominant culture that may have been ‘prised open by voices typically submerged in the discourses of power’ (Anderson, 1999b: 10).

Another important aspect of multiculturalism is the discourse of Anglo or White decline, which ‘bemoans what it sees as the attack on the core British values of
traditional White Australia’ (Hage, 1998: 20). In this formulation, the figure of the ordinary ‘mainstream’ Australian, the ‘traditional Aussie battler’, is perceived as a victim of a conspiracy to change the very nature of the country (Hage, 1998: 20). I examine how Griffith has coped with the increasing cultural diversity of the community and the challenges presented by this to Anglo-Celtic dominance and control, a critical aspect of the broader discourse of multiculturalism in Australia.

Hage also notes that the theme of cultural enrichment is one of the key themes of Australian multiculturalism (Hage, 1998: 117). This discourse reveals an opposition between enriched and enriching cultures whereby the White Australian is still positioned ‘in the centre of the Australian cultural map’ (Hage, 1998: 118). Further to this, it ‘assigns to migrant cultures a different mode of existence to Anglo-Celtic culture’ (Hage, 1998: 121), the key to which is the construction of ‘ethnics’ as objects of evaluation (Hage, 1998: 132). I examine how this theme informs conceptions of multiculturalism in Griffith given its important implications for multiculturalism nationally and as a concept.

The predominant historical trajectory assigned to Australian multiculturalism has it beginning in the 1970s. Bob Hodge and John O’Carroll, also significant contributors to the recent debates about multiculturalism in Australia, assign it a longer history than this, noting how the conditions for its emergence derive from the earlier era of ‘assimilation’ (2006: 15-19. See also Lopez, 2000). Throughout the study attention is paid to how multiculturalism has evolved in Griffith. Ien Ang sees an historical continuity in Australian attitudes noting that the anxieties and prejudices of White Australia have not fully disappeared (2003: 51). I consider some of the historic dimensions of multiculturalism in Griffith as a way of registering changes related to both demographic and official multiculturalism.

Critical to understanding multiculturalism in Australia/Griffith is the analysis of the lived experiences of people. Multiculturalism is a feature of everyday life for most Australians, many of whom are ‘delighted with the fact’ (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006: 3). Hage (1997) has read this in a way that contrasts ‘cosmo-multiculturalism’ with a more genuine kind of intercultural interaction. The study of Griffith looks at how local people have embraced multiculturalism in the course of their everyday lives as
a way of gaining a rich, complex picture of multicultural Griffith. Critiques like those from Hage (especially 1998) may ultimately be unable to fully account for what this study will demonstrate are the innumerable positive connections made by ordinary people (Hodge and O'Carroll, 2006: 15).

The influence of multiculturalism on national identity, which has been profoundly affected by the idea of Australia as multicultural, is also an important consideration in trying to account for multicultural Griffith. Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey (1992a: 9) have claimed that ‘the mass settlement of migrants from a wide range of countries has made the overt maintenance of a racist definition of the nation and of the Australian type impossible.’ A key question, therefore, is how the discourses of multiculturalism have impacted on understandings and representations of local identity in Griffith and what the implications of this are.

Ien Ang has described a form of multicultural co-existence that she calls ‘togetherness-in-difference,’ a form which recognises the ‘complicated entanglement of living hybridities’ (Ang, 2001a: 16). Essentialised identities can work against achieving this, resulting instead in groups of people who are ‘living apart together’ (Ang, 2001a). This is a potential outcome of the application of the kind of ‘mosaic’ model of multiculturalism articulated in official discourses in Australia. Multiculturalism, as a state response to cultural diversity, is in part predicated upon what Taylor (1994) called ‘recognition’ of distinct cultural or ethnic groups, each of which are acknowledged by the state as being of equal value and importance. Ang notes that it is not multiculturalism per se that prevents togetherness-in-difference, particularly because it implies a shared space, rather it is the mode of sharing that is potentially problematic (Ang, 2001: 14). The study also, then, looks at the extent to which Griffith has been able to transcend this conception of multiculturalism and create togetherness-in-difference.

**Multiculturalism and Indigenous Australia**

As Ellie Vasta has observed, multiculturalism had, since its inception, referred specifically to migrants and their place within Australian society and there had been little attempt to include Indigenous Australians in discourses on cultural diversity.
Stephenson (2002) argues that ideological and legislative attempts to keep Aboriginal and Asian communities apart have been designed to maintain the overarching supremacy of white settler Australians. There have been several recent attempts to bring Indigenous and multicultural discourses together (see for example Curthoys, 1999; Anderson, 2000; Povinelli, 2002; Stephenson, 2002), to create a ‘dialogue across multicultural, Indigenous and settler spaces’ (Anderson, 2000), something which also forms part of the rationale of this study. While the role of Indigenous Australians in ‘Australian multiculture’ is complex, it is also essential, their creativity and generosity in negotiating a new vision of Australia an intrinsic part of it (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006: 20. See also Vasta, 1996: 51).

Indigenous dispossession is the foundation on which immigration to Australia has been built. All non-Indigenous Australians are migrants, and all are the beneficiaries of Indigenous dispossession, though there are various degrees of complicity (cf. Pugliese, 2002; and Hage, 2003: 79-103). Multicultural Griffith exists because of the dispossession of Wiradjuri people, and Wiradjuri people are, therefore, a critical inclusion in the study. Many of the methods used by the invaders to achieve this end are covered by Peter Read (1994) in his book *A Hundred Years War*. Indigenous prior ownership and the ongoing presence of Indigenous people in Australia also raises questions about the legitimacy of non-Indigenous people in Australia (Hodge and Mishra, 1990) and as we shall see, the notion of legitimacy is critical to hegemony in multicultural Griffith.

There are risks involved in including Indigenous Australians as part of a study on multiculturalism: there is always the potential that Indigenous Australians may become just one among many different cultural groups and that the diversity within Indigenous Australia is ignored (cf. Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995b). Because of the implications for their political and cultural legitimacy, Indigenous people too may resist policies which treat them as simply one among many ethnic groups (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995b: 27; see also Stephenson, 2002: 93-94). Aboriginal research participants were, at best, ambivalent about multiculturalism.

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30 There is diversity among different Aboriginal groups in Australia and also within groups like the Wiradjuri. See for example Read (1994) and Macdonald (1986, 2004).
31 See Chapter Seven.
although there is Indigenous support from some quarters for a particular kind of multiculturalism. Many Indigenous Australians may not see themselves as part of, or want to be included in, constructions of Australia as ‘multicultural’.

On the other hand, Indigenous people are part of the cultural diversity of Australia, and to ignore this risks furthering their marginalisation and exclusion (cf. Beckett, 1988b: 5). Given that all non-Indigenous Australians continue to benefit, to varying degrees, from Indigenous dispossession, and that there is now a shared history of some 200-odd years, excluding Indigenous people from studies of multiculturalism is highly problematical. What Indigenous Australians and non-British migrants have in common is the experience of racism in Australia (Castles and Vasta, 1996; Docker and Fischer, 2000) and histories that are interdependent (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995b: 5). The uniqueness of Indigenous Australia, however, needs to be constantly kept in mind.

In the context of this thesis, recognition is given to the status of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people as traditional owners/the first people/Indigenous. This cuts across/underpins the whole research undertaking, and Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people remain integral. My own reading is augmented by the voices of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people to the extent that this has been possible. There have been limitations imposed for a number of reasons including that I am not a local person, that I am non-Indigenous, and that I only spent a relatively short period of time living in Griffith. All of these things placed serious limitations on the extent to which I have been able to include Indigenous voices. I have, therefore, also drawn on sources endorsed by Wiradjuri people generally, including the work of Gaynor Macdonald (2004), Peter Read (1994), and Peter Kabaila (1998). The study is mindful of the issues related to non-Indigenous representations and discursive constructions of Indigenous Australians (see for example Hodge and Mishra, 1990; Attwood and Arnold, 1992; Muecke, 2005). Among the issues are the potential for misrepresentation and critically, in the colonial/postcolonial context, issues of power such as who is speaking, with what authority, for whom, and with what effects. These effects can include silencing Indigenous people. I have attempted to capture

something of the relationship between Indigeneity and multiculturalism in Griffith in ways that are not neo-colonial.33

**Similar Studies in Regional Australia**

There is a paucity of place-bound studies of multiculturalism in regional Australia. Research on multiculturalism in the regional context tends to either explore specific ‘groups’, for example Stilwell (2003) and the Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies (2006), or are concerned with government services and their delivery. This includes services like health, education, settlement, employment. Griffith was included as part of a broader study of four regional centres in Australia focusing on the links between community diversity and economic development in rural and regional Australia (DOTARS, 2005). The in-depth study of a particular regional centre across a range of ethnic groups and across a range of spheres (tourism, heritage, landscape, everyday life and so on) through the lens of cultural studies is therefore perhaps unique.

**Multicultural Griffith: Sites of Analysis**

Geertz suggested that insights into a culture more generally can be gained from analysing particular cultural forms, from looking at the stories ‘cultures’ tell themselves about themselves (Geertz, 1973: 448). Rather than looking at specific cultural forms, the research material on Griffith is clustered into a series of cross-sections or ‘sites’, against a backdrop of ‘official multiculturalism’. Analysis in turn focuses on: government discursive constructions of multiculturalism (Chapter One), tourism representations (Chapter Two), representations of the past (Chapter Three), landscape inscriptions (Chapter Four), festivals (Chapter Five), the lived/performative or ‘everyday’ multiculturalism in Griffith (Chapter Six) and Indigeneity and multiculturalism (Chapter Seven). The chapters are essentially narrative devices that have emerged through a combination of personal interest, previous experience and knowledge, the richness of the archive, accessibility, doability, and the existing literature on multiculturalism. Each is, in part, immersed in

33 See for example Thomas (1994).
its own discursive construction, but also reveals something about multicultural Griffith.

The first chapter considers the official discourse of multiculturalism in Australia as it emanates from the three levels of government: federal, state and local. This chapter uses a multi-scalar analysis of multiculturalism in Australia to consider Federal, State and Local Government constructions of multiculturalism. Griffith City Council’s own responses to multiculturalism as policy and practice reveal that cultural diversity is seen as a defining feature of Griffith by the local government authority. The chapter also considers some of the ways in which the Federal and State approaches to multiculturalism impinge on and are manifest at the local level.

The second chapter looks at tourism representations and the discursive construction of multiculturalism in Griffith. The chapter considers what culturally diverse, ‘multicultural’ Griffith has meant for the tourism representations emanating from there. I argue that multiculturalism and the cultural diversity of Griffith have produced an idea of Griffith as ‘cosmopolitan’ and that the discourse in operation around this idea is essentially one of ‘enrichment’. Within this discourse some groups are constructed as ‘ethnic’ while others are not. This effects a construction of the past that turns on older notions of Australian national identity. Further to this, Anglo-Celtic Australians in Griffith are constructed as the key contributors to the success and prosperity of Griffith epitomised by the agricultural industry. There is, however, significant attention paid by those who produce these representations to the idea of Griffith as multicultural in ways that suggest an increasing inclusiveness.

The third chapter considers the pasts that get constructed for Griffith at the town’s key heritage site, Griffith Pioneer Park Museum and the associated Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre. The analysis includes how the history that is told at these sites is legitimated, who participates in its construction and what the implications are for those who call Griffith home, and for multiculturalism in Griffith. Pioneer Park is constructed within the local imagination as a significant site. It plays a key role in telling the history of ‘older’, generally Anglo-Celtic, Australians, within Griffith. Despite this, attempts have been made to include more
recent migrants, many of whom do not share the same cultural heritage as the Pioneer Park creators, although the inclusions are somewhat problematic. People with an Italian heritage are well placed to counter attempts to undermine or marginalise ‘their’ history, and have done so through the establishment of the Italian Museum. Here too, however, the past that is constructed is notably, and noticeably, limited and partial. Wiradjuri people are either ignored or relegated to the margins. It emerges that both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of the contemporary legitimacy of those in Griffith who claim Anglo-Celtic and/or Italian heritage.

Culture is spatially constituted (Jackson, 1989: 3). The fourth chapter makes more overt the spatial dimensions of multiculturalism in Griffith through a reading of the commemorative landscape. It considers prominent townscape features like monuments and memorials in light of multicultural Griffith. While state practices may institutionalise concepts like multiculturalism, it is in space that such concepts may become materially cemented and naturalised in everyday life (see Anderson, 1991: 29). The relationship between these cultural inscriptions and the idea of multicultural Griffith is one that in part turns on a disavowal of cultural diversity as well as the reification of the soldier-settler-pioneer, iconic figures in relation to the development of Griffith. This, in turn, feeds back into Anglo-Celtic dominance and control, shoring up Anglo-Celtic identity. The recent addition to the commemorative landscape of a sculptural installation known as *Lifecycle* suggests a significant shift without effacing the older, Anglo-Celtic dominated memorial endeavour. *Lifecycle* reveals something of how multicultural Griffith is conceived and functions.

Chapter Five also pays attention to the spatial constitution of multicultural Griffith through an analysis of a multicultural festival, an event that is illustrative of both a productive and a problematic multiculturalism. The conception of Griffith as a series of discrete communities that can be seen within the commemorative landscape of Griffith is also apparent at *La Festa*. Despite this the event has strong community support and is generally seen by organisers and participants as strengthening the community as a whole and furthering understanding and appreciation between

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34 See Anderson and Taylor, 2005.
people from different backgrounds. While control of La Festa is largely in the hands of a small and already relatively powerful group in the community, it also provides an opportunity for a range of other less powerful groups in Griffith to claim the space of the main street, to assert their cultural identity and to work towards engendering greater understanding, appreciation and respect among the broader community. The festival reinforces the value of the plurality of cultures in Griffith and may also foster cultural maintenance among those who participate as both performers and spectators.

Chapter Six tries to capture something of how a range of people experience life in multicultural Griffith. Life in multicultural Griffith is both complex and at times paradoxical. Participants and interviewees generally agreed that Griffith was ‘a success story’ in relation to multiculturalism, indeed it was held by many to be a model of tolerance, harmony, equity and community. Although multiculturalism is seen as a defining feature of Griffith by many people, many representations of Griffith as multicultural remain limited, drawing on the kinds of understandings that have been critiqued so thoroughly by Hage (1998). One of the problems is the use of a ‘mosaic’ model of multiculturalism which facilitates the construction of Griffith as a series of different and discrete groups. Allied with this is the local notion of ‘contribution’ and the kind of legitimacy that this is constructed as conferring on those interpellated by the discourse. All of this limits the kind of multiculturalism that facilitates ‘togetherness-in-difference’ (Ang, 2001a). On the whole, however, multiculturalism has been embraced by local people and might be described as ‘successful.’ The most noteworthy outcome, given the critiques of multiculturalism in Australia, is the real and significant challenge to Anglo-Celtic hegemony that has resulted from immigration to Griffith from Italy.

Ultimately, however, the whole idea and value of a multicultural society is called into question when one considers Australia’s Indigenous past, how non-Indigenous people came to be here, and the ongoing failure to recognise Indigenous sovereignty, or negotiate a treaty with Indigenous people in Australia. The implications of multiculturalism for Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith, and vice versa, are elaborated in Chapter Seven.
A dimension of this is how local Aboriginal people are interpellated, and this is one of the most striking but perhaps not surprising features of Griffith to have emerged from this study. If racism is a feature of multicultural Griffith, it appears in relation to the thinking of a range of non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people. Sometimes it was quite subtle, and at other times it was more overt. It did, however, appear to be pervasive. Many non-Aboriginal participants perpetuated a range of negative stereotypes and made derogatory comments about Aboriginal people in Griffith. They had little if any understanding of Wiradjuri history and culture either before or after the invasion of their lands and Aboriginal people generally were understood by non-Aboriginal people as not having ‘contributed’. There is of course a long history of this kind of racism and ignorance in Australia and Griffith has not been immune to this.\textsuperscript{35} Importantly, these non-Indigenous attitudes, values and understandings find nothing to challenge them in official discourses emanating from the local level. Instead discourses like those in which GCC, for example, engage marginalise, misrepresent or ignore Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people. It would seem then that multiculturalism in Griffith has failed to offer Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people respect and recognition, and has done nothing to prevent non-Indigenous locals from developing and/or maintaining ignorant and/or racist attitudes and understandings. There seems to be very little reflexivity about this at the local level.

The next chapter further contextualises the study and considers ‘official’ discursive constructions of multiculturalism.

\textsuperscript{35} See for example the edited collection by Gray and Winter (1997) and Hollinsworth (1998).
Chapter One

Australian Multiculturalism: The Role of the State

In Australia, the state has played a critical role in the development of multiculturalism as an ideal, and in the establishment of policies for its attainment. Government policy in relation to immigration, multiculturalism, and indeed Indigenous rights, all of which impinge on the study of Griffith, is also central to the process by which differences are rendered sociopolitically significant (Anderson, 2000: 385).

Examination of government policy in relation to multiculturalism provides the impetus to more closely examine local configurations as well as a platform from which to do so. It is also through an examination of government policy that critiques like those from Ghassan Hage (1998) and Jon Stratton (1998) can be seen to have emerged. At the level of local government in Australia, action in relation to multiculturalism as a means of addressing cultural diversity is ‘increasingly imperative’ (Thompson, Dunn et al., 1998).

All three levels of government in Australia can and do play a critical role in relation to multicultural Griffith. Griffith City Council’s own responses to multiculturalism as policy and practice reveal that they are increasingly pro-active with regard to issues like community harmony, access and equity, cultural maintenance and development, and recognising and celebrating cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is seen as a defining feature of Griffith by the local government authority and an attribute to be valued and supported.

This chapter employs a multi-scalar analysis of multiculturalism in Australia, considering federal, state and local government constructions of multiculturalism relationally. As well as examining policy documents, the chapter also considers some of the ways in which the federal and state approaches to multiculturalism interact with the local. To sketch out the terrain, I begin by outlining the global

See Anderson and Taylor, 2005.
context of Australian multiculturalism and then looking at some of the Australian specifics, including scholarly responses. I then undertake a closer analysis of recent federal, state and local government policies and activities in relation to multiculturalism at the both national and local (Griffith) scales. The chapter concludes with some observations about the local government authority, Griffith City Council (GCC), observations that provide an important context for the following chapters.

About Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been differently inflected, and has had different historical trajectories in a range of contexts around the world (see, for example, Bennett, 1998; Hesse, 2000; Parekh, 2000; Jupp, 2002). Multiculturalism in Australia is often seen to be informed by its earlier development in Canada (McAllister, 1993; Stratton and Ang, 1998: 138), although there are both similarities and differences between the two situations (see Jupp, 2002: 83-84; Gunew, 2004: 4-7). In Australia, despite its controversial nature, multiculturalism is seen as being integral to Australian national culture and identity, while in the USA commentators from a range of political persuasions see multiculturalism as being inimical to national unity (Stratton and Ang, 1998: 136). Further to this, it has been claimed that ‘in the USA the politicisation of multiculturalism has been largely from the bottom up, whereas in Australia multiculturalism is a top-down political strategy implemented by government’ (Stratton and Ang, 1998: 137). The situation in Fiji, for example, is different again, and is described as one in which multiculturalism has broad general support, although ‘it is not an idea that is sufficiently debated or understood’ (Subramani, 1995: 251). In Britain, where multiculturalism has had a somewhat similar historical trajectory to Australia, the term multiculturalism had seemed ‘discredited and out of time’ but speculation about its ongoing potential remains

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37 I have elected not to use ‘scare quotes’ in my use of the word multiculturalism, however this does not mean an adoption of the term that is uncritical or fails to recognise the contested nature of the term. For a brief discussion of this issue see Bennett (1998:1).
38 On multiculturalism as a contemporary political philosophy see Favell and Modood, 2003. I will return to this idea that multiculturalism in Australia is a top-down process.
39 Jupp has argued strongly that this is not the case in Australia despite claims from conservative critics that Australian multiculturalism has never been debated or put to the people. See for example Jupp, 2001: 266.
optimistic, at least among some key thinkers (Bhattacharyya, 1998; see also Hesse, 2000; and Parekh, 2000).

Australia is both multicultural: there are a multiplicity of cultures in Australia, and multiculturalist: the official approach to this cultural diversity is proclaimed to be one of fostering and support (see Parekh, 2000). Further, ‘multiculture’ is part of the everyday experience of most Australians, part of their identity as Australians, and is created from below as well as from above (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006). Australian multiculturalism informs the analysis that follows, particularly the way it is manifest in Griffith. It is not the intention here to reproduce in any detail the recent debates around multiculturalism in Australia generally, which have varied from what Hage calls ‘the discourse of Anglo-decline’ to the kind of reading of multiculturalism that Hage himself has produced, which understands multiculturalism as ‘merely a way of reinforcing White power’ (1998: 20; see also Jupp, 2001: 259-260). Nor is this thesis a direct attempt to counter critiques that have emerged from what many see as a shift to the Right in Australian politics since the 1990s, despite the consequences of this for multiculturalism.\(^{40}\) The current political climate has, however, provided part of the impetus to conduct the study. What takes place at the national level can have important consequences at the local level, some of which are considered below.

**Immigration to Australia and Griffith**

It is now generally acknowledged that there was a plurality of cultures in Australia from the earliest days after the British invasion in 1788, and indeed prior to that. Not only was there significant diversity between different groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the non-Indigenous arrivals were not culturally homogenous either. They included but were not limited to the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh (see Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, 2002). Since the invasion, the non-Indigenous population of what is now known as Australia has grown steadily as immigrants arrived from a range of countries, including many from England and Ireland (see Jupp, 2002: 12). These people have migrated for a variety of reasons and under a range of different conditions and circumstances largely dictated by

\(^{40}\) Many have already responded to this shift and considered its implications. See for example Stratton (1998), Markus (2001), Ang (2003), and Hage (2003).
subsequent non-Indigenous Australian governments who often had popular support for their policies and actions.

The White Australia Policy was for a long time the centrepiece of government policy on immigration. The policy was used by successive Australian governments to restrict entry into Australia by non-White people, as the government saw fit. Those deemed most desirable were White British people. While the thinking that underpinned it had informed government policy for much longer, the White Australia Policy was officially enshrined in legislation in the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901 and began to be dismantled after 1958 with the introduction of the Migration Act and further moves away from overtly discriminatory policies and practices during the 1960s and 1970s (see Jupp, 2002: 8-10). There was an important shift during this period whereby prior to 1966 ‘only “white” and preferably British immigrants were sought’, however, ‘since then policy has officially ignored race, colour and creed’ (Jupp, 2002: 11). Rather than being an across-the-board removal of discrimination, however, there was a gradual and graded admittance of people from those deemed to be most like ‘us’, through to those most ‘other’ (see Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 43-56), partly because of decreases in the numbers of people from the United Kingdom who wanted to emigrate to Australia (Jupp, 2002: 12). The (Federal Government) Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) currently oversees immigration to Australia.

Wiradjuri country, in particular the area around Griffith, was not intensely settled by non-Indigenous people until after 1910 (Kelly, 1988). Among the key things that led to an increase in the population was the building of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme (MIS), which was opened in 1912, followed by the establishment of the town of Griffith itself in 1916. People from a range of cultural backgrounds, especially English, Irish and Northern Italian (see Huber, 1977), settled in Griffith at

41 See, for example, Jupp (2002). For critiques and analyses of how White Australia still resonates see Jayasuriya et al (2003).
42 Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis (1995: 24) describe the insufficient supply of ‘desirable’ immigrants and the gradual admittance of ‘less desirable’ immigrants as something settler societies in general have in common.
43 When the majority of the fieldwork for this study was conducted this department was called the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA). A name change took place in 2006 and so both DIMIA and DIMA are referred to throughout this chapter.
44 Bryan Kelly (1988) covers this history in some detail.
this time. The presence in Australia of Italians during this period is likely to have been the result of demands for labour during the latter part of the 19th century and prior to World War 1 (see Pascoe, 1987: 101-106). Of those who settled in Griffith in the first decades of the 1900s, many had already worked elsewhere in Australia before trying their luck in Griffith (see Kelly, 1988: 165-168). In the period after World War Two, when immigration policy became less restrictive, people from an even wider range of backgrounds settled in Griffith. Initially many Southern Italians responded to the changed circumstances. Many were from Calabria and took up work in the agricultural industry around Griffith (Pich, 1975; Kelly, 1988). In the 1970s significant numbers of people originally from India, mainly the Punjab, settled in Griffith (Kelly, 1988: 181-182). From the 1980s people from a range of Pacific Island countries, including Tonga, Samoa and Fiji, settled in Griffith (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004; M. Schubert, personal communication, October 2, 2004). More recently a number of Turkish families have settled in Griffith (B. Miller, personal communication, July 29, 2004). During the first half of 2004 about 20 people from Afghanistan who were living in Griffith on Temporary Protection Visas were granted permanent residency and have continued to live and work in Griffith (N. Tehan, personal communication, July 30, 2004).

It seems that generally speaking, most of the non-Indigenous people who have settled in Griffith have initially gone there because of the employment opportunities. The most recent Census data shows that in 2001, around seventeen percent of the Griffith population were born overseas (Appendix 1). Of the overseas-born population, a significant majority were born in Italy, followed by those born in India. More than twenty-one percent of the Griffith population speak a language other than English at home, the main ones being Italian, Punjabi and Turkish (DIMIA, 2005a).

As the study of Griffith goes on to reveal, immigration from Italy has had a significant and enduring impact. At the demographic level this impact is immediately apparent: people born in Italy form the largest migrant group in Griffith. It is also the third largest ancestry group, after ‘Australian’ and ‘English’, the latter only being marginally higher. Griffith has, then, an Italian-born

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45 The number of people born in Italy is currently in decline. See Appendix 1. Cf. Burnley, 2001.
population of just fewer than seven percent, and a population with Italian ancestry of just under twenty-two percent. Around twenty-eight percent of the population could, therefore, be described as ‘Italian’ in some way. And yet the size of the Italian population reported by interviewees and other informants/participants was usually in the order of fifty percent, with some claiming it was as high as seventy-five percent. A similar disparity can be seen in the figures repeated by (Totaro and Pangallo, 1979: 7). This gives a clue as to the significance of the Italian diaspora both in reality and local collective imagining.

Policies for Managing Cultural Diversity

Since the demise of the White Australia Policy, the Australian Government has attempted to ‘manage’ culturally diverse Australia in a range of ways. It is generally agreed that there are at least two key phases in these policy attempts: assimilation and multiculturalism (see for example Jupp, 2002).

The main idea behind assimilation was that non-British migrants should/would become like those who were deemed to form a homogenous Australian society and culture: Australians from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. This ‘Australian’ culture was deemed to be somehow superior to the cultures of those expected to assimilate into it (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 45). This was essentially a response to the increasing admission to Australia of people from outside Britain and Ireland. Importantly, ‘there was nothing Aboriginal to which migrants were enjoined to assimilate’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 45), indeed assimilation was also applied to Indigenous Australians (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997: 32). Assimilation was the over-arching response to migrants from non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds from around the late 1940s to the mid 1960s (Castles, Kalantzis et al.,

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46 This is a crude but still useful exercise for gaining some insight into what Italian immigration has meant for Griffith, the broader significance of which will become increasingly apparent in the following chapters.

47 I return to this line of inquiry in the concluding chapter and raise the spectre of, following Hage (1998), an ‘Italian fantasy’ rather than a ‘white nation fantasy’ in relation to multicultural Griffith.

48 ‘Integration’ is also identified by some commentators as a separate phase between assimilationist and multicultural approaches. It has recently re-entered debates about multiculturalism in Australia (for example Ang, 2006).

49 There are a number of issues that pertain to claims about, firstly, the idea of an Anglo-Celtic culture at all, and secondly, claims about a homogenous Australia generally. See Introduction as well as Stratton (2000) and Hodge and O’Carroll (2006: 66-72).
1992a: 45). Castles et al claim that ‘by the end of the 1970s multiculturalism had become not only a new Australian word, but also a full-blown “ism”: a comprehensive ideology of what Australia was supposed to be and become’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 4). For Hodge and O’Carroll such histories have a flattening effect and they trace the beginnings of what we might recognise as multiculturalism to the early 1950s (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006: 15-19. See also Lopez, 2000). It is important to remember that multiculturalism did not herald the end of assimilationist thinking per se and indeed it is still possible to hear public calls for a return to assimilation as an approach to Australia’s cultural diversity (for example Coleman, 2006).

Multiculturalism is about difference and identity as they relate to or are embedded in and sustained by culture (Parekh, 2000; see also Taylor, 1994). In the Australian context, multiculturalism ‘offers a rudimentary social and political vision of an ideal Australian society, as well as a range of policies for its attainment’ (Jupp, 1997: 132-133) but has been less concerned with culture in the conventional sense (Jupp, 2001: 260). A cornerstone of this vision is the ‘tolerance of diversity’ (Jupp, 2000: 334). Multiculturalism as an ideology ‘calls for a celebration of cultural diversity as a continuing feature of Australian society’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 5) as well as being ‘an attempt to modify existing concepts of the nation to match up to the new realities’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 12). Policies of multiculturalism ‘are supposed to ensure that, rather than furthering the interests of a particular culture, the state functions as the neutral arbiter of the interests of a plurality of different, but equal, cultures’ (Nicoll, 2001: 115). It is generally seen as a move away from a more racist past (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 5).50

**Scholarly Responses**

Several significant texts can be used to illustrate key stages of the debates around multiculturalism in Australia. The first shows an increasing awareness of some of the issues associated with a (more) culturally diverse population in Australia and early attempts to respond. This was followed by what seems to have been a period of

50 There are of course significant continuities as well. See for example Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) and Jayasuriya, Walker and Gothard (2003).
hope, where the productive potential of multiculturalism, despite its limitations, gave reason to be optimistic about the future of Australia. Since then there has been disappointment expressed by many advocates of multiculturalism as they detected that little had actually changed and that both government and public thinking seemed to reveal a close affinity with our more racist ‘past’. Some recent responses, while providing much of the impetus for the study of Griffith, seem to have left little room to move, prompting a call for greater recognition and valuing of the real achievements of multiculturalism in Australia (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006).\textsuperscript{51} Some of these achievements are drawn out through the study of Griffith and are returned to in each of the contexts explored in the following chapters.

Jean Martin’s \textit{The Migrant Presence} (1978) was one of the earliest comprehensive studies undertaken in response to the changes in Australia as a result of the post-war immigration program. Martin focussed on health, education and trade unions in her consideration of how Australia was responding to the changed situation. The time at which Martin was researching and writing is deemed by some commentators to be the era of the ‘birth’ of multiculturalism in Australia (Foster and Stockley, 1988; Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a; Jupp, 2002); the time of the Whitlam Labour and Fraser Coalition governments, both of which had a proclaimed commitment to multiculturalism. Martin noted that by the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, ‘although Australia was never in fact a truly homogenous society in terms of the ethnic and cultural origins of its people, the institutional arrangements that had been consolidated…were based on assumptions of an essential and continuing homogeneity’ (Martin, 1978: 15).\textsuperscript{52} Some modification, therefore, was needed to respond well to the increasing cultural diversity.

Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey’s \textit{Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia}, a critical earlier text, took the analysis to a new level. Originally written in 1988, it considered the rise of multiculturalism, as opposed to what they describe as the more traditional forms of nationalism in Australia, and the effect this had on national and cultural identity (Castles, Kalantzis \textsuperscript{51} Cf. Docker, 1995.
et al., 1992a: 2). The dimensions of the debate around multiculturalism in Australia may not have changed significantly (see Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 2-4).

These authors suggested that multiculturalism, despite its limitations, was unlikely to be abandoned in favour of a return to Anglo-Australian ethnocentrism, and that as an ideology, multiculturalism could be seen to have retained considerable power because it reflected important realities in Australia (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 13). With some qualification, these authors observed that multiculturalism was both ‘reasonably successful’ and ‘a necessary project for the contemporary Australian-state’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 145). In 2005-2006, however, there has been renewed debate, often from a conservative perspective, about whether multiculturalism has been successful, and indeed whether it is still an appropriate approach to cultural diversity in Australia. As each of the following chapters illustrate, multiculturalism in Griffith has been a (qualified) success and I argue that, ultimately, it is still a useful approach. Rather than doing away with multiculturalism per se, we should be modifying what multiculturalism looks like.53

The current Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, whose conservative government came to power as part of a coalition in 1996, is ‘credited’ by many on the left with having overseen government advocacy of multiculturalism come to an end (see for example Stratton, 1998; Jupp, 2001; Markus, 2001: 40). The examination of some recent government documents undertaken later in this chapter suggests that although the approach is a conservative one, multiculturalism has not been removed from the government’s agenda. The detection of a withdrawal of government support for multiculturalism, closely followed by the emergence of other conservative factors in Australian politics, said to echo public sentiment, saw the mood change and a series of critiques were produced that responded to the situation (for example, Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998; Markus, 2001).

One of the most important critiques of multiculturalism in Australia to have emerged during this period is Ghassan Hage’s White Nation: Fantasies of Supremacy in a

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52 This study also provided the impetus for a more recent edited collection The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflections on the 20th Anniversary of Jean Martin’s ‘The Migrant Presence’ (Hage and Couch, 1999).
Multicultural Society. According to Hage, power and control are critical dimensions of multiculturalism. He has explored in detail what he calls the White Nation fantasy, a key element of which is the idea of White dominance. This is manifest in notions like ‘tolerance’, as well as in the setting and control of the terms of debates around immigration and multiculturalism. Essentially White Australians see themselves as being masters of the national space, despite both the physical presence of non-Whites and the challenges this has presented to White Australians. It is as if White Australians assume that they alone have a right to control the national space, and to make decisions about so-called ethnicities; to ‘direct the traffic’ as it were (Hage, 1998: 16-17). Even when White Australians support multiculturalism the ethnic voice is made passive, and debates around immigration and multiculturalism work to silence them; the ethnic ‘other’ is reduced to ‘a passive object of government’ (Hage, 1998: 17). Further to this, Hage’s White Australians all ‘share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture’ (Hage, 1998: 18) and work at containing the increasingly active role of non-White Australians in the process of governing Australia’ (Hage, 1998: 19, emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{54}

Many studies have demonstrated the extent to which more recent migrants, particularly those that Hage identifies as non-White, remain marginalised in Australia (for example Part II of Hage and Couch, 1999). While it is important to realise the shortcomings of multiculturalism in Australia, and the ideological underpinnings of its application here, the present study also illuminates some of the real challenges to White Australia, as well as the inherent complexities and ambiguities. As Hage himself has noted, ‘to discuss “the future” of multiculturalism in Australia today is not, and cannot be, to discuss whether multiculturalism has a future… multiculturalism is such an entrenched structural feature of our nation that any meaningful questioning of its future has to take its existence for granted, and inquire about the forms it can or should take, rather than question whether it should exist or not’ (Hage and Couch, 1999: xii). Indeed Australia, and as the present study will show, Griffith, has achieved a deeply rooted ‘multiculture’ that is part of

\textsuperscript{53} This is also essentially what critics like Hage (1998; 2003) and Ang (2001; 2006) have called for. \textsuperscript{54} I return to Hage’s analysis throughout the following chapters.
everyday life for most Australians and government policy needs to be revised, not discredited and removed (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006).

**Cultural Diversity and Australian National Identity**

A key feature of debates around multiculturalism in Australia has been the implications of the changes, both real and imagined, for national identity. While the assumptions underpinning the modern nation-state may be part of the problem in Australia becoming ‘multiculturalist’ (Parekh, 2000: 1-11), nationality and nationalism continue to command profound emotional legitimacy and arouse deep attachments (Anderson, 1991: 4). Nations may be imagined communities, in which members will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them (Anderson, 1991: 6), but in a town the size of Griffith, many members of the broader community do actually know each other. Within the smaller communities that are interpellated as part of the larger community of Griffith there is even greater intimacy. In this way the study of Griffith that follows illustrates an ‘intimate’ kind of multiculturalism, brought on by proximity (cf. Ang, 2001a). This in turn is useful in thinking about how multiculturalism in Australia might operate.

Part of the political process of establishing a nation is the creation of a national ideology and the balance of social forces within this process influences which national characteristics prevail (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 6). Those who have the power to create and rule a nation-state have the most influence in defining the ‘national character’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 6). Importantly though, ‘there is a constant process of asserting, questioning, redefining and examining the national identity’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 6). In Australia, the ‘quest’ for identity has been as much about what Australians ought to be, as it has about what they are (Stokes, 1997: 3).\(^\text{55}\) Hodge and Mishra have identified an acute anxiety at the core of the national self-image, which they claim is related to the ‘nature of the foundation of the modern Australian state, as the unjust act of an imperial power whose direct beneficiaries have still not acknowledged that injustice nor succeeded in constructing a viable alternative basis for their legitimacy’ (sic)(1990: x).\(^\text{56}\) Ongoing ethnic and

\(^{55}\) Significant critiques have come from Richard White (1981) and Graeme Turner (1993).

\(^{56}\) I return to this claim Chapter Seven.
racialised tensions in Australia illustrate continued struggle over national belonging (Anderson and Taylor, 2005). In Griffith the struggle is much less pronounced and the collective identity that is articulated in local discourse draws on Italian and Anglo-Celtic cultures and heritages. It also suggests that there is scope for including other (i.e. neither Italian nor Anglo-Celtic) ‘cultures’. 57

Historically the search for a national identity in Australia led to attempts to construct an ‘Australian type’, which was generally ‘constructed in terms of the white, masculine, outdoor person originating from the British Isles’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 8). These themes developed so that prior to 1945 Australian national identity supposedly turned on the ‘muscular bushman/digger/lifesaver’ who was working-class and a ‘battler’ who did not take kindly to authority and who could be summed up in the ideas of ‘mateship’ and a ‘fair go’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 8). This has prompted some commentators to claim that being Australian has generally been described in racist and sexist terms, despite the claims about egalitarianism (see, for example, Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a; Frow and Morris, 1993; Kuna and Turner, 1994). 58 For Castles et al Australia’s image of itself has always been a racist one, which justified genocide and exclusionism and denied the roles played by non-British migrants (1992a: 9). Importantly, however, the mass settlement of migrants from a wide range of countries has challenged this making ‘the overt maintenance of a racist definition of the nation and of the Australian type impossible’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 9). 59

Although the present study shows that in Griffith at least Castles et al are right on this last point, and much of this kind of thinking seems to have been done away with, there is a palimpsest effect in some areas of local self-representation. 60 The older,

57 This idea is elaborated throughout the following chapters. See especially Chapter Six.
58 The preoccupation continues and recent discussions around how Australian identity might be conceived of in light of the now-recognised cultural diversity of the population include the notion of a civic identity (Horne, 1994), calls for the maintenance and strengthening of the ‘core culture’ (that is, Anglo-Celtic culture)(Dixson, 1999), and the claim that Australians need to become (more) ‘Aboriginal’ (Greer, 2003).
59 This assertion is challenged periodically in Australia. As I write, Coalition Government MP Danna Vale has just been heard on national television saying that ‘Australians’ were aborting themselves out of existence and that within 50 years Australia would be a ‘Muslim nation’. Whether one wants to describe this as racist or not, Vale clearly sees ‘Australian’ and ‘Muslim’ as mutually exclusive constructs (ABC, 2006).
60 See especially Chapters Two and Three.
'racist' ideas about Australian identity were also occasionally manifest in local talk, but this was rare, except when non-Indigenous people in Griffith talked about Aboriginal people. Discourses of national identity—of who is and who isn’t ‘Australian’ continue to be important ways of including some people and excluding others. These constructions resonate at the local level and have important implications for Griffith in terms of identity and belonging. And while the constructs may be ‘ideological’ and inherently mythical, they involve real material practices and therefore have material origins and effects (Yuval-Davis in Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 10).

**Multiculturalism Today**

Multiculturalism in Griffith has its own particular flavour, and the following chapters explore this in detail. It is also, however, formulated within federal and state contexts and is often a response to federal and state government policies and initiatives. In addition, there is a significant reliance on state and federal levels of government for funding and resources in relation to the development and implementation of policies and programs at the local level. The following section explores current federal government responses to their culturally diverse constituency, outlines the role played by the state (NSW) government, and then turns to the local government authority, Griffith City Council, to consider their role and some of their responses to cultural diversity/multiculturalism.

**Meeting the Challenges and Maximising the Benefits: The Federal Response**

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), formerly the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), is the federal government department currently given responsibility for multiculturalism. This department received extensive media coverage during 2004/2005, and indeed for much of the Howard Government’s terms of office, most of which was critical of the government’s handling of immigration matters, and related to a series of incidents and debacles, including the detention and/or

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61 See Chapters Six and Seven.
deportation of several Australian citizens.\textsuperscript{62} Inquiries resulting from these cases have revealed a department bedevilled by incompetence and notable for a distinct lack of concern and compassion for individuals coming under its gaze, something which may indeed reflect wider Howard Government attitudes in this area. Currently in their fourth term, the Coalition Government, led by Prime Minister John Howard has pursued a conservative agenda in relation to both multiculturalism and immigration. The 2001 federal election was won, at least in part, on the issue of ‘border protection’, including the now infamous \textit{Tampa} case, something which is indicative of the government’s approach to immigration generally.\textsuperscript{63}

In their first term of office the Howard Government, after abolishing the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (Jupp, 2002; Jayasuriya, Walker et al., 2003: 213), appointed the National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) ‘to develop a report that recommended a policy and an implementation framework for the next decade, aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity was a unifying force for Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003a). The brief turned on a perceived need to ensure that cultural diversity was a unifying force, indicating the government’s perception of it as divisive. Similarly, the frequent and continuing references from the government to ‘harmony’ say more about the perceived propensity for disharmony as a result of multiculturalism/cultural diversity than anything else (see, for example, Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2005). The NMAC produced the issues paper \textit{Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward} (NMAC, 1997) followed by the report \textit{Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness} (NMAC, 1999).\textsuperscript{64}

The 1999 report, in the context of the study of Griffith, is notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, for its responsiveness to Indigenous Australians and reconciliation, secondly because of claims that multiculturalism, rather than being an anathema to so-called Australian values, arises out of them, and thirdly because of the claim that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Indeed at times during 2004-2005 DIMIA were in the main state and national news papers every week. The most prominent cases were those of Australians Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez Solon, which led to the Palmer and Comrie Reports respectively.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Much has been written about this. See for example Jupp, 2002 and Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006.
\end{itemize}
Attitudinal change in Australia in response to multiculturalism has been incomplete leading to the call from the NMAC for ‘a more inclusive phase of multiculturalism that seeks to embrace and be embraced by all Australians’ (NMAC, 1999). On the whole, however, and in light of critiques of multiculturalism outlined above, there was nothing particularly progressive in this report and indeed none of the thirty two recommendations were such that the conservative government felt they needed to reject them outright. And while the concerns of ‘Anglo’ or ‘older Australians’ drew a response from the NMAC, the kinds of concerns and issues raised by Castles et al. (1992), Stratton (1998), Hage (1998), among others, did not.

The government responded to the NMAC’s report with its *New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999). This was followed by *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, a document designed to ‘update’ the afore-mentioned new agenda and provide ‘strategic directions for 2003-2006’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b). The *New Agenda* noted that ‘the main emphasis of Commonwealth Government multicultural policies is on achieving community harmony and deriving the benefits of Australia’s diversity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 10).

The value of cultural diversity and multiculturalism from the perspective of the government is overwhelmingly derived from its usefulness to the government, the corporate sector, and ‘the nation’. The discourse of valorisation deployed by the government (and to a lesser extent the NMAC) is largely an economic one related to productivity and to the benefits that need to be extracted. Cultural diversity ‘is one of our great social, cultural and economic resources’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 8). It is also to be valued because it ‘is a source of competitive advantage, cultural enrichment and social stability’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 3). Hage notes the inherent power relations in such a discourse of valorisation. One of the crucial elements of this discourse is that ‘valuing requires someone to do the

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64 Jupp has described the 1999 NMAC as ‘probably the most politically conservative of any advisory body since the Galbally committee of 1978’ (Jupp, 2002: 91).
65 They did not necessarily implement them, however. See Jupp, 2002: 98-99.
66 This emphasis is not solely a feature of current policy. Jupp has noted that government policies in relation to multiculturalism ‘have normally been directed at improving human capital or enhancing commercial contacts, rather than supporting immigrant cultures’ (Jupp, 2002: 95).
valuing and something to be evaluated’ (Hage, 1998: 120). So although the NMAC may have seen Australia’s egalitarian ethos behind multiculturalism (NMAC, 1999: 53-54), the discourse of value is not only less than egalitarian in its assumptions, it ‘also assigns to migrant cultures a different mode of existence to Anglo-Celtic culture. While the dominant White culture merely and unquestionably exists, migrant cultures exist for the latter’ (Hage, 1998: 121, emphasis in original).

Indeed the viability of multiculturalism and of those deemed to be its beneficiaries (namely ‘migrants’), rests with an ability to be productive and of value. Still couched in terms of ‘tolerance’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 6), cultural diversity has value when it can be shown to be ‘in the national interest’. Thus ‘the government is committed to the enhancing and focussing of Australian multiculturalism to make it inclusive and to ensure that the social, cultural and economic benefits of our diversity are fully maximised in the national interest’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 10). There are shades of this discourse of productivity in Griffith, as discussed in Chapter Six, but it is much less prominent locally than it is in federal government documents.

Cultural diversity, however, also presents an ongoing ‘challenge’, which needs to be addressed in order to maximise these benefits (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b: 5). The challenge posed to Australia, as well as benefits that can be reaped, can in part be dealt with through ‘managing diversity’, which seems to be a critical part of the raison d’être for current multicultural policy. Thus the government aims to maximise the economic and social benefits through ‘diversity management strategies’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 8). Managerial discourse is manifest quite differently within official discourse in multicultural Griffith, as we shall see.

While the NMAC stress ‘inclusiveness’ as the way to ensure ongoing public support for multiculturalism, it is unclear whether the often-repeated phrase ‘our culturally diverse community’ refers to the Australian community per se, or only those deemed to be, in current terminology, from ‘culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds’.

This term, often abbreviated to CLDB or a variant, has replaced NESB, or non-English speaking background, as a way of describing some within the Australian population by a range of community
Commonwealth documents as being made up of three distinct groups described variously as: original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples/Indigenous cultures/Indigenous Australians/Indigenous people; early European settlers/British and Irish settlers/early settlers; and migrants/recently-arrived migrant groups/more recent migrants. Occasionally the distinction is between those who were born in Australia and those who were not (see for example Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 6) and those who are from an English-speaking-background and those who are not (NMAC, 1999: 7). The biggest schism in terms of changes to the Australian population is not deemed to be the British invasion which began in earnest in 1788, but post-World War Two immigration (see for example NMAC, 1999; and Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b: 2).

Despite this, the NMAC highlighted reconciliation as a key concern of multiculturalism, noting the need to continue to work ‘to help improve respect, trust and understanding between indigenous and other Australians’ (NMAC, 1999: 85). They stress that ‘Australia’s multiculturalism will remain fundamentally flawed until we have effected meaningful reconciliation between indigenous and all other Australians based on mutual respect’ (NMAC, 1999: 55). The government’s response was to observe that ‘the multicultural framework of our society has broadly benefited Indigenous peoples through its promotion of the integrity of diverse cultures and their harmonious intermingling’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 7). Given that in relation to nearly every measure of well-being in society Aboriginal people are significantly below national standards (see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005) and that fundamental issues like dispossession have not substantially been addressed, this statement is, at best, naïve.68

The Commonwealth Government’s most recent policy document addressing multiculturalism, Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity, is essentially a response to the attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001, as well as the first ‘Bali Bombing’ in 2002. In his Foreword, Prime Minister John Howard links multiculturalism with these events, a connection which is further made

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68 groups and organisations as well as government agencies. See for example the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (2005).
throughout the document. While much of the talk continues to be about tolerance, benefits and challenges, and reaping the rewards of cultural diversity, this document suggests that there is little government faith in the success of multiculturalism in Australia, particularly the maintenance of ‘community harmony’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b). The link established between multiculturalism and terrorism by the Australian government is disturbing, with potential negative consequences for many Australians, particularly Muslim Australians or those who are deemed to be ‘of Middle Eastern appearance,’ people who have already been negatively impacted upon by this same government’s earlier anti-terrorism rhetoric.69

These documents remain the key federal government policy documents in relation to multiculturalism in Australia. They appeal to the worried ‘Anglos’ and older Australians identified by the NMAC and reassure them that multiculturalism is being managed by the government in their interests and that they should tolerate cultural diversity because there is are economic and other gains to be had. The discourse of Anglo-decline (Hage, 1998) looms large. This is the political and policy context in which multiculturalism in Griffith has developed over the past decade. The case of Griffith, however, demonstrates a more progressive understanding of and response to cultural diversity, both in ‘official’ and ‘everyday’ discourses, something which is elaborated throughout the study and can also be seen in the following example.

**Local Manifestations: Griffith Multicultural Community Council**

Australian multiculturalism is perhaps best understood as an aspect of immigrant settlement policy, having grown out of a concern with settlement issues rather than cultural maintenance (Jupp, 2002: 93). Departments responsible for immigration have constantly tried to limit their responsibility to the first two years of settlement and to look to other departments to then take responsibility as appropriate to their portfolios (Jupp, 1999: 49). In recent years, DIMA have allocated funding for so-called settlement services through Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and Migrant

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68 The relationship between Indigenous Australians and multiculturalism is a key concern throughout this thesis, as noted in the introductory chapter and elaborated in Chapter Seven.
69 Some of the issues related to this are covered in the work of, for example, Abood (2001), Turner (2003), Poynting and Noble (2004) and ongoing work by Heather Goodall (see for example Goodall et al., 2004).
Service Agencies (MSAs), or through the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS), by way of grants (DIMIA, 2005b). Most recently this funding has been merged and is now available to successful applicants through the Settlement Grants Program (SGP). At the same time, the government has been ‘keen to encourage’ more migrants to ‘live and work in areas outside of Australia’s major cities’ (DIMIA, 2005c). In line with this ambition, DIMA have recently established regional outwork officers ‘in support of regional migration and ensuring that regional Australia capitalises on the potential benefits’ (DIMIA, 2005d). Griffith is listed on DIMA’s website as a regional location that wants to attract migrants (DIMIA, 2005e).

It is surprising then that the provision of settlement services to new and recently settled migrants in Griffith was essentially left up to the community, a role taken on by the Griffith Multicultural Community Council (GMCC), established by community members in 1996 (the same year the Coalition Government came to power), with a high level of broader community support (N. Tehan, personal communication, July 30, 2004). It was also supported locally by Coalition MP Kay Hull (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004).

The need for a DIMA office in the area is identified as an issue to be addressed in the current *Social and Community Plan* (Griffith City Council, 2004a: 20). Yet there has been no ongoing guarantee of federal funding for settlement services in Griffith, and the GMCC has had to continually apply for small grants through the CSSS. These have proved to be inadequate in terms of meeting the needs of those requiring settlement services. GMCC’s request for $93,000 in its most recent application for funding was rejected by (what was then) DIMIA, who instead offered only $64,000

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70 The nearest MRC/MSA to Griffith appears to be in Canberra! Instead funding for settlement services has come through the CSSS. Once they have been awarded a grant under the CSSS, not-for-profit community organisations or local government bodies can provide information and referral services to individuals, facilitate community capacity building and promote client needs to mainstream service providers (DIMIA, 2005).

71 This change to funding was announced locally by National Party MP for the Riverina Kay Hull in a media release on October 17th 2005. See Hull, 2005.

72 Funding awarded to the GMCC by DIMIA has largely consisted of grants of $35,000 in May 2004 and $64,803 in May 2005, the latter being rejected as inadequate. Funds were used to provide a resource and information centre staffed by a full-time Settlement Services Coordinator and several volunteers. The Settlement Services Coordinator actually serviced a much wider area than Griffith, travelling as far a field as Hillston, more than 100km to the North, and as well as Coleambally and Narrandera to the South. Two grants of around $17,000 each were also received from the NSW
(Drape, 2005). When GMCC threatened to withdraw its services, DIMIA withdrew its offer (Drape, 2005).

Further negotiations ensued and were watched closely by the local media, suggesting a high level of public interest. The situation was subsequently ‘resolved’ by Griffith City Council, who established a new sub-committee, which enabled council to take over the work of the GMCC Resource and Information Centre using the funds offered by DIMIA (Griffith City Council, 2005b).

Additional funding was to be sought from the NSW State Government through the Community Relations Commission (CRC), who currently fund a part-time worker dedicated to new migrants from Turkey (Griffith City Council, 2005b).

In addition to providing settlement services, GMCC have also been involved in a range of activities, some of which might be described as ‘beyond the call of duty’ in relation to the provision of settlement services for which they are funded. They have: coordinated and participated in activities to address specific local issues of racism and racist violence as these have emerged in the community; organised events aimed at raising cultural awareness and understanding; given talks to various community groups that have requested it; networked with other community groups; and participated in a range of other events and activities within the broader community (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004).

Despite all this, it was the Federal Government Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs who, at the 2005 Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia conference, challenged stakeholders to ‘work in partnership with the Australian Government to develop better ways to help refugees and migrants settle in regional areas’ (McGauran, 2005)! If the minister means that communities like Griffith are not doing enough, he clearly has a limited understanding of the lengths to which groups like the GMCC in Griffith may go to, to help recently arrived migrants.

Community Relations Commission in 2003 and 2004 respectively, which were used to employ a part-time Turkish Community Worker.

73 Like many other local government authorities, Griffith City Council may already be under stress (Thompson et al, 1998). As this comprehensive study of councils in Australia observed ‘they require recognition from both federal and state government of the excellent work many are undertaking. They also require greater support from these levels of government’ (Thompson et al, 1998: 94). The arrangement with regard to settlement services in Griffith strikes me as being one of ‘buck-passing’.
settle in. Alternatively, he may mean that such groups are not towing the conservative line strongly enough or that he is unhappy with the advocacy role groups like GMCC may adopt.

GMCC and its membership are indicative of a group of people within Griffith who are strongly supportive of immigration and multiculturalism and are pro-active in their support, including in lobbying government. The come from a range of cultural/ethnic backgrounds (N. Tehan, personal communication, July 30, 2004). The broader community have been very supportive of the work the council has done (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004).

We can begin to see the kind of importance multiculturalism might have to people in Griffith. The collective effort not to be stymied by the federal government in relation to providing settlement services is significant. The limitation is that much of this still seems to go on within the framework established by the federal government. The perception is that DIMA have not and do not do enough, but there does not seem to have been a call, within this forum at least, for a radical change to government approaches. It may be that people working at this level, ‘on the ground,’ have more pressing things (like, for example, ensuring a newly arrived family has a somewhere to live) needing their attention. The federal government’s threat to withdraw funding also gives an indication of the kind of power they wield over the local community.

So despite these tensions, government initiatives in relation to cultural diversity may also receive strong support from this same sector of the local community whose work the department have effectively undermined. This is perhaps not surprising given that some of these initiatives are in keeping with the broader liberal-multiculturalist agenda of local groups like the GMCC. One such example is Harmony Day, held annually since 1999 on March 21st and part of DIMA’s larger ‘Living in Harmony’ initiative (DIMIA, 2005f). DIMA support harmony related events and activities with a ‘Community Grants Program’ (Hull, 2005b). Griffith was one of the participants in the Harmony Day Regional Pilot in 2003, and appears as a case study on DIMA’s

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74 See also Chapter Six.
website (DIMIA, 2005g). Subsequent Harmony Day events have also occurred in Griffith, often with support from grant funding. In 2004, Harmony Day was promoted by GCC on their website, information was distributed by the library, and the local paper *The Area News* covered the event, which included a citizenship ceremony in which officials were welcomed with a Fijian kava ceremony (Martinelli, 2004f). The event has been seen as an important one by the GMCC (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004). It provides residents of Griffith with an opportunity to show their support for and to celebrate their cultural diversity.

The notion of harmony, which is frequently stressed by the government in its policy documents, is, however, problematical (see for example Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 17; Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b: 7). By emphasising harmony the Australian government allude to what is presumably its opposite, disharmony, thereby linking this to multiculturalism/cultural diversity, both as a result of ‘the current international environment’ and ‘tensions between and within communities’ (DIMIA, 2005f). While they rightly perceive a potential threat to harmony as coming from within Australia, as well as potentially from without, they do not reflect to any extent on what they seem to be suggesting: the fragility of ‘community harmony’ in Australia and what this might indicate. At the local level, however, participation in and support for Harmony Day and related activities and events is more likely to be linked to the opportunity these provide for the overt and public endorsement and celebration of Griffith’s cultural diversity (Martinelli, 2004f; D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004). Griffith Multicultural Community Council is a ‘grass-roots’ response to a federal government agenda that goes beyond what their conservative understandings of multiculturalism would seem to require.

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75 Griffith City Council were also approached by the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University in 2005 to participate in a project entitled *Building Neighbourhood Community Harmony: Strategies for Local Government* which is being conducted by this Centre in partnership with DIMA (GCC, 2005c). Council agreed to participate and the project has been substantially completed but the report has not yet been endorsed by GCC (A. Wise, personal communication, September 28, 2006).

76 For example the Griffith Adult Learning Association (GALA) applied for and received $18,000 through the Living in Harmony initiative for a project working with local schools in relation ‘cultural education’ (Martinelli, 2004f).

77 The research conducted by Hage at the time of the Gulf War gives an indication of how international events may lead to ‘racist’ acts in Australia. See, for example, Hage, 1998: 27-28. More recently there have been reports of violence directed at some within the Australian population in the wake of the Howard Government’s foregrounding of ‘terrorism’ as an issue in/for Australia (see for example CRC, 2005).
and illustrates something of the extent to which multiculturalism has been embraced in Griffith.

**The Community Relations Commission: Promoting Multiculturalism**

The State Government, in this case that of NSW, also influences Australian multiculturalism. State government agencies’ and departments’ concerns with multiculturalism are most obvious in the areas of language services and education as well as health, housing and local government (Jupp, 2001: 264). In Griffith multiculturalism can be seen to be influenced by the state government in relation to the areas mentioned by Jupp above as well as through various funding initiatives and the Regional Advisory Council.

In 1979 a research paper was prepared for the Ethnic Affairs Commission by the then Chairman Paolo Totaro and Commissioner Frank Pangallo, entitled *Visit to Griffith and Leeton* (Totaro and Pangallo, 1979). At this time the issues identified in relation to ‘ethnic communities’ were largely to do with access and equity, something that is reflected in the recommendations made to the State Government (see Totaro and Pangallo, 1979: 4-6). Not surprisingly, given the date of this report, the emphasis is solely on the Italian community in Griffith. While much may have changed for Italians in Griffith, as will be seen, it is interesting to note that the same sorts of issues still make life harder for more recent migrants. The issues emerge largely because of language difficulties and include the need for better interpretation and translation services, the need for bi-lingual welfare and health officers, and the need for ‘community’ language programs in schools (Totaro and Pangallo, 1979). All of these issues have resonance for current migrants whose first language is not English (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004).

An indication of the existence of inter-group tensions in Griffith at this time can be gleaned from the authors’ concluding comments. While the authors recommended the Ethnic Affairs Commission ‘encourage the participation of ethnic minorities in the economic, social and cultural life of the State’, they qualified the suggestion by

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78 This state government department is currently known as the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW (CRC).
stressing the importance of acting at all times with ‘the ultimate goal of decreasing racial dissensions’. Indeed ‘it may well be that for us to come out now too strongly in highlighting glaring areas of lack of participation in Griffith and Leeton, may be counterproductive for the local communities’ (Totaro and Pangallo, 1979). This is presumably an attempt to placate ‘worried Anglos’ and reassure them of their primacy in the cultural landscape of Griffith. As this study goes on to demonstrate, Italian locals now seem to be on an equal footing with local Anglo-Celts.

Although Totaro and Pangallo’s report refers to ‘integration’, not ‘multiculturalism’, state and territory governments in Australia have adopted policies in relation to multiculturalism that have generally been consistent with Federal approaches (NMAC, 1997). Several recent NSW State Government documents related to multiculturalism, suggest that this is still the case (see for example CRC, ndc). State governments might also, however, be less removed from the everyday lives of their constituents and this seems to be the case with regard to Griffith.

Inaugurated in 2001, the CRC is currently the peak state government department that deals with issues related to multiculturalism. It ‘recognises and values the different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds of residents of NSW, and promotes equal rights and responsibilities for all residents of NSW’ (CRC, 2004). The CRC provide funding in Griffith, for example towards the provision of settlement services (see above), and have also established an advisory committee, among other initiatives, that has implications for multicultural Griffith.

One of the main ways the CRC engages with people in rural and regional areas is through the Regional Advisory Council’s (RACs) they have established throughout NSW, including one based in the Griffith area (CRC, ndb). These were established under the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and have been created to assist the CRC’s ‘interaction with people representing

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79 This may be a reference to tensions between various groups in Griffith because of the disappearance and presumed murder of anti-drugs campaigner and local councillor Donald Mackay. See below.
80 Ten RACs have been established. These are Albury, Central West, Griffith-Leeton, Hornsby-Wyong, Hunter, Illawarra, Macarthur-Liverpool, Nepean-Blacktown, New England and Northern. That Griffith essentially has its own council (Leeton is about half the size of Griffith and is also in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, some 58km from Griffith) gives an indication of its significance in the eyes of the CRC.
the multicultural community in rural and regional areas’ (CRC, ndb). The RACs are comprised of ‘relevant local and regional government agencies and individuals to reflect the diversity of each region’ (CRC, ndb). In Griffith they have ‘tried to account for all major communities: Italian, Indian, Tongan, Turkish and Indigenous’, as well as representatives from government agencies and departments including the police, housing, education and health, and Griffith City Council (D. Zappacosta, personal communication, July 27, 2004). Noticeably absent from this list recounted by GCC’s representative on the Griffith-Leeton RAC are the fourth-largest migrant group in Griffith—the English (see below).

The Griffith-Leeton RAC is an important link between the state government and local people but may itself adopt the problematic approach seen at the federal level. The Act states that ‘the composition of a regional advisory council is to reflect the diversity of the local community concerned’ (CRC, 2000: Part 3, Section 10). Yet there was some consternation expressed at the inclusion of someone deemed to be ‘Anglo’, who ‘is not representing an ethnic group’ and managed to ‘slip through the system’ to end up on the Griffith RAC in 2004 (D. Zappacosta, personal communication, July 27, 2004). The idea that ‘Anglos’ do not have an ethnicity and/or are not migrants continues to have some currency in Griffith as does the existence of something called the multicultural community, of which Anglo-Celtic Australians, and presumably English migrants, are not deemed locally to be part of. Given the disadvantage and discrimination suffered by many ‘non-English speaking background’ migrants in Griffith historically, one can understand the kind of logic being applied here, problematic as it is.

In addition to the RAC, the state government have been involved in state-wide initiatives like the Partnership with Pacific Island Communities which have the potential to impact on the local (CRC, 2006). Funding for a range of events, activities and programs also comes from the State Government of NSW, often to make up shortfalls in DIMA funding as outlined above in relation to the GMCC. In recent times this has included the employment of a part-time support worker for recently arrived migrants from Turkey. In addition to this funding, the state government continues to provide important support for multicultural Griffith in areas like education and health. One of the other main ways in which state government
policy impacts on the local is through mandatory planning requirements and one of these, a ‘Social and Community Plan’, is discussed in the following section.

**Griffith City Council: Cultural Diversity at the Local Scale**

Some earlier commentators recognised that Griffith’s ‘richness and wealth in cultural heritage [was]…built on the skills and hard work of people who came from thirty-two different countries across the world’ (Grassby, 1963). Often seen as a key player in the advent of multiculturalism as government policy in Australia, Al Grassby spent many years living and working in Griffith, initially with the CSIRO in the area of ‘agricultural extension’ (Grassby, 1985: 2-3). He was the State Member of Parliament for the area from 1965 to 1969 and the Federal Member from 1969 to 1974, serving as Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs from 1972-1974 (Grassby, 1985). Described as one of the most public enthusiasts for multiculturalism (Jupp, 2002: 41), Grassby lost his seat in the 1974 Federal Election ‘in a campaign which included racist attacks on him and his policies’ (Jupp, 2002: 41; see also Catanzariti, 2003). Grassby played an important role in the development of multiculturalism in Griffith and described Griffith as ‘a lesson as to what can be achieved and how it can be achieved for the whole of Australia’ (Grassby, 1985: 11).

Grassby’s enthusiasm is, however, only part of the story and the picture painted by Phillip’s 1981 study is also revealing. This ‘community profile’ and ‘guide to community welfare needs in the Griffith area’ did observe that while the metropolitan media at the time had painted a picture of Griffith that suggested serious racial tension and community disharmony, in fact Griffith was relatively free of the extremes of racial tension manifest in Sydney and there was ‘a high degree of social interaction, of intermarriage, of acceptance and of tolerance’ (Phillips, 1981: 9).

These observations need to be contextualised in relation to events in the five or so years leading up to the publication of this report. As touched on in the previous section, prominent local politician and public anti-drugs campaigner Donald Mackay

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81 Al Grassby died in April 2005.
82 See also Bernadette Kelly’s (1984) study of Griffith discussed below.
disappeared from the car park of a Griffith hotel in July 1977, and was presumed to have been murdered (Kelly, 1988: 263). Prior to this there had been several ‘raids’ on properties in the Griffith area where marijuana crops were found to be growing (Grassby, 1985: 9). It seems that Mackay’s activities placed him at odds with both the organised crime syndicates, and corrupt police and other officials, claimed to be involved in the drug trade in NSW/Australia, and in which some Griffith locals were implicated (Grassby, 1985; Kelly, 1988). These events resulted in a situation where local ‘Italians’, particularly Southern Italians, became associated with organised crime and drug cultivation and trafficking by both the metropolitan media (Phillips, 1981: 8-10; Grassby, 1985: 10; Kelly, 1988: 261-268) and some local Anglo-Celts (Totaro and Pangallo, 1979: 13; Grassby, 1985: 10). While some of these authors attempt to downplay the negative impact of the murder of Donald Mackay on the relationship between Italian and non-Italian locals (for example Phillips) there was undoubtedly an impact. Indeed the whole town might be said to have been ‘tarnished’ and continues, bizarrely at times, to be associated with drugs and organised crime in the minds of many outsiders.83

Despite its down-playing of ‘racial tensions’, Phillips’s report did note the existence of some tension and claimed that it was ‘between the Italo-Australians and the Anglo-Australians, between the Northern and Southern Italians and the Aboriginals and the white community in Griffith’, something which was ‘not unique’ to Griffith (Phillips, 1981: 11).84 So while ‘Griffith is better off than most other places with regard to social tension’ it was important to realise that ‘there are competing interest groups in Griffith, that the Anglo-Australian group is dominant, and that this dominance often creates friction and hostility’ (Phillips, 1981: 12).85 Notably, however, and consistent with Grassby’s vision, Griffith ‘can easily become the model for an Australian multi-cultural community’ (Phillips, 1981: 12).

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83 See for example Brown’s 2003 article for the Sydney Morning Herald. Further evidence of this association in the minds of the general public is provided by the fact that on almost every occasion I mentioned my study of Griffith to someone who was not from Griffith the topic of drugs came up, often including a reference to Italians and/or the mafia.

84 Tensions between Italians and Anglo-Celts in Griffith around this time have also been noted by Pich (1975) and Huber (1977).

85 The dominant group in Griffith in 2004 was somewhat differently configured and this is covered in some detail in Chapter Six.
Phillips’ report goes on to make several recommendations in relation to the role local government might take in providing leadership and setting an example for the rest of the community (1981: 16-18). There is a surprising resonance with the recommendations in GCC’s most recent Social and Community Plan discussed below. Of particular note are recommendations related to access to decision making within council beyond so-called dominant groups, leadership, inclusion, participation, policy development in the area of community relations and representativeness. Although the community dynamic today is slightly different, many of these issues remain pertinent for GCC. Most notable is the need for Council and the broader community to develop an awareness and understanding in relation to the Aboriginal community, the need to consult with Aboriginal people, and the need to support Aboriginal community development (Phillips, 1981: 37). In this area at least, one might argue, as Tony Birch has in a different context, that ‘nothing has changed’ (Birch, 1992).

Today the Griffith City Council makes many overt references to multiculturalism and cultural diversity. GCC’s ‘vision’ for Griffith, for example, is that the town ‘be an acknowledged major regional centre with an emphasis on best agricultural practices, providing: a viable local economy with sustainable development and growth; a clean and ecologically sustainable built environment and natural environment; a quality lifestyle for residents; and a pride in our cultural diversity’ (Griffith City Council, 1997; Griffith City Council, ndk). This fourth point, ‘pride in our cultural diversity’, is supported by a series of goals and strategies that emphasise harmony, equal opportunity and cultural diversity as a promotional tool, as well as access, support, participation, celebration, cultural heritage and tourism. Griffith is both ‘noted for its cultural diversity’ and ‘has welcomed migrants and refugees’ (Griffith City Council, 2004a: 37). Indeed ‘Griffith is recognised and prides itself as being a shining example of multiculturalism in Australia’ and ‘a leader in multicultural relations’ (Griffith City Council, 2004d).

While there is some consistency here with the Federal Government’s approach and vision, particularly in relation to notions of harmony and using cultural diversity for

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86 Celebration, cultural heritage, and tourism are all discussed in some detail in the following chapters.
economic gain, there seems to be a genuine commitment and pro-active approach to multiculturalism at the local level of government (cf. Thompson, Dunn et al., 1998). The documents considered below suggest that cultural diversity is also a key feature of Griffith’s broader cultural identity from the perspective of people that live there. The recent Cultural Plan in particular goes well beyond Federal Government approaches to multiculturalism and seeks to foster, support and celebrate Griffith’s cultural diversity, which is one of two predominant themes identified as reflecting Griffith’s cultural identity (the other being water)(Griffith City Council, 2005a).  

Council not only acknowledges cultural diversity, it also sets about fostering it and attempts to ascertain and then support the needs of recent migrants to Griffith. GCC is proactive in relation to multiculturalism at the level of planning. The Corporate Plan, adopted in 1997, outlines specific goals and strategies related to their vision for multicultural Griffith. The most recent planning documents from GCC, the Social and Community Plan 2004-2007, and the Cultural Plan of 2005, respond more overtly to community diversity. Both of these planning documents involved significant community consultation (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004).

One of the key issues to emerge from the Social and Community Plan in relation to ‘people from culturally diverse backgrounds’ was the need for increased cultural awareness within GCC and other service providers, as well as the wider community. The media were seen as having a role to play in this (Griffith City Council, 2004a: 59). Other issues that arose through the consultation, and that are fore-grounded in the plan, include those relating to language: better access to interpreter services and the provision of information in languages other than English; support for the refugee

87 GCC recently won a Local Government and Shires Association Award for the Cultural Plan in the category ‘Developing Culture’ (GCC, 2006d).
88 Preparation of a Community and Social Plan is mandatory under current NSW legislation, but the preparation of a Cultural Plan is not. Guidelines for local authorities in preparing a compliant plan specify that the needs of ‘designated target groups’ (where they are applicable to the LGA in question) be considered, and among these target groups are ‘Aboriginal people’ and ‘people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds’. See Department of Local Government, 1998.
89 Given that the voices of the people of Griffith who participated in the consultations come through strongly in both of these documents, they will be considered again in other chapters where appropriate.
population, particularly appropriate service provision from DIMIA;\(^90\) additional support services for other migrants; and greater social inclusion of migrants (Griffith City Council, 2004a: 59-61). Again there are some interesting similarities here with earlier assessments of the situation in Griffith (Phillips, 1981).

The *Social and Community Plan* and the *Cultural Plan* both emphasise access and equity as well as inclusion, cultural awareness and fostering cultural identity. The related issues have been raised by the broader Griffith community, but GCC have included each emergent recommendation into an Action Plan (Griffith City Council, 2004a: 19-20), which can only be judged in time. At the least there is a high level of awareness of the relevant issues and a willingness to listen on behalf of GCC.

Wiradjuri people are a significant inclusion in both the *Social and Community Plan* and the *Cultural Plan*. There are important issues related to subsuming Indigenous people into the rubrics of multiculturalism including the potential for their specific cultures, histories and present-day needs to be ignored. In these plans, however, Wiradjuri people are a separate consideration to ‘people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds’, as defined by the Department of Local Government (Department of Local Government, 1998).

GCC have been aware of many of the issues that continue to hamper Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people since at least 1981, and presumably longer than that (see Phillips, 1981). It seems that there has been a lack of commitment in this area given that many of the same issues are still being raised by the Aboriginal community.\(^91\) These include issues related to cultural awareness, consultation, local government support for community development programs, and effective communication (Phillips, 1981: 37; Griffith City Council, 2004a: 56-58; Griffith City Council, 2005a). All of this is consistent with other research material showing that there was very little support from GCC for NAIDOC Week in 2004;\(^92\) there is no

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\(^90\) This shortcoming, which it needs to be remembered emerged from broad community consultation, came only a year before DIMIA refused to support the GMCC’s request for $93,000 to provide settlement services in Griffith to all recently arrived migrants.

\(^91\) See also Chapter Seven

\(^92\) The Aboriginal flag was flown after someone from the Aboriginal community put in a request (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004).
Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer or equivalent employed by GCC;\textsuperscript{93} and no formal support for a ‘Welcome to Country’ at Council events and functions (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004).\textsuperscript{94} Aboriginal people are, however, encouraged to participate in arts-and-culture-type projects.\textsuperscript{95} As one management level employee of council acknowledged, ‘there may be a bit of education that needs to go on’.

\textbf{Conclusions}

State-sponsored multiculturalism can and does have important implications for the local. Griffith City Council has little or no say in relation to Australia’s immigration program but can be seen to have an increasing responsibility in relation to dealing with the outcomes locally. They do so in ways that demonstrate a desire to be inclusive of a range of voices within the community. There is no indication in the local government documents examined of the federal government’s perceptions of cultural diversity and multiculturalism as divisive, threatening or in some way leading to disharmony. The economic paradigm which underpins much of the federal government’s support for immigration and multiculturalism is substantially muted in local government documents. Further, there is no backlash against either the displacement of Anglo-Celtic hegemony, or the emerging threat to the current hegemonic arrangements revealed in the following chapters, evident in these documents.

Cultural diversity generally is both acknowledged and supported by Griffith City Council. It is seen as something worth celebrating and promoting, and in this they aim to be guided by their constituents, those who encounter, experience and construct narratives around multicultural Griffith in the course of their everyday lives. It is indicative of multiculturalism as it is constructed from both above and below.

\textsuperscript{93} An Aboriginal advisory group to Council was set up as recently as 2005!
\textsuperscript{94} Individual Councillors who are so inclined may, however, request one.
\textsuperscript{95} Some of these are referred to in other chapters. See for example references to \textit{Lifecycle} in Chapter 4 and \textit{La Festa} in Chapter 5.
Griffith City Council has a strong hand in the trajectory of multicultural Griffith and plays a crucial role in local discursive constructions of multiculturalism, and in its practical outcomes. At the level of the discursive they often mirror federal government conceptions and concerns, particularly in relation to the theme of cultural enrichment and other benefits that can be derived from cultural diversity. But although what goes on at the local level is clearly informed by state and federal government contexts, in the case of Griffith, council can be seen to be both pro-active and progressive. In this they are quite different from the federal government. This in turn suggests the productive potential of multiculturalism at the local level despite conservative understandings at the national level and critiques of these understandings by Hage (1998) and others. GCC are advocates of multiculturalism as an approach to the cultural diversity of Griffith and, unlike the federal government, it is a ‘positive’ and progressive kind of multiculturalism they envisage and advocate.

Analysis now turns to tourism representations, representations which are strongly informed by these local ‘official’ discourses but which reveal a greater affinity with the kind of multiculturalism critiqued by Hage (1998).
Chapter Two

Multicultural Griffith for the Tourist: A Cosmopolitan City

Tourism is a cultural practice, and is a significant feature of the ‘modern’ world (Rojek and Urry, 1997; Urry, 2002). Tourism is also a cultural process and is active in creating local geographies through place representation (see Hughes, 1998: 30). The creation and deployment of images, identities and places is an important aspect of tourism. This chapter considers what culturally diverse, multicultural Griffith has meant for the tourism representations emanating from there and how the image/s and identity of Griffith created for the tourist takes cultural diversity into account. We will see that multiculturalism and the cultural diversity of Griffith are critical elements in the discursive construction of Griffith for tourists. This is manifest in the idea that Griffith is a ‘cosmopolitan city’, a construction which uses a discourse of ‘enrichment’ to lure the tourist. Recognition is given to a range of different cultural and ethnic groups as being an integral part of the community and its identity.

Tourism, as a site of analysis, reveals the hand of Griffith City Council, who is heavily involved in the production of information about Griffith for tourists, texts which are presumably also consumed by local people. Their content—the imagery chosen for inclusion, the language used, and the discourses on which these both draw and sponsor—give important insights into multiculturalism in Griffith. They have important implications—ideological, political, socio-cultural and material—for Griffith and its residents. Because of their considerable involvement in it, tourism is one arena in which Griffith City Council can and does demonstrate a commitment to multiculturalism. It provides an avenue through which it is able to work towards its ‘vision for Griffith’, and especially the aim to demonstrate ‘a pride in our cultural diversity’ (Griffith City Council, 1997; Griffith City Council, ndk). Tourism can also bring economic benefits, and council does not shy away from the cultural diversity of Griffith being used as a ‘promotional tool’ (Griffith City Council, 1997; Griffith City Council, ndk).

The limits of the discursive construction of multiculturalism in Griffith are also revealed by examining tourism representations. Within this discourse different
‘groups’ are interpellated differently; some groups are constructed as ethnic/migrants while others are not. This feeds into/enables a construction of the past that turns on older notions of Australian national identity and in which Anglo-Celtic Australians in Griffith are constructed as the key contributors to the success and prosperity of Griffith and the significance of the Italian diaspora is down-played. Wiradjuri people should be an important inclusion in stories of Griffith, but their inclusion in representations of contemporary, cosmopolitan Griffith for the tourist is partial and problematical. The tendency is for Wiradjuri people, unlike non-Indigenous local people, to be represented as a feature of the past and for their distinctive histories to be ignored.

One recent Australian study found that tourism and the images it constructs and generates have been used to shape or transform the identities of regions (Trotter, 2001). But places are ‘continually evolving landscapes with spaces for resistance, contestation, disruption and transgression of dominant discourses and wider hegemonic social and cultural relations’ (Aitchison, MacLeod et al., 2000: 1). The question here is not so much how ‘true’ tourism representations of Griffith actually are, but how they are constructed, which myths and discourses they draw on, what kind of knowledge is produced, and what the implications of this are for multicultural Griffith and its residents (see Hall, 1997b). This is the terrain covered by this chapter.

The study of the relationship between tourism representations and multiculturalism draws on a range of textual sources such as brochures and guides, postcards, an interpretive display and a website. I am particularly concerned with the production and content of these texts, and especially in light of discourses of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is constructed and conceived of in a number of ways in tourism in Griffith and is influenced by conservative official discourse. Critically, however, multiculturalism as it is produced in tourism representations is deemed to be an integral part of the culture and identity of Griffith.

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96 This theme is elaborated in Chapter Six.
The first section contextualises the chapter in relation to tourism and tourism representations. This is followed by a ‘reading’ of Griffith divided into four sub-sections, each of which turns on a particular aspect of the research material.

**Griffith and Tourism**

The business of promoting tourism in/to Griffith falls largely to Griffith City Council, supported by the state government authority, Tourism New South Wales (TNSW). Tourism is often an important contributor to the economies of places like Griffith and an indication of the significance of tourism to the area can be gleaned from recent figures on visitation. For the year ended June 2002 the number of visitors to the Riverina region from elsewhere in Australia (and who stayed overnight) was 1.1 million (Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 2). The Riverina received a further 1.2 million ‘domestic day visitors’ (Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 10). The region also received nineteen thousand international visitors for the year ended June 2002 (Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 12) and Europe (not including the United Kingdom) was the largest source of these visitors (see Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 12). Twenty five percent of these visitors said that they were visiting friends or relatives (Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 13). Visitation to the Riverina, however, only represented about one percent of the 2.6 million international visitors to New South Wales for this period (Tourism New South Wales, 2003: 15).

As a cultural process tourism has been described in a range of vaguely negative ways. It is said to involve inventing places (Williams, 1998), myth-making (Selwyn, 1996), and ‘the creation and reconstruction of geographic landscapes as distinctive tourist destinations through manipulations of history and culture’ (Ringer, 1998: 7). Hollinshead describes tourism as a maker of peoples, places and pasts, going on to describe how tourism representations of the past, particularly as heritage, provide ‘a form of historical truth amongst a plurality of manifest, latent and subjugated alternative outlooks on the past’ and have the power to ‘manufacture and/or maintain

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97 Using the kind of rhetorical shorthand common in tourism promotion (see Hughes, 1998: 19), the state of New South Wales is conceived of as a series of ‘regions’ and Griffith is in the Riverina region (TNSW, 2004). In a recent TNSW campaign it became part of Country NSW, a liminal space between the ‘outback’ and the city.
privileged versions of peoples, places and pasts’ (Hollinshead, 1999: 48). There is some substance to these claims, as we shall see in relation to Griffith, but the image and identity created for Griffith within tourism is also one that draws on local realities as well as discursive constructions of Griffith that have a much wider currency. Because of this intertextuality, the tourism representations examined in this chapter are more ‘concrete’ than the above characterisations allow for and, at least in the case of Griffith, there is some basis to the myths and inventions.

An examination of tourism representations, and the discourses in which they are embedded, provides insights into how a community sees itself, or at least wants visitors to see it. Tourism’s re-imagining strategies are just as likely to come from within those communities as to be imposed on them from without as ‘towns and cities have become actively engaged in reconfiguring their identity to get themselves on the tourist map’ (Hughes, 1998:20). Dicks (2003) too has argued that many places have essentially become exhibitions of themselves, in an attempt to attract visitors, proclaiming the possession of certain cultural values which have come to be seen as a place’s identity. Griffith, as a tourism destination, has been configured in a number of ways in relation to multiculturalism, which, as we shall see, is seen by Griffith City Council (GCC) as one of the key distinguishing features of contemporary Griffith. The visitor guides, web pages, postcards and interpretive display can be seen to function collectively then as the exhibition catalogue (see Dicks, 2003: 2).

In the context of multicultural Griffith, tourism is of fundamental relevance and importance in the construction of local identities (see Ringer, 1998; Cronin and O’Connor, 2003). It comprises ‘crucial arenas of public culture where embodied notions of identity are sold, enacted, debated, and occasionally contested’ (Desmond, 1999: xviii). Further, something of local power relations can be gleaned from the examination of tourism representations and such relations form a critical dimension of multiculturalism in Australia (Hage, 1998). The images, identities and

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98 Crick (1988: 65-66) suggests that there are also other processes at work that influence people, places and pasts within tourism.
representations created and deployed within tourism may draw on dominant value systems and meanings, reinforcing these dominant ideologies thereby revealing something of the dynamics of the society in question (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998: 3). While tourism can be conceived of as an arena that articulates wider power structures (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998: 5), it is both a constructed and a constructing phenomenon, ‘a communicator and a shaper of society’s ideology’ (Hollinshead in Morgan and Pritchard, 1998: 17). Not everyone may participate equally in these constructions and yet such constructions have implications for those who are constructed, or indeed not constructed.

Three different aspects of tourism representations of Griffith are analysed in this study: the Griffith Visitors Centre (sic), including its website; a selection of local guides/brochures; and the postcards available locally that purport to represent Griffith. Together these provide significant and substantial insights into tourism representations of multicultural Griffith. Griffith City Council is responsible for much of this promotional material. They run the Griffith Visitors Centre and associated website, sell the postcards from the visitor centre, and have produced three of the four guides analysed in the current study. Each of these sources both produces and reflects the local geographies of Griffith, but is also heavily immersed in the discourse of its own production, something which partly controls the subject matter and its presentation (Hughes, 1998: 24). These texts are important not only because they seek to reach a wide audience, but also because of the critical role they play in communicating the identity of Griffith to outsiders, and indeed to local people as well. In much of the promotional material that pertains to Griffith, prospective residents, local people, and tourists are all addressed (see for example Griffith City Council, nda).
Reading Griffith

The Griffith Visitors Centre (GVC) is prominently located at the intersection of the main street, Banna Avenue, and the main road to the south. Nine staff are employed at the centre, including a Tourism Manager. The GVC has a number of functions such as the distribution of a range of guides and brochures on other NSW and Victorian tourism destinations, the sale of souvenirs and gifts and provision of information on a range of local events and activities as well as general tourism related information. They have a substantial interpretive display, which includes items of local produce. The interpretive display consists of a series of twelve large illuminated panels made up of both written and visual material. The area in which this display is housed is accessed through the main area of the GVC. The display was put together by a consultant with local input in terms of content. The images were chosen from GCC’s collection or sourced from the National Library in Canberra. It was completed in the period 2000-2002 (J. Rolles, personal communication, 18 July, 2005). The GVC also has a website, which is linked to the GCC website.

Plate 5: Griffith Visitors Centre provides information and advice to visitors to the town. Brochures and guides are distributed, various items sold, and an interpretive display has been installed to help visitors gain an understanding of and insight into Griffith and its people.
The postcards used in the study were purchased from the GVC and consist of twenty-six individual postcards plus a ‘20 View Folder’. Each postcard is captioned ‘Griffith, New South Wales’. The GVC orders the postcards from a wholesaler, but decisions about which images were to appear on the postcards were made locally and re-ordering is based, in part, on what has sold most successfully in the previous period (J. Rolles, personal communication, July 13, 2004).

The visitor guides are representative rather than comprehensive in terms of what has been produced in the way of visitor guides to Griffith, and are from the years 1984, 1992 and two recent ones with no dates on them that would seem to be from 2001 and 2004 respectively. A company called Scancolor produced and published the 1984 guide (Scancolor, 1984), which was then distributed by an earlier incarnation of the GVC. The subsequent guides have all been produced directly by Griffith City Council (Griffith City Council, 1992; Griffith City Council, nde).

Each of these representational forms play an integral role within tourism and are mechanisms by which the tourism industry appropriates, communicates, circulates,
and disseminates place myths (Waitt and Head, 2002: 339) and identities. Each function in part as an invitation to a performance or engagement with a place that is arranged through certain narrative structures (Hughes, 1998: 26). These are informed by, and in turn inform, wider discursive constructions. They are analysed collectively in the study around four themes, each of which reveals something about multiculturalism in Griffith. The first of these themes is cosmopolitanism and the discourse of enrichment.

**Cosmopolitanism and the Discourse of Enrichment: Constructing Griffith as Multicultural**

There are many overt references to multiculturalism and cultural diversity in tourism representations of Griffith. On the whole, multiculturalism is seen as a significant feature of contemporary Griffith, particularly in more recent representations. An element of this is the conception of Griffith as ‘cosmopolitan,’ something immediately apparent from the GVC website.

> Griffith is the ‘oasis’ of the Riverina and the heart of – Wine and Food Country. This thriving city is a unique mix of cultures from all around the world which give Griffith that true cosmopolitan feel. It is renowned for its quality restaurants and European style cafes all serving divine gourmet cuisine complimented by our local fine wines. You’ll taste the best Italian food outside of Italy! (sic)(Griffith City Council, nde).

The idea of Griffith as a large, busy, sophisticated place, unlike stereotypes of rural and regional Australia, has much currency in local tourism representations and is clearly linked to cultural diversity, to the ‘cultures from all around the world’, and in particular to ‘Italians’. While the cultural diversity of Griffith is obviously being used for marketing purposes, it also seems that Griffith itself is being defined, at least in part, by the cultural diversity of the population. It is an integral part of Griffith’s identity in these constructions. Furthermore, this diversity is seen as a positive feature of the town, with the potential to attract visitors.

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99 A wider collection of postcards were for sale but only those specifically captioned ‘Griffith’ are considered.

An important shift has taken place in the construction of Griffith for tourists over the past two decades. In the 1984 visitor guide, despite a population that was already significantly culturally diverse, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity were not used as descriptors of Griffith. This has changed over time, and in the 1992 guide Griffith was both ‘a cosmopolitan city’ and ‘one of the most successful multicultural communities in Australia’ (Griffith City Council, 1992: 6-7). In 2001 it was notable for its ‘international cuisine’ and ‘cosmopolitan atmosphere’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 2). Most recently ‘the city is a unique blend of cultures which gives it its unique cosmopolitan atmosphere, where you can relax and taste the world’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 1). The tourist is invited to experience and enjoy what these descriptions suggest is successful multiculturalism. Not only is this is a significant shift in relation to local self-representation, these representations can also be compared favourably to federal government conceptions of multiculturalism during the same period, which appear suspicious and cynical. We can begin then to get a sense of the ways in which local (Griffith) manifestations of multiculturalism are informed by but also move beyond what is articulated at the federal level.

Italians, both Northern and Southern, have been critical to the development and success of multiculturalism in Griffith, and this too is acknowledged in the tourism representations. Often the theme of cosmopolitanism is linked to Italian migration. Italians are notable largely because ‘the input of their toil and culture have enriched the area’ (Griffith City Council, 1992: 7). Indeed ‘these people add a special cosmopolitan and international flavour to our city’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 2). In what might be read as a fairly patronising formulation, the theme of cultural enrichment, a key theme of Australian multiculturalism, is a dominant thread of the construction of Griffith as multicultural (see Hage, 1998). Following Hage, the valorisation of Italian culture does not, however, put Italian peoples and culture on an equal footing with Anglo-Celts. Rather, one group do the enriching, while the other are to be enriched (Hage, 1998: 118). Indeed the ‘our’ of ‘our city’ could be seen to exclude ‘these people’. In Griffith, however, the situation is more complex than such

101 As discussed previously, Italians had been settling in Griffith in significant numbers from the 1910s, the 1970s saw significant numbers of people from India settle, and people from a range of Pacific Islands had begun settling in Griffith by the 1980s. Migrants from the countries of the British Isles, and their descendents were prominent in Griffith and Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people had continued to live in and around Griffith.
a reading acknowledges. Italians are just as likely to have constructed these representations themselves, given their significance in all aspects of life in Griffith. These representations actually offer an important recognition of the cultural diversity of Griffith and how it is valued at the local level. Italians can be seen to have made a shift from being relatively marginalised (see for example Pich, 1975; Phillips, 1981) to an integral part of the thriving and successful Griffith that is produced for the tourist. They are, in fact, constructed as the key to it. Thus, the enriched/enriching dichotomy is unable to account for the complexity and ambiguity that are features of multicultural Griffith.

Food is a critical component of the discourse of enrichment within Australian multiculturalism (see for example Hage, 1997; and Hage, 1998). Here it is intimately linked to the idea of Griffith as multicultural and is used to demonstrate cosmopolitanism (see for example Griffith City Council, ndd: 2). This self-proclaimed cosmopolitanism is the result of what is variously described as ‘our ethnic community’ (Griffith City Council, 1992: 18), ‘our…multicultural community’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 11) or Griffith’s ‘unique blend of cultures’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 1). Most overtly ‘our truly multicultural community provides visitors with a range of cuisines rarely found in a rural town’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 11).

This could be read as a local manifestation of Hage’s ‘masters of the national space’ thesis (Hage, 1998) in the use of the word ‘our’, if one imagines these statements to be directed at a ‘non-multicultural community’, who may position themselves as central, reducing the status of the so-called multicultural community to that of service providers, thereby making the ‘voice of the “ethnic other”…passive’ (Hage, 1998: 17). Read in such a way, those deemed part of this multicultural community are confined to the role of (secondary) producer, and the tourist is invited to ‘relax and taste the world’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 1). For Hage this would demonstrate ‘cosmo-multiculturalism…a discourse which positions “ethnic feeders” simply as passive feeding functions in a field where migrant subjects have been

102 As discussed in Chapter One
103 It is interesting to note that the status of Griffith as a city, so loudly proclaimed elsewhere, has been ignored to make this point.
erased and where the central subject is a classy and more often than not an “Anglo”-cosmopolitan eating subject’ (Hage, 1997: 118).

But while it is important to recognise the relevance of such critiques of multiculturalism, the (increasing) acceptance of culinary diversity should not be dismissed as merely superficial and may in fact operate as a cultural lever towards a more comprehensive acceptance of the heterogeneity of Australian culture and society (Ang, Brand et al., 2002: 32). These representations of Griffith suggest something beyond a situation whereby ‘the deeper structural contributions of migration are blocked out by this surface acceptance of migrant food…[and] migrants remain marginal, somehow Other, a minority culture to be selectively plundered for the gratification of a “mainstream” palate’ (Saul, 1999: 239). The ‘our’ of these constructions of Griffith for the tourist is an increasingly inclusive ‘our’, that is, one that includes the whole ‘community’. Thus it becomes less about foreigners and foreign flavours, and more about ‘us’- the community of Griffith, which happens to be culturally diverse. The ways in which different groups have influenced the cultural life of the town, and the positive value this has for all local people, can be seen in these constructions.

In many of these representations ‘Italian influences’ are not only foregrounded, but sometimes come to stand for ‘multicultural’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 11). It is interesting that ‘Italian’ food is at times constructed as ‘gourmet’ food even though it is part of everyday life in Griffith (Griffith City Council, nde: 8). Indeed tourism operators and other business owners themselves still often draw on their Italian heritage as a way of promoting their products. Present day representations appear in stark contrast with those of the early decades of the 20th century, a time in which many Italians settled in Griffith, and when Italian food was deemed far from desirable (see Andreoni, 2003).

Multiculturalism is such an important feature of Griffith that an entire text panel is dedicated to its explication in the GVC interpretive display. The panel

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104 Food, as an aspect of multiculturalism and particularly as it relates to Italian culture, is also discussed in Chapters Five and Six.
‘Multiculturalism’ is placed against a backdrop of an enlarged colour photograph of a class of primary school children. The children’s faces are presumably meant to correspond to the list given on the text panel: ‘Anglo-Celtic, Italian, Indian, Pacific Islander, Phillipino, Spanish, and Turkish’ (sic). Absent from the list are Wiradjuri and other Indigenous Australians. Including Anglo-Celtic people as part of the ‘multicultural mix’ is significant. There has been a tendency in the broader discourse of multiculturalism in Australian to exclude Anglo-Celtic Australians to the extent that multiculturalism was commonly understood to be about migrants and ethnics, of which Anglo-Celts were considered neither (see for example Gunew, 1994b; Bennett, 1998; Gunew, 2004).

Plate 7: GVC panel 'Multiculturalism'. The children’s physical appearance is used to illustrate the point.

The use of photographs of children’s faces as representations of multiculturalism is not uncommon in official discourses, but can be seen as problematical. This is because ‘in at least two senses, a purity of origin is being laid claim to: first, of course, in the apparent obviousness of the supposedly unambiguous, visual physical features portrayed in each face, the face which is used as a sign of identity itself; and

[105 For example advertisements for Catania Fruit Salad Farm, Riverina Grove and Bertoldo’s Bakery]
second, purity is portrayed in the notion that each face is absolutely distinct, and yet provides the basis of a clear representation of the whole—of the collectivity as such, in all its diversity’ (Lechte and Bottomley, 1993: 36). But the image also provides a visual means of capturing what Griffith is like, and what is important about Griffith, for the tourist. Indeed it demonstrates more than just the recognition of cultural diversity; it is a celebration of it. Although critics of the rush to celebrate diversity have acknowledged this, they may also have overstated their case and been to intent on critiquing of the essentialisation of difference. The group of schoolchildren suggest a unity and sense of collective identity based on cultural diversity. This stands in contrast to the discourse of Anglo-decline that has been highlighted as part of the response to multiculturalism in Australia (see Hage, 1998).

The text panel that accompanies the photograph begins by noting Italian migration, followed by ‘migration from around the globe’. People from Turkish, Indian, and Italian backgrounds are mentioned as are those from the Pacific Islands for their contributions. Although Anglo-Celtic people are included here as part of the ‘multicultural mix’, their status as (just) another migrant group is less obvious. When Anglo-Celtic people are not deemed to be just another migrant group among many, they are positioned in a way that suggests some prior claim to space and place and therefore an entitlement to manage this space as well as those constructed as migrants- the relative newcomers. Once such a power relation has been established, a discourse of valorisation can become operational. There are shades of this here such that, these people, ‘our culturally diverse communities’, ‘contribute significantly to the economic, cultural, social and political life of the city of Griffith’ (GVC Panel ‘Multiculturalism’), and we are never quite sure who the ‘our’ is and who is part of the ‘culturally diverse community’. There is some ambiguity here about the status of Anglo-Celts in Griffith. The ambiguity suggests a tension between the urge to include Anglo-Celts and what doing so might actually mean for Anglo-Celtic hegemony. The inclusion of Griffith’s Anglo-Celts as part of the story of multiculturalism in Griffith is an important shift nonetheless, even if it is not ultimately sustained.

Multiculturalism, at least in the GVC interpretive display does more than just enrich life in Griffith, though it certainly does that. It is also ‘a way of life’, which is ‘helping to maintain and develop this harmonious and culturally diverse city’ (GVC Panel ‘Multiculturalism’). In contrast to the Federal Government’s conceptions of multiculturalism, rather than being a potential source of disharmony, which needs to be managed as such, the suggestion in this passage of text is that multiculturalism can actually foster a more harmonious community.

**Ethnicity and Recognition**

It is instructive to look more closely at who is interpellated by this discourse, what some of the implications of this might be, and the extent to which this goes beyond ‘recognition’ (see Taylor, 1994). While they are included in the story of multiculturalism, in many of the tourism representations, ethnicity and ethnic variation among immigrants from the United Kingdom is ignored. As Stratton has observed, ‘in Australia not every migrant, and not everybody from a migrant background, is thought of as an ethnic, that is someone to whom ethnicity is attributed’ (2000: 25). Thus within the construction of multiculturalism in/for tourism, some people are marked by ethnicity while others are not. The individuals who are specifically named as key figures in relation to Griffith’s ‘development’ were all either born in England or Ireland or are their descendants. They are also all male. These key figures are Lt. John Oxley, colonial government surveyor and explorer; Samuel McCaughey, a grazier who was involved in the development of the irrigation scheme; Walter Burley Griffin, the American architect who designed the town of Griffith; JJ McWilliam, who established McWilliam’s Wines; and Arthur Griffith, Minister for Public Works in 1912 when the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme was opened.

Arthur Griffith, after whom the town of Griffith was named, was an Irish immigrant, but is not constructed as either ethnic or as a migrant within these tourism representations.

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106 A list could include Irish, English, Scottish, Cornish and Welsh people, for example. See for example Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov (2002).
107 This is not just an Australian phenomenon. See for example Sollors (1995) and Hutchinson and Smith (1996). But as Gunew has argued, it is critical in the Australian context that the dominant ethnicities also be rendered visible and deconstructed (Gunew, 1994: 92).
representations (see for example Griffith City Council, ndb; GVC Panel 'Murrumbidgee Irrigation'). Nor is John Oxley constructed as an English migrant, and he is never described as English. In the one instance when Samuel McCaughey is described in relation to his origins, he is an ‘Irish born Australian’ but not, however, ‘Irish’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 29). The ethnicity of these mainly English and Irish men is ignored within these tourism representations such that people from these backgrounds are able to become simply ‘Australian’ and therefore acquire an immediate kind of legitimacy in relation to their presence and activities, something which flows on unquestioned to their descendents (see Anderson and Taylor, 2005: 461-462).

Something similar can be seen in relation to explications within tourism of the development of the wine industry in Griffith, which is generally deemed to have begun with one JJ McWilliam (Griffith City Council, nde). McWilliam was the son of an Irish immigrant, but unlike Italians involved in the wine industry, who might still be ‘Italian’ after several generations of being in Australia, he is not marked by ethnicity or country of origin. While the McWilliam family, within one generation, have become Australian, the same cannot be said for those with an Italian heritage who are configured as in-comers to a pre-existing ancestral space (Anderson and Taylor, 2005. See for example GVC Panel 'Wine Making'). Thus vigneron are described as being either ‘Australian’ or ‘Italian descent’ (Griffith City Council, 1992: 8). Further, the McWilliams’ success is linked to an ongoing ‘family passion’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 16), unrelated to their Irish heritage, while the other most prominent local wine-making family, the De Bortoli family, are described in relation to cultural traits related to their Italian heritage and subsumed into the category ‘Italian migrants’ (Scancolor, 1984; Griffith City Council, nde: 17). As well as being constructed as having entered an ancestral space linked to Anglo-Celts, Italians may also be homogenised, despite the ongoing saliency of a North-South distinction in Griffith, something attested to by research participants.

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108 It is worth remembering, however, that the Irish in Australia were, in earlier times, conceived of as quite distinct from the English, and themselves marginalised. Grassby (1985) noted the distinction between the English and the Irish in Griffith in the 1950s and 60s. But rather than noting Irish marginalisation, he described how the refusal of local Anglo-Celtic Australians to discriminate against
Italians are deemed in these representations to form ‘a special part of the city’s heritage’ as do ‘the many nationalities who have been drawn to our area’ (Griffith City Council, nde: 2). The significance of the Italian diaspora to multicultural Griffith can be gleaned from the claim that ‘Italian migration was strong from 1913, with a second wave of Italian immigrants settling here after World War 2’ so that ‘now over 50% of Griffith’s population claim Italian heritage’ (GVC Panel ‘Multiculturalism’). This figure seems somewhat exaggerated compared to the census data\textsuperscript{109} and the over-statement of numbers of Italian settlers and their descendents was common anecdotally in Griffith. The intent here seems to be to underscore the significance of Italian heritage and culture to Griffith and to recognise, explain and perhaps reinforce Italian hegemony. This use of ‘numbers’ stands in stark contrast to other instances where the numerical significance of particular migrant groups is over-stated to suggest a ‘threat’ (see for example Hage, 1998; Jones, 2003: 117-118).

There is something of a tension evident in these representations in relation to Griffith’s Italian heritage. Although prominence is given to Italian locals, they are not included as part of tourism’s chronology of Griffith until the narrative turns to ‘multiculturalism’ as the frame of reference.\textsuperscript{110} Further, in the 1992 guide, introduced by the first person with an Italian heritage to be elected as Mayor, Italians are ‘in’ the area, but not necessarily ‘of’ the area. ‘Many Italian migrants were drawn to the area …since then, Italians have lived and worked in the area, encouraging relatives and friends to migrate’ (Griffith City Council, 1992: 6). What this suggests is that Italians have not completely transcended their status as ‘migrants’ nor their earlier marginalisation. The language used here accords them a particular mode of belonging that seems to belie a deeper engagement with place/Griffith on the part of many ‘Italians’. It stands in contrast to the realities of Italian hegemony in Griffith.\textsuperscript{111} The ongoing construction of Italians in Griffith as relative newcomers, ethnic others, and just another migrant group, have the potential

\textsuperscript{109}Pich (1975) covers some of the story Italian settlement in Griffith, a story which includes racism, discrimination, marginalisation and hardship, as well as innovation, community building and for many, economic prosperity.

\textsuperscript{111}Irish migrants was used to prevent discrimination against Italian migrants by making direct comparisons (Grassby, 1985: 6-7).

\textsuperscript{111}As I go on to explore throughout the following chapters.
to undermine their status in Griffith. This potential has not, however, been realised and we can get a sense of the lingering tensions between the dominant groups in Griffith: Anglo-Celts and Italians. We can also see how Italians in Griffith might be interpellated differently in different contexts.

Multiculturalism/cultural diversity are not yet something that is captured in the postcard imagery. Indeed the images reproduced on the postcards, are notable for the exclusions and silences on which they turn. While the agricultural industry features heavily, many of those who are most active in it are absent. Contributors to the industry include significant numbers of people from the Pacific Islands, India and Turkey, the agricultural industry and the work it afforded being the main reason for the move to Griffith in the first place (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004; B. Miller, personal communication, July 29, 2004; M. Schubert, personal communication, October 2, 2004). These are the same people who are at other times used to support claims that Griffith is one of the most multicultural cities in Australia (for example in the GVC interpretive display). Indeed the most significant contributors to agriculture/horticulture in Griffith, as local history has it, are Italians, yet there is no indication of this in the postcard imagery. In what seems to be a recent shift, and despite being ignored in the written component of these texts, ‘Third World-looking people’ (Hage, 1998), as well as ‘whites’, do appear in images related to the wine industry in Griffith more generally (cf. Griffith City Council, nde).

Different ethnic groups, then, are interpellated, differently within tourism representations of multicultural Griffith and some are significantly marginalised. The ethnicity and diversity of migrants from the United Kingdom and their descendents is ignored and they become simply ‘Australians’, while others remain ethnics and migrants, with presumably less claim on the national, or in this case local, space. This can be seen particularly in relation to Italians in Griffith and may in turn serve to legitimise or make a case in favour of Anglo-Celtic hegemony to the extent that it still exists. The reality in Griffith is that Italian migrants and their descendents have made significant inroads into challenging Anglo-Celtic

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112 The construction of some groups as more ‘legitimate’ than others in Griffith has at times created interesting tensions in multicultural Griffith. See Chapter Six.

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When thinking about these representations of Griffith, we need to ask, as Richard White did in relation to Australian national identity, ‘not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve’ (1981: viii). This is to say that ‘practical classifications are always subordinated to practical functions and oriented towards the production of social effects’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 220).

Wiradjuri people: Part of the Cultural Diversity of Griffith?

While multiculturalism is constructed as a feature of the present, Wiradjuri people tend to be constructed as a feature of the past. Not only are they confined to the past, to a period which is for Griffith essentially ‘pre-history’, their contributions to agricultural and other local industries are down-played and particular stereotypes of Aboriginal people are deployed. They are not included as part of the ‘multicultural mix’ and are not listed among the groups credited with having made a significant contribution to the ‘economic, cultural, social, and political life of the city of Griffith’ (GVC Panel ‘Multiculturalism’). In this sense they go ‘unrecognised’ or are ‘non-interpellated’ (Hage, 2006) by this discourse on multiculturalism in Griffith.

They are, however, interpellated as part of Griffith’s past. The first of the twelve panels in the GVC interpretive display is entitled ‘Indigenous People’. The text is accompanied by a black-and-white photograph of an unnamed, dark-skinned, man whose naked torso is marked with white paint and who is holding some sort of stick. We need to note, firstly, that there is an inherent inequality between photographer and ‘subject’ in any such photographic representation, raising political and ethical questions (Jackson, 1999: 127). This image in particular draws on a discursive construction of Indigenous Australians that locates Wiradjuri and other Indigenous people in the past. This is the first panel in the display and the beginning of the story and Wiradjuri people are therefore only part of the story of Griffith in

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113 This claim is elaborated in the following chapters.
114 The relationship between Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith and multiculturalism in Griffith, and the implications of one for the other, is elaborated extensively in Chapter Seven.
115 This photograph has presumably been ‘staged’ and the subject is sporting a short-back-and-sides haircut and has a moustache but no beard. The image’s potential to signify primitivism and to nostalgically romanticise Wiradjuri people still holds despite this. The man in the photograph is, importantly, a Wiradjuri man. The image was selected for inclusion here in consultation with the Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council (Rolles, 2004).
any significant way prior to the establishment of the town. Recognition of present
day Wiradjuri people, and indeed other Indigenous people who now live in Griffith,
is not in evidence in this representation. Indigenous people essentially disappear
from the story after the 1800s, a time that is marked off as pre-dating the
development of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and the town of Griffith. That
is, Indigenous people are associates with the local version of the pre-modern, but not
modernity.

Plate 8: GVC panel 'Indigenous People'. This attempt to recognise Wiradjuri people and the
impact of dispossession on them ultimately falls short.

The GVC panel is, however, an attempt to at least acknowledge the
Aboriginal/Wiradjuri history of the area:

With the arrival of European settlers from the 1830s onwards, the
Wiradjuri experienced enormous devastation to their traditional lives.
There were a great many incidents of violent confrontation between
the Aboriginal people and the settlers from 1839 to 1841 (GVC Panel ‘Indigenous People’).

Although violence was perpetrated over a much longer period than this, and took a range of different forms including administrative (Read, 1994), this is one of the few occasions on which Wiradjuri people are acknowledged at all as the traditional owners of this land. The backdrop to this panel is a reproduction of the relevant portion of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies map *Aboriginal Australia*. This is an important acknowledgement and recognition that the land on which Griffith is located was/is Wiradjuri country. But juxtaposed with the text and other images, and taken out of context without further explanation, the map remains a somewhat ambiguous inclusion, albeit one with the potential to further Wiradjuri claims to prior occupation and land rights.

Also located in the past is the Aboriginal contribution to the agricultural industry, a contribution towards which this panel gestures. Indeed many Wiradjuri people have contributed significantly to the agricultural development of the area (Kabaila, 1998; Grant, 1999; Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004). All this might be said to be a sort of ‘clearing of the decks’ so that the narration of ‘European’ history proper can proceed unhindered (McCubben, 2001: 51). Despite the involvement of Wiradjuri people in tourism through an Aboriginal owned and operated winery in the region, Wiradjuri people are excluded from these representations of agriculture in and around Griffith.116

Elsewhere in the display we learn that ‘early explorers reported that Aborigines had mentioned a great river they called Mur rum bidgee, which roughly translates as ‘never-failing water’ and that the name Burrinjuck, as in Burrinjuck Dam, comes from the Aboriginal words ‘Booren Yiack’ (GVC Panel ‘Murrumbidgee Irrigation’). But while the Indigenous provenance of these official names for the Murrumbidgee River and Burrinjuck Dam is acknowledged, the cultural appropriation which has

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116 Murrin Bridge Wines is located north of Griffith, in Wiradjuri country, near Lake Cargelligo on the Lachlan River. Their products are distributed by a winery in Griffith and are also retailed locally.
occurred through their contemporary use, and the implications of this, is not.\textsuperscript{117} Wiradjuri people are absent from the narrative related to the building of the irrigation scheme apart from this brief lexical recognition.\textsuperscript{118}

The collection of postcards of Griffith available from the GVC is particularly problematical in a postcolonial, multicultural context. One of them, captioned ‘Griffith New South Wales: Australian Aborigines’, consists of three smaller photographic images of dark-skinned men, clad only in ‘lap-laps’\textsuperscript{119} and matching head-bands, pictured outside in the bush, involved in either ‘cooking a wallaby’ on a campfire, ‘returning with their prey of Goanna, Wallaby and Fresh Water Tortoise’, or sitting on the ground ‘preparing for a corroboree’.\textsuperscript{120} Given the surrounds, these men are not in the Griffith area.\textsuperscript{121} That the regional specificity of Indigenous culture in Australia is ignored suggests ‘entrenched conceptions of a totalizable and transplantable Aboriginal culture’ (Mickler, 1991: 75; see also Birch, 1992: 232). The three images that comprise this particular postcard are also indicative of a style of thought which is based upon an epistemological and ontological distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ such that non-Indigenous Australians imagine ‘the Aborigines’ as their ‘Other’, as being radically different from themselves (Attwood, 1992: i). Indeed pictorial representation generally has played a significant role in the non-Indigenous construction of a separate and distinct (and ‘inferior’) Aboriginal ‘race’ (see for example Jackson, 1999). These inherited, imagined representations deploy the familiar stereotypes, icons and myths about Aboriginal people that often emerge through lack of dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and are derived from racist understandings (Langton, 1993). These kinds of images of

\textsuperscript{117} See Birch, 1992. There is much at stake in relation to the naming of places. Names are an important dimension of the Indigenous representation and interpretation of relationships to land (Birch, 1992: 233). When Indigenous names are used by non-Indigenous colonisers to name land, it legitimises the ownership of those that do the naming (Birch, 1992: 234).

\textsuperscript{118} Cf. Pugliese, 2002: 8. One cannot imagine that the building of such a large and extensive works would not have resulted in significant destruction of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal peoples’ culture and heritage, to say the least.

\textsuperscript{119} This is a generic term given to me by an Indigenous friend who pointed out that there are different terms for this item depending on the Indigenous language group.

\textsuperscript{120} Edwards describes these themes as ‘the stock-in-trade of the postcard market’ in relation to this kind of imagery (1996: 208). The studies carried out by both Jackson (1999) and Head (2000: 65-66) illustrate the historical continuity of these kinds of representations of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous people.

\textsuperscript{121} The clearest indicator of this is the type of vegetation growing.
Indigenous people have historically performed an ‘ideological role in legitimation of white supremacy’ (Jackson, 1999: 131).

In these representations Aboriginal people are shown engaged in stereotypical activities whereby the authenticity of culture is presented as residing in the past, an unchanging past without internal dynamic (cf. Edwards, 1996), a culture with a past but no obvious future (Mickler, 1991: 76). The imagery accords with a particular circuit of meaning around Aboriginal people in Australia which was developed prior to the 1950s, in which the ‘real’ Aborigine was a ‘full-blood’ and participated in Aboriginal communal rituals and preserved aspects of ‘his’ culture, especially singing and dancing (Hamilton, 1990: 21; see also Kociumbas, 2003: 135). This ‘way of seeing’ (Berger in Jackson, 1999) might draw on older non-Indigenous ideas about Indigenous Australians, but it obviously still has currency in tourism.

One of the implications of these kinds of representations is the disavowal of other forms of Aboriginality in Griffith. Critically, ‘to speak of a utopian past or faraway place is to nostalgically mystify the present’ (Muecke, 2005: 31). As James Clifford has observed ‘whenever marginal people come into a historical or ethnographic space that has been defined by the Western imagination…their distinct histories quickly vanish’ (Clifford, 1988: 5). Further, Wiradjuri people can no longer invent local futures and what is different about them remains tied to a traditional past that either resists or yields to the new, but cannot produce it (Clifford, 1988: 5).

In other tourism representations like those in the recent visitor’s guide the inclusion of Wiradjuri people is limited to the time ‘prior to white settlement’, and geographically to ‘the banks of the Murrumbidgee River’ (Griffith City Council, ndd: 2). Constraining Wiradjuri people temporally and geographically legitimises their exclusion from later events and from the history of the town of Griffith itself. Further to this, Indigenous land is described as ‘territory’, undermining claims of prior ownership by devaluing Wiradjuri relationships to the land and thereby downplaying the significance of the British invasion of the area. ‘Territory’ has quite a different resonance to ‘home’ or ‘country’, for example (see Rose, 1996).
While there is a very limited inclusion of Wiradjuri people in discursive constructions of contemporary rural/cosmopolitan Griffith, one can still purchase hand-painted boomerangs, clap-sticks, didgeridoos and nulla nullas from the GVC shop. These are made by a Wiradjuri man from nearby Narrandera (J. Rolles, personal communication, July 13, 2004). Selling ethnographic objects as cultural curiosities (in this case hunting implements and musical instruments) may be good for business (see Birch, 1992: 231), but it is not tantamount to any sort of accreditation of Aborigines as legitimate subjects (Mickler, 1991: 76). Indeed the discursive construction of multiculturalism within tourism in Griffith is such that Wiradjuri people might well wonder, as did Aboriginal interviewees, what is in it (multiculturalism) for them (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004; Interviewee 2, 21 Oct 2004).\(^\text{122}\)

**Constructing the Past**

In the historical summaries that appear in tourism representations, Griffith’s cultural diversity and multiculturalism are much less apparent as organising concepts. The discursive construction of history in this cluster of research material is such that the local story normally begins in 1817, when surveyor/explorer Oxley passed within a few miles of the future location of Griffith and described the area as ‘uninhabitable and useless to civilised man’ (Oxley in Griffith City Council, nde). Punctuated by key moments like the establishment of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme, the story moves on to describe a ‘thriving provincial city’ which is ‘fast becoming one of the great cities of Australia’ (Griffith City Council, nde). The discourse is, overwhelmingly, one of progress and development. The ‘semi-desert’ has been made ‘attractive and productive’ in ways that Oxley, who is almost always used as a counterpoint, failed to foresee.\(^\text{123}\) Wiradjuri people are absent in this telling and rather than occupying Wiradjuri lands, ‘the Griffith district occupies land which originally formed part of the pastoral runs of Cuba (now Kooba) and Benerembah

\(^\text{122}\) See Chapter Seven.

\(^\text{123}\) This discourse continues to be articulated in contemporary Griffith very strongly, particularly in relation to debates about water availability and consumption with references often being made by participants about Griffith ‘returning to a dustbowl’ without the water. ‘Civilisation’ it would seem is provisional and precarious.
Stations’ (Griffith City Council, nde). John Oxley is portrayed as being the first to visit the area.

The key figures in these histories are the non-Indigenous males, Oxley, McCaughey and Burley Griffin, and at times, Griffith’s namesake Arthur Griffith and others. In one telling another figure appears- the ‘hermit of Scenic Hill’, Valerio Riccetti (sic), ‘an Italian migrant’, who adds some colour to the story as a somewhat eccentric character (Griffith City Council, ndb). While Italians more generally are accorded a key role in the development of Griffith, contributing ‘their toil and culture’ (Griffith City Council, nde), the contribution is that of the ethnic other who is constructed as having arrived in a pre-existing ancestral space. Given that the foundations have already been laid, the role played by such arrivals can only be one of an additional ‘contribution’, with the possibility of contributing being firmly tied to the groundwork laid by others. These historical summaries therefore undermine the legitimacy of Italians in Griffith and give primacy to Anglo-Celts.

Soldier Settlers, men who came to the area as part of the post WW1 resettlement scheme, are an integral part of such a construction. Drawing on something of a victim narrative (see Curthoys, 2000), these returned servicemen often mark a kind of foundational moment in the history of farming in the area. There is much sympathy for these men, who ‘worked hard to clear the virgin scrub to prepare the land to be granted as irrigation farms to either themselves or other arrivals’ (GVC Panel ‘Soldier Settlers’). This formulation goes some of the way towards the construction of a prior ancestral space into which newcomers—other arrivals—might take their place. It is the (largely British descent) soldier settlers who prepare the space for the incomers, facilitating a hierarchical interpellation of different ethnic groups. There is another version of this story that has much currency locally. It tells of the failure of many soldier settlers as farmers and the subsequent sale of land to Italian farmers, who were able to succeed and prosper.126

124 The way they are included is reminiscent of Hage’s ‘Stew that Grew’, see Hage, 1998: 118-123.
125 See also Chapters Three and Four
126 See Chapter Four.
Cultural diversity is often seen as a feature of the present, but not the past despite the fact that Italians had begun settling in the area from the 1910s (Kelly, 1988: 165), Wiradjuri people were being expelled from nearby Warangesda Mission to where they had earlier been removed (Read, 1994: 54-75), and may well have been working and living in and around Griffith (see Kabaila, 1998), and the distinction between the Irish and the English was strong, not to mention the further internal differentiations that may have been made by these groups (see for example O'Farrell, 2000; and Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, 2002). Even in relation to the Snowy Mountains Scheme, often noted as significant in relation to Australia’s post-war immigration and the beginnings of multiculturalism, there is no explication beyond a brief reference to ‘over 100,000 people from over 30 countries around the world’ who ‘came to the Snowy Mountains’ (GVC Panel ‘Snowy Mountains Scheme’).¹²⁷

Discourses of Australian national identity in the tradition of what has been called ‘the bush legend’ (Turner, 1993: 107) loom large in some of these representations. Much of the postcard imagery, for example the postcard ‘Shearing Sheep’, draws on a version of Australian national identity that dates back to the 1890s and whose particularities seem to have ‘outlasted most of the political and social conditions which produced them without losing their potential for signifying Australian-ness’ (Turner, 1993: 110). Two tropes of Australian national identity appear, Ward’s Australian legend—in the form of shearer—and the pioneer/farmer (see Ward, 1966; Curthoys, 2000: 19-21). The image is that of ‘the white, masculine, outdoor person originating from the British Isles’ (Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 8). While women, as pioneers, were often included in this particular narrative take on Australian history, this is not in evidence in these particular representations (see Curthoys, 2000: 20).

What is particularly pertinent in thinking about representations of the past deployed within tourism in Griffith is the claim both the ‘pioneer legend’ and the ‘Australian legend’ are silent on race and ethnicity- ‘both refer only infrequently to non-British immigrants and both obscure the dispossession of indigenous peoples’ (Curthoys, 2000: 21). We can see something similar happening at the local level, that is, in

¹²⁷ See for example the Powerhouse Museum exhibition ‘Snowy! Power of a Nation’ held in Sydney, 28 September 1999- 30 January 2001 as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the scheme.
Griffith, too. Wiradjuri people and other non-Europeans (such as Indians, Turkish people, and Pacific Islanders) and their narratives, are effectively excluded from these representations of the past. The discursive construction of multiculturalism in history writing for tourism is such that it marginalises or ignores the contributions of many people. A ‘discourse of origins’ (Bennett, 1993b: 227) that flows from exploration by the colonists, particularly John Oxley and his party, has significant implications for Wiradjuri people. But an important shift is taking place in Griffith in terms of how the past is represented and Italians are now more overtly claiming the title of ‘pioneer’ and this is explored in the following chapter.

Conclusions

Many of the limits and limitations of multiculturalism explicated by Hage, Stratton and others are in evidence in the discursive construction of multiculturalism within tourism in Griffith. While tourism representations of multicultural Griffith both acknowledge and attempt to celebrate the cultural diversity of Griffith, on the whole, those responsible for these representations still interpellate discursively the various ethnic groups in Griffith in ways that exclude or marginalise some groups, despite the realities of life in Griffith. This is especially the case when potted histories of Griffith are attempted and is most pronounced in relation to Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people.

The examination of the discursive construction of multicultural Griffith for the tourist also shows that there has been change over time, an updating of the tourism images and identity, and the most problematical representations are the older ones, including the postcards, which are still in circulation. The historical summaries that are deployed within tourism remain particularly problematical. The GVC display is the most progressive and reveals how multiculturalism and cultural diversity are critical dimensions of the identity of contemporary Griffith and its people.

Cultural diversity is frequently used within tourism to promote Griffith and through these representations, council also demonstrate the importance of multiculturalism to Griffith and ‘pride’ in the cultural diversity of the town. The discursive construction of multiculturalism articulated in tourism representations draws in part on the kinds
of understandings evident in state-sponsored multiculturalism, but also goes beyond these conceptions. Griffith is not only culturally diverse in reality, but that the idea of multicultural Griffith is both constructed within and important to official discourses and tourism representations. Multiculturalism is so significant it has become part of the myth-making/image creation for tourism. It is part of what makes Griffith distinctive and because it is seen as a positive feature of the town it can then be deployed in the attempt to lure the tourist.

Analysis will now turn to local representations and discursive constructions of Griffith’s past more broadly as a way of examining the extent to which the idea of multicultural Griffith has permeated the sphere of local history and heritage, how it has done so, and what the implications of this are for those interpellated by it and for multiculturalism in Griffith.
Chapter Three

Of Pioneers and Settlers: Constructing the Past

Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, and more recently, the Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre,\textsuperscript{128} are the key sites in relation to Griffith’s non-Indigenous history and heritage. They are significant contributors to the telling of Griffith’s history in the public domain and are also major tourist attractions. This chapter considers the past that is constructed for Griffith at these sites. Analysis includes how the history that is told at Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum is legitimated, who participates in its construction and what the implications are for those who call Griffith ‘home’ and for multiculturalism in Griffith.\textsuperscript{129} The museums are conceived of as physical and symbolic structures that engage in the discursive construction of Griffith, its people and its past. The museum is analysed in relation to its discursive regimes and strategies as well as in its historical context, through the lens of multiculturalism.\textsuperscript{130} The analysis focuses on what both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum, their displays and exhibitions, reveal about multicultural Griffith.

Pioneer Park is constructed within the local imagination as a significant site of for local heritage and identity. This includes within tourism and in the broader undertakings of Griffith City Council (GCC) (see, for example, Griffith City Council, ndh). It purports to tell ‘the story of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda), and in doing so plays a key role in telling the history of ‘older’, generally Anglo-Celtic, locals. It offers a history that is constructed by those locals who identify with the pioneer/settler trope, and is presumably meant to instruct others in this history. But the Pioneer Park management is aware of the need to be inclusive in relation to museum content given the cultural diversity of the local community. So even at the local pioneer museum,

\textsuperscript{128} Hereafter referred to respectively as Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum.
\textsuperscript{129} For a broader consideration of museums as cultural/discursive constructions see for example Sherman and Rogoff (1994)
\textsuperscript{130} The museum is not analysed in relation to the latest technological advances in collection management, heritage conservation and interpretation. It is also outside the scope of the study to consider in detail visitor responses to the two museums, but as Urry (2002: 101) has observed, such sites are not uniformly read and passively accepted by visitors. On museum meaning-making in relation to visitors see for example Hooper-Greenhill (2000).
which could conceivably be a site of major resistance to the idea of Griffith as multicultural, attempts have been made to include more recent migrants within the existing exhibitions even though many of them do not share the same cultural heritage as the museum’s creators. In 2005 the Italian Museum, established by local people with an Italian heritage, was opened in the grounds of Pioneer Park. This has extended the recognition of Griffith’s diverse heritage in a significant and substantial way.

Both museums are, however, either unwilling or unable to account for Wiradjuri culture and heritage and this is their biggest shortcoming. Wiradjuri history and culture is either ignored or relegated to the margins. It emerges that both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of the contemporary legitimacy of those in Griffith who claim Anglo-Celtic or Italian heritage, although Pioneer Park also allows for the inclusion of more recent migrants. While the role of Griffith City Council is less overt than in the sphere of tourism, GCC is critical to the ongoing existence of both of these museums, given their financial and in-kind support. Individuals and community groups also play an important role in relation to the functioning of the two museums.

Part of what is at stake in relation to places like Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum is the articulation of identity. Sites like Pioneer Park tell us who we are and, perhaps more significantly, who we are not (Karp, 1991: 15). They are important sites of collective and individual identity formation and articulation in Griffith. They have implications for notions of belonging. That the local pioneer museum addresses cultural diversity says something about the kind of currency conceptions of Griffith as multicultural have. Multiculturalism has permeated thinking in Griffith in relation to who they are to the extent that even here attempts are made to acknowledge and include something of the cultural diversity of Griffith.

I begin by outlining a theoretical context for museums as cultural representations before analysing Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum in separate consecutive sections. A description is given of each site before analysing their respective exhibitions and displays. The discussions are drawn together in the concluding part of the chapter.
Museums and Heritage Sites: Cultural Representations

Museums, as modern cultural institutions, and importantly in the context of multicultural Australia, are essentially European-derived (Pearce, 1992). In the past they have been accused of both reflecting and serving a cultural elite, and with problematical engagement with so-called minority groups, including Indigenous people (see, for example, Simpson, 1996; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997). One of the claims made about both museums and heritage sites is that they silence alternative versions of the past (see for example Hollinshead, 1999).

For some time the representation of history as heritage has also been a significant dimension of the interest in museums and heritage sites for both museum professionals and academics (for example Lumley, 1988; Rickard and Spearritt, 1991; Davison, 2000). There have been substantial critiques of the ‘heritage industry’ in response to the proliferation of heritage sites in countries like Britain (see for example Hewison, 1987), while others have urged caution about simplistic readings of the heritage phenomena describing a ‘new heritage’ rather than a heritage boom per se (Samuel, 1994; Dicks, 2000).

Pioneer Park seems to sit awkwardly between ‘heritage site’ and ‘museum’, and is treated as a museum in the context of the study. This is because it proclaims itself as such, because of the emphasis on objects, and because it is a constructed site, in the older sense of the term, that is the location of the museum does not have any specific significance as a heritage site that is publicly acknowledged. Pioneer Park is a museum in the sense that it collects, displays and interprets objects for the public (Dicks, 2000). As such it is a site of power; a powerful and subtle author and authority (Karp, 1991; Macdonald and Fyfe, 1996). It is involved in the construction, elaboration and reproduction of identities (Graham, Ashworth et al.,

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131 Non-European cultures also participate in various forms of collection and display. See for example some of the essays in Karp and Lavine (1991) and Kreps (2003). There remains, however, an inherent tension when a multicultural society privileges one particular (in this case Western European) form of display. This form of display is the one that has taken hold and been developed most strongly in Australia and the following analysis works from within this tradition. Cf. Clifford, 1997.
2000). This dimension of what Pioneer Park does therefore is important in the context of multicultural Griffith.

As a museum, Pioneer Park is akin to an open-air folk museum or a living history museum (see Bennett, 1993a; Samuel, 1994; Dicks, 2000; 2003). It can be seen as part of a wider trend in relation to ‘public’ history in Australia whereby small local history museums in the style of Pioneer Park proliferated in the decades after the second world war and in particular during the 1960s and 70s (Davison, 2000; Gore, 2001: 45). Similar trends have been observed elsewhere in the ‘western’ world in relation to a broadening of heritage concerns to include a more diverse set of heritages that extend beyond those of the so-called elite groups (Samuel, 1994; Bennett, 1995; Urry, 1996; Dicks, 2000). There is also a longer history of this museum form in Europe and America (See Samuel, 1994: 169-189; Bennett, 1995: 115).

The proliferation of these kinds of museums is, then, part of a move away from elite heritage to a more vernacular one, in which we can, presumably, imagine ourselves (Dicks, 2000; 2003). The emphasis at Pioneer Park is on farming and rural life particularly during the early part of the 20th Century when the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme was being established, despite the claim to be telling the story of the area from ‘prehistory, through the sparsely settled 19th century, to the multi-cultural oasis of today’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda). The key figures are those conceived of as ‘pioneers’ and ‘settlers’. Critical here, however, are claims that these apparently more inclusive approaches to representing the past often remain silent on race and ethnicity (Curthoys, 2000). While this ‘new vernacular heritage’ (Dicks, 2000) represents local community simultaneously for the tourist gaze and to commemorate place-identity, it is the latter that dominates at Pioneer Park.

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132 Comparison can be made with the early days of the development of Sovereign Hill in Ballarat, Victoria, with which Pioneer Park has much in common despite it being a smaller undertaking. Pioneer Park, however, has not moved away from its initial raison d’être in the way that Sovereign Hill has done. See Evans (1991).
133 I consider these constructs below.
134 Hollinshead (1999) provides a good insight into the relationship between tourism and heritage. See also Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) and McCubben (2001).
Pioneer Park differs in a number of ways from many similar sites that have been studied. There is little emphasis on retailing goods and on the whole it seems to be less ‘polished’ than some comparable sites in Australia (see, for example, Bennett, 1993a). It also differs because it is less about tourist spectacle to the extent that it does not offer re-enactments and performances as part of its usual operation, period authenticity appears to be less of a priority, and there is no attempt to simulate the past through sights, sounds and smells beyond the display of objects and buildings (Dicks, 2000; 2003). Emphasis remains largely on the objects and buildings themselves and less on the life that went on around them. The kind of history it tells, and the themes and tropes that are deployed, however, are not dissimilar in many respects, to those discussed by Trotter (1992) in her analysis of the Stockman’s Hall of Fame in Queensland. But unlike the Stockman’s Hall of Fame, the discourse in operation at Pioneer Park does not reveal ‘fears that multiculturalism may subsume the Australian identity’ (Trotter, 1992: 167), rather it reveals the extent to which multiculturalism is recognised as a critical aspect of understanding Griffith’s past.

Pioneer Park is socially and historically located and bears the imprint of social relations beyond its walls and beyond the present. Its significance is not a function of its fidelity or otherwise to the past ‘as it really was’, rather, it depends on its position within and relations to the presently existing field of historical discourses and their associated social and ideological affiliations (Bennett, 1993a: 73). All representations of the past involve remaking in and through the present (Urry, 1996). At the time of Pioneer Park’s development, popular history in Australia was still very much pioneer history and the ‘new’ reconstructed pioneer villages and settlements seemed to embody this (Hirst, 1978: 335). These villages tended to confine pioneers to their land and ignore the wider society ‘by leaving out people altogether’ and were ‘powerful contributors to the consensus view of Australia’s past’ (Hirst, 1978: 335-336). Pioneer Park, despite the emphasis on buildings and other smaller objects, does include aspects of cultural identity, social history and collective memory and in doing so inscribes the Griffith landscape in deliberate and specific ways (see Allon, 2002).
Griffith Pioneer Park Museum

Background and Context of the Museum

Pioneer Park is located in an area of Griffith known as Scenic Hill, overlooking the town of Griffith, on the corner of Remembrance and Scenic Drives. Set on eleven hectares of ‘natural bushland’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda), it is comprised of more than forty buildings arranged along either side of street-like paths winding through the site, creating the impression of a village or town. The buildings include former schoolrooms, a shearing shed, blacksmith’s shop, stables, cottages, shops, churches, an inn, a coach house, two gaols, several sheds, a post office, a railway station, a couple of halls and a hospital. One of the buildings is used as a museum entrance and shop, another for administrative purposes, and another as a catering facility/function centre. Pioneer Park also provides a picnic/barbeque area within the main museum site and backpacker-style accommodation in an adjoining site. Pioneer Park is the sole member of the South West Chapter of Museums Australia (NSW).

Plate 9: Griffith Pioneer Park Museum. Laid out like a ‘village’, the museum is comprised of more than forty buildings brought to the site from as far a field as Victoria.

135 The site is actually a former gravel quarry that has been filled and in part re-vegetated, including the planting of gardens and a lawn (Howard, 2004).
A recent heritage study of the Griffith Local Government Area conducted on behalf of Griffith City Council and the NSW Heritage Office noted the heritage significance of several of the items in the collection, including some of the buildings. This study also recommended that the museum itself be included on both the local and state Heritage Registers. Pioneer Park was described as potentially having outstanding heritage values such that it should be nominated to the State Heritage Register. Its significance derives from it being an

Outstanding, intact example of the type of display village built in the 1970s. Very high social significance, as it taps into the grass roots of the Griffith psyche, symbolising the life struggles of the pre- and post-irrigation white pioneers. Some collection items are of possible state or national significance. Built by a core of people who had their roots in the pre-irrigation period, and were themselves irrigation pioneers, a lot of the work has its own high integrity (Kabaila, 1998: 11).

Ongoing research being carried out at Pioneer Park in relation to the collection includes a survey and assessment of the moved buildings which is being conducted by heritage consultant Meredith Walker and is funded by a NSW Ministry for the Arts grant (S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005).
The site is widely promoted within tourism as a key attraction, often being assigned the role of commemorating ‘the life and times’ of the ‘pioneers’ of the area (Griffith City Council, 1992:13; Griffith City Council, ndd:6). The Griffith Visitor Centre distributes promotional pamphlets, sells postcards and promotes the museum as an attraction through their website where it is described as ‘high on the list of attractions’ (Griffith City Council, nda). They include it on all but one of the fourteen itinerary suggestions in their Tour Operators Pack (Griffith Visitors' Information Centre, nd). It is also promoted by outside agencies and organisations through regional tourism brochures, on websites and in guidebooks (see for example Lonely Planet, 2002: 45; Tourism New South Wales, 2004).

Urry has described the generation of much more diverse sets of heritages in recent times, and he attributes this in part to a ‘proliferation of social groups who have sought through their enthusiasm to preserve aspects of “their” history’ (Urry, 1996: 58; see also Dicks, 2000). Those who sought to establish the museum were local people, many of whom were retired farmers (Howard, 2004). A committee was set up in 1967 and Griffith City Council helped the group secure the land for the establishment of the museum, with work beginning on the site in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and 80s as the collection was expanded (Howard, 2004). Griffith Pioneer Park Museum was officially opened in 1971 (Howard, 2004: 8). Today the museum is run by a community committee of twelve, including two GCC Councillors, and is staffed by volunteers and three council employed staff: a manager, curator and maintenance person (D. Collins, personal communication, July 17, 2005).

While people of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds may have dominated at Pioneer Park, it has not exclusively been their domain. Locals with an Italian background have, at various times, been involved with Pioneer Park in a range of capacities including as donors, as president of the committee, and as museum director (Howard, 2004). As a result of the relatively recent development of the Italian Museum in the grounds of Pioneer Park, two members of the Italian Museum committee have been allotted positions on the Pioneer Park committee and two members of the Pioneer Park committee are on the Italian Museum committee (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). This inclusiveness is not uncharacteristic of
multicultural Griffith, despite what one might expect from a place like Pioneer Park. There are limitations, however, and English is the only language used at the museum despite the fact that many in the local community have a first language other than English. In the context of multicultural Australia, and in particular Griffith, it is also pertinent to consider what fundamental assumptions underpin the kinds of representations of the past proffered by Pioneer Park and how this correlates with, for example, Indigenous, Pacific Islander or Sikh approaches to history and heritage (Karp, 1991).

Pioneer Park is a site of vernacular heritage and has essentially been established by members of the local community rather than museum professionals. It retains a volunteer base of about seventy people, most of whom are retired locals. These people are essential to the museum’s continued operation (D. Collins, personal communication, July 17, 2005). Since the mid 1980s the museum has, however, had a curator and at times the differing approaches of community volunteers and museum professionals has become apparent (Howard, 2004: 167; S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005). This is not surprising given that local feelings about heritage are forged out of quite different spaces from those of professionals (Dicks, 2000: 149). The volunteers remain very influential and have considerable input into the running of the museum (D. Collins, personal communication, July 17, 2005; S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005).

At Pioneer Park, ‘ordinary people now’ are offered the chance to encounter and learn about ‘ordinary people then’ (Dicks, 2000: 37). Where Pioneer Park differs from other similar museums is that neither those represented, nor those doing the representing, are appropriately described as being of the ‘subordinate classes’ (Bennett, 1995: 109). In the context of the local world of Griffith those involved with the museum, and whose heritage it essentially commemorates, tend to be drawn largely from one of the groups with the most social, cultural and economic capital: older Anglo-Celtic descended or white Australians. They were and are part of one of Griffith’s dominant groups. Indeed several prominent local people who might be described as ‘community leaders’, have been and continue to be involved with the museum. As a result Pioneer Park celebrates and commemorates vernacular
heritage, but is largely controlled by an ‘elite’ group of local people (cf. Bennett, 1995: 109-127).

Howard describes Pioneer Park as ‘the pride of the Griffith community’ (Howard, 2004: Preface) and participants did express a high degree of support for and interest in the museum. Most of the collection has been donated by members of the public. The relationship between the museum and those to whom it speaks is such that it is not uncommon for members of the public to visit the museum looking for the particular object/s donated by their family as a way of reconnecting with their heritage (S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005). All of the research participants that were formerly interviewed had visited the museum at various times and for various reasons. Many took visiting friends and relatives there for picnics or to ‘have a look around’. An Anglo-Celtic woman said it helped teach her grandchildren, who had not grown up in Griffith, ‘a bit about the area…I’d like them to know where their grandparents have come from and their roots’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). An Italian man felt that the museum was ‘good…its showing the whole history of Griffith…for me it means a lot’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). Several more recent migrants were somewhat less enthusiastic, although all still expressed support for both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum. A Tongan man thought it was ‘good because a lot of people don’t even know [about the history]’ (Interviewee 9, 19 Oct 2004). One Indian participant was ambivalent, pointing out that compared to his Punjabi heritage, ‘it’s not that old’ (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004). An Indian woman noted ‘great room for improvement’ in relation to the displays but her efforts to get involved had not been embraced (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004)(see below).

Pioneer Park also serves as a more general recreational and utilitarian space. Other uses of the site in 2004 included wedding ceremonies, a children’s playgroup, a book launch, a birthday party and a photographic shoot. Two major annual events are held on site: the Pioneer Park Action Day on Good Friday and Australia Day celebrations,

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136 On one occasion a family came to look for a table that they had donated several years earlier but were unable to find it. It was eventually located on a subsequent visit, but had initially been unrecognisable to the family because museum volunteers had ‘restored’ it (S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005).
which includes a ceremony and breakfast. The site is also an educational resource for school groups.¹³⁷

Plate 11: Forging a wheel at the annual Pioneer Park Action Day 2004 which drew a particular demographic to the site.

Plate 12: Soap-making at Pioneer Park Action Day 2004. Demonstrations of activities or events that are no longer routinely undertaken by contemporary people are a prominent feature of the day.

¹³⁷ This includes providing teachers with an education kit. The kit was under review when this
A range of community groups have been and continue to be involved with Pioneer Park, working on particular projects. The Griffith Lions Club, for example, have undertaken work on one of the generators in the collection in order to make it operational, something that has been acknowledged at the site by mounting the Lions Club insignia on the building that houses the generator. Groups like Rotary also often assist in the staging of events like the Pioneer Park Action Day by taking responsibility for the barbeque, for example (D. Collins, personal communication, July 17, 2005).

Pioneer Park appears initially as a shrine to objects, particularly old timber and corrugated iron buildings and farm machinery. There are a wide range of objects in the collection far too numerous to list here but including harvesters, horse-drawn vehicles, tractors (21 of them lined up in one shed), tools and equipment related to a range of trades like saddlery and blacksmithing, a fire engine, objects related to the pastoral industry, musical instruments, hospital equipment, office equipment, furniture, and a range of engines, generators, pumps and other machinery. Many of the objects seem to be included simply because they are ‘old’ or from an imagined bygone era.

Plate 13: Much of the Pioneer Park Museum collection consists of old farm machinery. This includes a large shed full of tractors.
The buildings are an eclectic collection of relocated/rebuilt original buildings ranging in date from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, replicas of imagined older buildings, and a few relatively new buildings. The buildings, and indeed the collection itself, have come from as far a field as Victoria having either been sourced specifically by the volunteers or donated by members of the public (Howard, 2004). Initially the museum did not have an acquisition policy. One was eventually adopted and it has not been altered since (Howard, 2004; S. Norris, personal communication, July 18, 2005). It includes reference to pre-irrigation times, the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, the town of Griffith, the existing buildings in the collection, the themes of isolation and self-sufficiency, farm equipment and ‘multi-cultural heritage’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndc). Formal interpretation of the site is somewhat limited, consisting mainly of a series of inconsistent green signs/labels that are mounted on either the exterior of the particular building (some are not labelled) or next to the object in question. A majority of the objects remain unlabelled.\footnote{Interpretation in this sense can include signs, brochures and other guides, websites, guided tours, text panels, object labels and so on. Interpretation ‘endows objects and places with symbols that make recognizable references to human lifestyles, giving them a human context which situates them in places, times, narratives or themes’ (Dicks, 2003: 11). See also McCubben (2001: 7-10) and McArthur and Hall (1996).}
If anxiety, uncertainty or some form of decline is a pre-condition for the development of sites like Pioneer Park (Hewison, 1987; Davison, 2000), it is not economic decline that prompted this development in Griffith. Pioneer Park was developed, however, at a time when Anglo-Celtic dominance in the town was being increasingly undermined. Contemporaneous to the establishment of Pioneer Park, Griffith was in the process of moving from one characterised by the complete dominance of migrants from Britain and Ireland, and their descendants, to one of power-sharing, at least with the Italian community (Grassby, 1985). This was becoming particularly evident in the area of farming and agriculture (Pich, 1975; Grassby, 1985). Concurrent with these local developments were Federal Government moves away from a policy of migrant assimilation to one of multiculturalism. Pioneer Park has not remained immune to these developments.

If the development of Pioneer Park did initially provide a means for coping with change, and contribute to the shoring up of Anglo-Celtic Australian identity because of a perceived threat to it, it has not been manifest as a denial of the future. While the women and men who established the museum may have felt that their heritage was under threat or not being adequately acknowledged, Pioneer Park is not about ‘retreatism’ per se (Dicks, 2000: 46). To a significant extent Pioneer Park is stimulated by the present, and makes reference to the present, rather than being a retreat from it. It is also forward-looking to the extent that it provides for the inclusion of more recent migrants in both the acquisition policy, which allows for an extension of the Museum’s existing collection in relation to ‘the multi-cultural heritage of the Region’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndc) and in the exhibition of these heritages. In this sense Pioneer Park might be thought of as ‘a quintessentially modern means of coming to terms with the incessant flow of time’ for Griffith residents (Dicks, 2003: 133).

**Telling the Story of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area**

One of the ways in which Pioneer Park functions is as a site of commemoration, governed in part by a discourse of memorialism (see Dicks, 2000). The museum was established with the intention of it being ‘a permanent tribute to the pioneers of the district’ (Howard, 2004: 2). The glossy brochure distributed by the Griffith Visitors
Centre declares that at Pioneer Park ‘We honour the Pioneers who turned the sod That future generations may live’ (sic) (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda) and the small photocopied guide to the site given to visitors upon their entry still foregrounds the honouring of pioneers as the museum’s purpose (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndb). Other recent museum texts couch the concerns of the museum in terms of heritage and identity (for example Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndd).

In this task of commemoration, the past that is constructed for Griffith at Pioneer Park draws on many of the old nationalist themes of Australian history more generally such as hardship and struggle, battlers and victims, triumph against adversity, social harmony and eventual success (see, for example, Curthoys, 2000). Indeed it is an acquisition priority to extend the collection in relation to objects that exemplify the ‘themes of isolation and self sufficiency’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndc). There is a particular ‘habit of memory’ in operation here (Thomas, 2001).

Pioneer Park is informed by national discourses and in Australia the pioneer legend is an ‘enduring national myth’ (Curthoys, 2000), configured differently at different times in the past, but conservative in its politics (Hirst, 1978). Pioneer Park derives its currency from this myth, as well as furthering it through its incarnation as ‘those who first settled and worked the land’ (Hirst, 1978: 318). Importantly for the analysis of Pioneer Park, ‘in pioneering histories, the distinction between people who are pioneers and people who are not is crucial’ (Thomas, 1996: 65).

The pioneer legend is potentially inclusive of women (Curthoys, 2000) with some going as far as to claim that women have always been included in the pioneer legend (Hirst, 1978: 331). At Pioneer Park the figure of the pioneer tends to be, but is not

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139 There is resonance here with some of the themes developed by the Australian Heritage Commission in their guide *Australian Historic Themes* (2001). The AHC’s list of themes also draws attention to many of the things about which Pioneer Park remains largely silent, like Indigenous dispossession.
exclusively male. Importantly, the legend is said to be silent on race and ethnicity (Curthoys, 2000). Hirst claims that by the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘a time of heightened concern for racial strength and purity,’ the meaning of the term pioneer was extended to include those who were working on the land, particularly on new farms or at the edge of settlement (Hirst, 1978: 332). This coincides, of course, with the development of the White Australia Policy as well as the Aborigines Protection Act. The conception of ‘pioneers’ held by those who established the museum was ‘the people who originally opened up the area in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s’ (sic)(Howard, 2004: 2), a conception that did allow the inclusion of those who were working on the land. But it did not include Wiradjuri people, and was silent on ethnicity. Things apparently changed, however, and ‘some years later…the advent of irrigation and closer settlement, and indeed immigration, were accepted as an integral part of the district’s history’ (Howard, 2004: 2).

It is against such a backdrop that the inclusion of the idea of Griffith as multicultural can be seen to be particularly significant. Multiculturalism has prompted rethinking about what is done at the museum. A current list of museum values makes reference to multiculturalism, whereby the fourth of the ten values is listed as ‘reflection of the heritage of all cultures which have contributed to the development of the region’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, ndd). On GCC’s website this is taken a step further when it is claimed that Pioneer Park has three special areas of interest: multicultural heritage; bush furnishings; and farm machinery (Griffith City Council, ndg). The museum’s pamphlet also lists ‘multi-cultural heritage’ as part of ‘telling the story of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda). Indeed ‘we aim to give visitors an understanding of the unique character of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, from prehistory, through the sparsely settled 19th century, to the multi-cultural oasis of today’ (Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, nda). The only real indication of this broadening of concern at the site itself, however, appears in the exhibition Griffith Through the Decades,141 where people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds are constructed as ‘settlers’. In one way those labelled

140 This type of history fails to recognise that Indigenous people ‘settled’ or ‘worked’ the ‘land,’ problematic as such interpretations are.
141 See analysis below.
‘recent arrivals’ appear almost as a decorative afterthought to the ‘real’ history of Griffith, and similar claims have been made about history and heritage at the national level in Australia (for example Ang, 2001b). Critically, however, the story told at Pioneer Park has been updated in an attempt to reflect the realities of multicultural Griffith.

But representations of Wiradjuri people and culture confirm that ‘despite sweeping changes throughout Aboriginal society which were set in train at the point of European contact, museums and galleries have sustained an illusion of primitivism and tribalism in their official versions of Aboriginal culture’ (Jones, 1992). The museum’s collection includes two ‘scarred trees’, positioned well away from the main part of the museum, the spatial arrangement reflecting how Wiradjuri people themselves have been positioned in Griffith (see for example Kabaila, 1998). These are trees that have, at some time, had sheets of bark removed by Wiradjuri people for purposes like making a canoe or shield. The rationale of the museum’s creators in relation to these trees seems to have been the same as that applied to the collection of buildings. They were removed from their original location along the Murrumbidgee River in 1972 after negotiations between the then museum president and the NSW Forestry Department and concreted into the ground at the museum (Howard, 2004). Howard describes their inclusion as an acknowledgment and commemoration of ‘the original settlers…particularly the Wiradjuri tribe…who inhabited the area prior to white settlement’ (2004: 17). The current curator of the museum acknowledges that the removal and de-contextualisation, or re-contextualisation, of Indigenous cultural heritage by non-Indigenous people is problematic (S. Norris, personal communication, June 11, 2004).
Plate 15: A 'scarred tree'. The tree was removed from along the Murrumbidgee River and placed at the museum to demonstrate Aboriginal cultural practices. It is located on the fringe of the ‘village’.

The text that accompanies this ‘exhibit’ refers only to ‘Aboriginal people’, about whose ‘cultural practices’ these trees are an ‘important reminder’. Wiradjuri culture is located in the past; without its local specificity and we get no sense whatsoever of the meanings the trees hold for Wiradjuri people. There is no contextualisation of the ‘objects’ and no Wiradjuri voice made audible by those who have set up this display. The making of a canoe is a ‘cultural practice’, by nameless ‘Aboriginal people’. The Soldier Settler’s Hut, in contrast, was ‘built’ by ‘Gerald Debois’ who
‘settled on Farm 1495, Yenda, in 1919 after serving in the British Army during World War 1’.142

There are other aspects of Griffith’s past about which Pioneer Park also remains largely silent. Pioneer Park claims to be telling the ‘story’ of the MIA and the use of the singular is instructive. The story told at Pioneer Park is largely one of struggle, hardship and challenge, but not a story of failure. As such, one important local legend, repeated often by participants, remains peripheral at Pioneer Park. This is the story of the failure of many returned soldiers who took up land as part of a post World War One resettlement scheme. Known locally as the Soldier Settlers, this group of men are reputed to have been unsuccessful in their attempts at farming (for a range of reasons not always of their own making) with many subsequently abandoning their farms. At Pioneer Park, however, there is only minor reference to this significant history, which, also as local legend would have it, enabled Italian farmers to come into the area, take up land, and subsequently succeed.143

‘Griffith through the Decades’: The Sharam Hall Exhibition

One of the key interpretive spaces in the museum is contained within a building called Sharam Hall, named after a key instigator in the setting up of the museum.144 The purpose of the building, built in 1970-1, was to display objects from the collection and is described today as an ‘orientation centre’ (Howard, 2004: 57-58). The permanent exhibition housed in this building, Griffith through the Decades, provides a condensed history of Griffith, partitioning it into a series of time periods which are then referred to chronologically.

The story begins with ‘The Way it Was: Bilbies and All’, which includes reference to Wiradjuri people, as well as the flora and fauna of the region. Positioning Indigenous people with flora and fauna, as part of ‘nature’ rather than ‘culture’ was

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142 There are many other examples that illustrate the point. There is additional detail given about the lives of many other non-Indigenous people who built or lived in the buildings at Pioneer Park.
143 This is discussed further, below, in relation to the Italian Museum.
144 Charles Sharam is the man referred to in the title of the book One Man’s Dream: A History of Griffith’s Pioneer Park Museum (Howard, 2004).
common in colonial Australia and has clearly not been done away with as an approach to Indigenous history and heritage at Pioneer Park.145

Plate 16: The first part of 'Griffith Through the Decades'. On the right hand side are some stone tools. To the left, just outside of the image area is a cardboard cut-out of John Oxley commenting on the scene before him.

The next panel ‘First Impressions: 1817 Oxley’ draws on the observations made by surveyor/explorer John Oxley when he travelled through the area, before the story proper gets going. The key themes are of isolation and hardship, visionary men, hard work, the harshness of life, failures of government and experts, the farmers as victims of outside forces, bountiful harvests, closer settlement and, finally,

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multiculturalism. This is essentially a ‘birth-and-development of Griffith’ model of the past (Thomas, 2001: 307) that begins with the establishment of ‘Large Area Stations’ and reaches its apotheosis with the establishment of the irrigation scheme. Represented are the familiar sanitised nationalist themes that have been thoroughly naturalised through repetition (Birch, 1992: 237).

Plate 17: Part of the Sharam Hall exhibition ‘Griffith Through the Decades’. One can get a sense of the design and layout of the exhibition.

Harking back to an earlier era of museum display, several Indigenous objects are displayed as part of ‘The Way it Was’. They are positioned alongside several representations of native fauna carved out of wood and against a painted backdrop of a bush scene, something that suggests that they are of a different order to the other objects in this display. Museums generally have played an important role in ‘re-sanctifying ceremonial material, articulating series of weapons and domestic artefacts, and presenting authenticity to a public conditioned by schooling and the media to accept notions of the savage and the “other”’, locating authenticity in another place and time (Jones, 1992: 62).

146 Displayed are a shield, a didgeridoo, two ‘sharpening stones’ and a ‘pounding stone’. This tendency in museum display, still evident at Pioneer Park in 2004, was criticised by the Pigott Committee in its 1975 inquiry into Australian museums and collections. See Bennett, 1993a.
Exhibited here as part of the natural history of the area, Wiradjuri people are positioned on the lowest rung of the ladder of human evolution, representing culture at the stage of its emergence out of nature (Bennett, 1993a: 76). The recognition of an Indigenous presence in the area prior to white settlement was deemed necessary, but not through any notion of Wiradjuri people being an integral part of Griffith’s history. Rather, they appear as part of the flora and fauna, part of ‘nature’, disappearing before the advance of European civilisation, in the figure of John Oxley (Healy, 1997; Gore, 2001). There is no overt deployment here of the myth of *terra nullius*, nor the equally familiar story of fatal impact (see Thomas, 1994: 15). As Tom Griffiths (1996: 5) claims, because of the nature of their undertaking, ‘settler Australians’ as amateur historians, were generally unable to avoid contemplating Aboriginal culture as they speculated about nature and the past. Griffith’s amateur historians have contemplated Wiradjuri culture. But the inclusion, which mirrors what has been observed more generally in Australia, is such that Wiradjuri people are essentially a ‘stone age people’ whose displacement by subsequent ‘settlers’ might appear to have been prefigured in evolution (see Beckett, 1988c: 196).

*Griffith Through the Decades* remains silent about the foundations of non-Indigenous claims to the land (Bulbeck, 1991). This worse than tokenistic effort confines Wiradjuri people to prehistory; excludes Wiradjuri voices; conceals the historic relationships between Wiradjuri and non-Wiradjuri people; and subsumes Wiradjuri people into this non-Indigenous history of Griffith. It is a classic example of discursive and institutional practices through which white Australia imagines and defines itself in relation to the Indigenous people it has colonised (Mickler, 1991: 71) and through which colonialism in perpetuated (McCubben, 2001).

Cast as simply the ‘first known settlers’, in a long line of settlers, Wiradjuri people can have no particular prior claims to land, and their sovereignty is significantly undermined (cf. Trotter, 1992: 169). The use of the word ‘known’ suggests there may even be some doubt about their status as the first. As Chilla Bulbeck puts it,

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147 Paradoxically, Pioneer Park management permitted an important disruption to this convenient tale about Wiradjuri/Aboriginal people and culture when local Aboriginal (Kamilaroi) man Merv Firebrace participated in Pioneer Park Action Day activities. Merv, in a t-shirt with the Koori flag printed on it, and shorts and sandshoes, played the didgeridoo and told stories for the audience at
‘we all have the same claim to stay here’ (1991: 169). Wiradjuri people, conceived of as ‘the first settlers’ in this opening display, and noted as ‘the first known settlers’ in the later discussion of settlers, are effectively excluded from this narrative of progress and development. There is no recognition of their participation in the establishment of the area as it currently stands, nor, presumably, in its future.

If one knows where to look, however, there is a somewhat surprising interruption of the dominant narrative in this exhibition. Tucked away towards the back of the exhibition, and dwarfed by displays of produce, is a small display case containing some archaeological remains from Warangesda Mission and Darlington Point Reserve. This display was put together by a consultant archaeologist, seemingly on behalf of local Aboriginal people, and reveals that there is much more to the story of Wiradjuri people’s dispossession, including their survival, than the main interpretation would have us believe. From the display we learn something of Wiradjuri lives from the 1880s to 1924 at Warangesda and the subsequent move to the Darlington Point Reserve. The story is brief but includes a little about the role of the church in post-invasion Indigenous lives, the suffering and hardship many endured, Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations, government control over Indigenous lives and Wiradjuri involvement in agriculture. By telling some of the story of Warangesda Mission, Wiradjuri people continue to be part of Griffith’s story despite the mystification that is a feature of the opening panel and display, ‘The Way it Was’. The way this display sits within the exhibition itself, however, means that there is no real undermining of the dominant historical discourse and indeed this ‘interruption’ can be quite easily missed. Its potential for subversion is also undermined by the understated interpretation of the display: it remains ambiguous in relation to the larger exhibition.

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Action Day 2004. At Pioneer Park these seemingly contradictory representations co-exist. See Chapter Seven.

148 Misspelt here as ‘Waradjuri’, later Wiradjuri
150 The mission was located on the Murrumbidgee River near Darlington Point, just south of the town of Griffith. It was opened in the late 1800s and closed in the mid 1920s after which time some of those who had lived on the mission moved to another place on the river that came to be a reserve (See Read, 1994 and Kabaila, 1998).
The key constructs in the exhibition are the pioneer and the settler (cf. Dicks, 2003: 157-158). The pioneer is clearly a racially and ethnically inscribed figure, but the construct of the settler appears to be a more flexible and potentially inclusive concept. In this exhibition there are four categories of settler: Wiradjuri people (the first settlers); squatters and settlers ‘mainly of British origin’; settlers (a whole range of nationalities including British and Italian) and ‘recent arrivals’ (non-European migrants). We see here the attempt at Pioneer Park to be more inclusive and to recognise the diversity of present-day Griffith. This is an important acknowledgement that reveals that multiculturalism is a critical part of the ongoing collective identity of the Griffith community and provides an example of how this is manifest in representations of the past.

This construct, ‘settlers’, however, is not without its problems. While many of Griffith’s ethnic groups are represented, each is positioned slightly differently and not all are portrayed as having contributed equally to the progress and development of Griffith. Each are interpellated slightly differently and accorded different roles both temporally and in relation to the material evidence exhibited at Pioneer Park, therefore feeding into both the gendered and racialised nature of hegemonic myths of pioneers and settlers (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995a: 8). Indeed some settlers actually appear as the beneficiaries of the hard work, vision and suffering of the exemplary settler, the pioneer. The ‘recent arrivals’ in particular, seem to appear after the hard work has been done and are given little credit for their contributions. Incorporated as ‘the first known settlers’ the specific histories of Wiradjuri people too are effaced and their prior occupancy reduced to being no more significant than that of any other ‘settler’. The violence of the dispossession of Wiradjuri people is completely ignored as are Wiradjuri responses to the invasion of their country. Wiradjuri voices are silenced. Seen in this display are both the persistence and the perpetuation of colonialism (McCubben, 2001). The ‘19th Century squatters and settlers…mainly of British origin’ are the key figures in this exhibition.

151 See for example Read (1994).
Omitted from the story are broader issues of race relations, gender relations, and social disadvantage. Instead we are confronted with a cosy consensual vision of the past (see Davison, 2000: 169-170) and an assumption of common destiny (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995a: 19). This exhibition presents a history of Griffith that is continuous, exemplary, without discord (Walsh, 1992: 128), and purged of disturbing social and political conflicts (Davison, 2000: 167). The key to the success of the area continues to be the pioneer, a virtuous figure who toiled and suffered in the barren, desolate landscape, something from which subsequent settlers continue to benefit. But the assumed common destiny can be seen to be one in which people from a range of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are included, and it is one in which multiculturalism is a part.

**Inclusive Histories**

While it may be that at the national level in Australia the understanding of the past ‘from indigenous prehistory through pioneer accomplishment to the expansiveness of antipodean modernity, is no longer unashamedly embraced, either officially or in public perceptions’ (Thomas, 2001: 304), this understanding of the past has yet to be transcended at Pioneer Park.
A range of people, though included in the Pioneer Park narrative, remain on the margins and in many ways Pioneer Park is assimilatory in its approach. The contribution of women at Pioneer Park is recognised but on the whole this is a ‘man’s world’, and women remain peripheral. This is made possible in part through the emphasis in the collection on machinery, tools and other objects associated with the lives and work of men. Indigenous people, and other non-European people, might well have histories that do not belong to this birth-and-development model of history, with its emphasis on ‘contribution’ (see Thomas, 2001), but there are very limited attempts to accommodate alternative perspectives at Pioneer Park.

Pioneer Park records and commemorates the lives of farmers and other ‘ordinary people’. But the masculinist and ethnocentric biases limit its status as an egalitarian museum representing ‘the community’ of Griffith and telling ‘the story of Griffith’. A range of experiences that are important to the development of multiculturalism are ignored or trivialised including race relations and the dispossession of Wiradjuri people. The demarcation of the late 19th century-early 20th century as the period most worthy of attention facilitates the ethnocentrism in evidence at Pioneer Park especially given the significance of people of British and Irish descent during this period. The diversity within this ‘group’ remains invisible. Pioneer Park serves in part to silence alternative memories of the past (see Urry, 1996).

But while the museum is ethnocentric in terms of its perspective, and in relation to power and control, the creators don’t consciously ignore or marginalise non-Anglo-Celtic locals. Instead, they weave them into the story in subtle ways that, in the end, obscure their specific histories and privilege an Anglo-Celtic perspective (see Bennett, 1993a). This is particularly obvious in relation to Italians. Nor has there been a conscious attempt to exclude or marginalise Aboriginal people. Indeed acknowledging ‘the original settlers’ was deemed to be part of telling the history of

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152 There is further evidence of this kind of thinking in the some of the responses to the development of the Italian Museum. See discussion below.
the area in the earlier phase of the museum’s development (Howard, 2004: 17). How this was attempted is, however, highly problematical.

All of this has not gone unnoticed by some local residents. One older Anglo-Celtic Australian interviewee commented that Pioneer Park needed to be more inclusive ‘as far as ethnic groups are concerned’. The main thing preventing a more inclusive approach in relation to both the collection and its interpretation was deemed by this person to be funding. The Italian Museum was seen as a step in the right direction, however, ‘what I’d like to see is some avenue of showing the other ethnic groups that have come here in the same light, but it probably won’t happen in such a grand way. I can’t see we can have one for the Fijians, one for the Turkish…this is where Pioneer Park needs to say okay, we need to bring some of these groups into our area’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). While this was a call for a broadening of the collection and the interpretation, it was not a call for a different perspective on the history of Griffith.

Although the voices and stories we hear are essentially those of people with an Anglo-Celtic heritage, what they talk about has been broadened by the inclusion of non-Anglo-Celtic migrants. What is remarkable about this conservative pioneer museum is that rather than resist the idea of multicultural Griffith, they have incorporated it into their brief. The recently opened Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, known locally as simply the Italian Museum, constructs the past from a slightly different perspective, though as we shall see, leaves the dominant paradigm intact. The result is a binary rather than a multi-lateral framework.
The Italian Museum

Ethnocentrism and exclusionary practices by ‘mainstream’ museums have provided impetus for the establishment of museums by particular ethnic groups wishing to take some control of cultural representation and develop museums that satisfy their own needs, as well as provide additional roles and functions (Simpson, 1996: 4). This has been part of the reason for the establishment of the Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre, which was officially opened in September 2004 by the then Premier of NSW, Bob Carr.

The Italian Museum stands in stark contrast to Pioneer Park in a number of ways. Visually, the imposing architect-designed building, which incorporates both corrugated iron and rendered concrete facades, is very different to the cluster of buildings located only 50 metres away within the same complex.  

It is surrounded by a well-maintained looking green lawn through which a formal path leads to a paved forecourt area and entry to the building.

Plate 19: Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre was opened in 2004 and provides an interesting visual contrast to the pioneer village with which it shares its grounds.

153 The decision to locate the museum at Pioneer Park was made by the Italian Museum Committee for reasons that were largely ‘practical’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004).
Inside the objects are positioned in tall glass cases that stand back to back along the centre of the exhibition space, or on one of the freshly painted white platforms. These two display areas are placed far enough away from the central glass cases to create a walkway between the two. The objects are carefully positioned and clearly labelled. The impression is one of order and cleanliness. The building is light and airy and appears very sparsely furnished with the collection compared to the ‘riot’ of objects in the park next door. The names of the sponsors and others who have contributed are stencilled onto the back of the lime-green wall that partitions the entrance from the exhibition. The displays are carefully interpreted by four large themed text panels, a series of sub-panels, and object labels, all of which have been well-researched and well-written. Multi-media and interactive displays were yet to be installed (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). In another contrast with Pioneer Park, text appears in both English and Italian.154

Plate 20: Part of the Italian Museum display. The interior of the building, and the way in which the objects are displayed and interpreted, is also quite different to Pioneer Park.

Like Pioneer Park, the Italian Museum has been very much a community effort, and has taken over ten years to come to fruition. As reflected in the title of the museum,
this is seen as more than just an exhibition space by its creators and its function as ‘a cultural centre and a centre of learning’ is equally important (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). Two annual events have already been inaugurated at the museum, the Festa delle Salsicce and the Festa della Republica, and there are plans for a third annual event as well as a library and Italian language centre (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). The museum is run by the Italian Museum Committee made up of members of the Italian community in Griffith and two members of the Pioneer Park Committee.

Many who consider themselves part of the Italian community in Griffith have been involved more generally in the development of the museum in a variety of ways and indeed a majority of the funds needed to establish the museum came from this community (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). The current exhibition has been designed and implemented by a curatorial consultant based on research and other work done by local people (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). As was the case at Pioneer Park, there has been some tension between the approaches and expectations of some committee/community members and professional curatorial practice (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). Unlike Pioneer Park, however, the latter seems to have triumphed in relation to the Italian Museum exhibition.155

It is claimed that this is less about any kind of Italian nationalist sentiment and more about acknowledging Italian culture and heritage in its Australian context; less about tourism and more about local social and cultural life (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). It seems to be about all of these things. It is about strategic self-essentialisation based on a desire to maintain and recognise a distinctive Italian culture and identity in Griffith. Part of the rationale of those involved in developing the museum was to ‘leave a legacy for Griffith of what they

154 The large suspended text panel visible in the above photograph is in Italian. On the other side of the display case the same text appears in English. On the labels and smaller text panels placed along the bottom of the case information appears first in English and then in Italian. 155 The Italian Museum is also currently involved in a project jointly funded by GCC and the Migration Heritage Centre of NSW. ‘Fruit of our Labour: Italian Stories’ is being carried out with the assistance of the Australian Centre for Public History at the University of Technology Sydney. Stage One of the project is to comprise the production of a short illustrated history, development of a list of historic themes, a series of local workshops, and the documentation and assessment of relevant local historical collections (GCC, 2005).
had contributed to the growth of Griffith’ and to provide a space to ‘house memorabilia that immigrants brought out with them’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). This has broadened to include a brief to ‘develop the different aspects of Italian cultural life’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). The development of the museum, in part, reflects a renewed pride in Italian heritage and culture within the Griffith community after its waning in the 1970s and 80s (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004).

Despite the claim that people in Griffith, generally, are ‘very supportive’ of the project and ‘understand the contribution that Italians have put into the town’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004), it has not been without controversy. When the project was first being mooted in the early-mid 1990s, some tensions appeared that many in Griffith may well have thought they had done away with. Anecdotally, some of those involved with Pioneer Park, in whose grounds the museum building was to be built, charged members of the Italian community with being segregationist; with not wanting to ‘assimilate’. Further to this, graffiti appeared on a road sign just outside the grounds of the museum declaring/demanding ‘pioneers of oz not wogs’ (sic). The graffiti was hurriedly removed before NSW Government Minister Frank Sartor, who had been in Griffith overnight for a museum fundraiser, was driven past the sign on his way to the airport.

There are complex meanings at play here. Assimilation was the dominant discourse in Australia for many years before multiculturalism, and it is not unheard of for older Australians to call for its return, like public intellectual and author Peter Coleman did in a 2006 SBS Radio forum on multiculturalism (Coleman, 2006). In the Griffith context it could simply mean that the person claiming that the building of a separate Italian museum was segregationist felt that it was going to undermine a sense of collective history and identity in Griffith. The graffiti, however, has a more clearly sinister tone to it and makes a clear distinction between ‘pioneers of oz’ and ‘wogs’, who are presumably not part of the former. Although not wishing to be drawn on the matter, the Chair of the Italian Museum Committee conceded that ‘when we started there was that feeling that we were treading on Anglo territory, I guess’ (J.

156 In this it has much in common with Pioneer Park.
Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). There are clearly some tensions remaining between the dominant groups in Griffith but there have also been attempts to overcome these.\textsuperscript{157}

Like Pioneer Park, the Italian Museum is very much a site of vernacular heritage. Objects include personal items, household items, and objects related to work, social life and industry with either an Australian (Griffith) or Italian provenance. Each object is linked to a particular individual, family or business but not contextualised beyond this. The exhibition turns on four key themes related to Italian settlement in Griffith: immigration, improvisation, tradition, and consolidation. There is limited contextualisation of Italian immigration to Griffith. The lives of local people and families who are/were migrants from Italy are crucial to this exhibition and their personal stories are prominent and paramount. The objects on display are there because of their connection to the individual lives of both men and women.\textsuperscript{158}

This exhibition too has its ‘pioneers’, both male and female. The themes of hardship and isolation are important, as they are for Pioneer Park, and emphasis is placed on difficult living conditions, hard work, success and prosperity in relation to Italian migrants. Interestingly, Bagtown, the pre-Griffith village constructed of scrap material from the construction of the irrigation scheme and closely associated with Anglo-Celtic heritage, and that is romanticised by the creators of Pioneer Park, is described in this exhibition as ‘crude’ (IM Panel ‘Improvisation’). The language used here is much less romantic than that used by Pioneer Park in relation to Bagtown and one gets a sense that in this ‘Italian’ telling there is some disdain for the way these presumably non-Italians lived. While the Italian Museum tells much of the same story as Pioneer Park, stories which have wider currency in Griffith, the different reading of Bagtown illustrates the productive potential of alternative ethnic/cultural perspectives on the past.

But such alternative histories often cannot resist the force of the imaginative will of mainstream truths and may end up mimicking them (Hollinshead, 1999: 54). Like Pioneer Park, the history told at the Italian Museum is a triumphant history and the

\textsuperscript{157} See Chapter Six
\textsuperscript{158} Indeed here it is ‘women and men’ (IM Panel ‘Consolidation’)

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Italian ‘pioneers’ are characterised variously as skilled, ingenious, hardworking, remarkable, extraordinary, productive and knowledgeable. Unlike the soldier-settlers, who in this telling were ‘inexperienced’ and therefore ‘failed and moved on’, ‘the abilities of the pioneering immigrants ensured they succeeded on their farms’ (IM Panel ‘Tradition’). Although it is Italians rather than Soldier Settlers to whom the success and prosperity in agriculture is attributed, the framework of the story remains the same.

Although Italians in Griffith today are part of the dominant group, this has not always been the case. While Pioneer Park manages to avoid any reference to race relations, the Italian Museum acknowledges the impact of the White Australia Policy, internments during World War Two and tensions in the town between ‘Italians’ and ‘Anglo-Australians’. The tensions are, however, set only in the past, and while this gives an indication of the present day relations between Anglo-Celtic and Italian locals, it fails to acknowledge the ongoing struggles of many more recent migrants to Griffith. Nor does it explore, to any great extent, an ongoing division within the Italian community in Griffith today: that between ‘Northerners’ and ‘Southerners’. The only sense of Italian diversity is from the small map of Italy hanging on one of the walls which shows Italy as a series of regions.

At Pioneer Park the significant figures are the pioneer, and his progeny, the settler. At the Italian Museum it is the Italian immigrant who, above all others, is given credit for what both museums agree is the successful development of the town of Griffith. While the great white men singled out for special mention at Pioneer Park have their equivalents here in Valerio Ricetti, the ‘hermit of Scenic Hill’ and Al Grassby, it is essentially ‘ordinary people’ that this exhibition celebrates. It is made even more meaningful because many of those whose stories are recorded are still alive or have children who are.

The Italian Museum is more culturally/ethnically exclusive than Pioneer Park, making no reference at all to Wiradjuri people or other ethnic groups in Griffith other than ‘Anglo-Australians’. Indeed the exhibition does not describe Griffith as

\[159\] Cf. Chapter Four
multicultural at all. Rather it talks about the relationship between Anglo-Australians and Italians, and how this has changed over time, and makes brief reference to ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ Italians. It sees the relationship between Anglo-Australians and Italians today as a positive one, as opposed to the past, and sees the improved situation as being largely attributable to Al Grassby and the efforts of some ‘Griffith Italians’.

In relation to Wiradjuri people, the Italian Museum illustrates the kind of instance Pugliese (2002) had in mind when he called for a ‘decolonising migrant historiography.’ It is a site through which colonial relations of power are reproduced in relation to Wiradjuri people and their culture and heritage. Like Pugliese argues in the Australian context, Griffith’s ‘migrants’, and I would add especially those from Italy who like their English/Irish/Scottish/Welsh counterparts have a long and substantial history in the area, have an ethical responsibility to Wiradjuri people.¹⁶⁰

In some ways then, the Italian Museum is also more conservative than Pioneer Park and fails to recognise and incorporate Griffith’s diversity and its Indigenous heritage. This is, however, as its name proclaims, an ethno-specific museum, and does not claim to tell ‘the story of Griffith’, rather that of Italian settlers. In the same way that Pioneer Park valorises the Anglo settler-pioneer, the Italian Museum, albeit in a slightly more sophisticated way, romanticises and valorises the Italian migrant as the primary contributor to the success of Griffith. In the context of multiculturalism in Australia such museums provide an opportunity for the historical specificities of particular cultural or ethnic groups to be recognised but to the extent that they are ethno-specific may be limited in their broader relevance and in fostering a sense of a shared identity. So while the establishment of museums like the Italian Museum are clearly important to the recognition of, in this case, Italian culture and heritage, they may be less able to be advocates for multiculturalism per se.

**Conclusions**

The histories told at both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum are celebratory and complacent (Bennett, 1993a). Further, those responsible for creating the museums
can be seen to have inherited a multiplicity of sociocentrism and live within an edifice of ethnocentrism that have arisen out of earlier attempts to explain the world in a particular place for a particular population (Hollinshead, 1999: 57). Pioneer Park valorises the Anglo-Celtic pioneer as the key figure, while at the Italian museum it is the Italian migrant. Both are constructed as virtuous, resilient, hardworking and innovative. Each museum asks the visitor to see their respective heroes as the key to what they believe has been the successful development of Griffith. This mirrors an important reality about Griffith given that people from Anglo-Celtic and Italian backgrounds comprise the dominant groups in Griffith.

On the whole the histories told at these sites are in harmony with other local histories told within the sphere of tourism, in local history books, by the local council and elsewhere. Like other museums, Pioneer Park functions largely as a repository of the ‘already known’, telling again the stories of Griffith, which have ‘become a doxa through their endless repetition’ (Bennett, 1993a: 73). The history told at the Italian Museum also has great currency in Griffith, though it has, up until now, tended to be an oral history rather than a written one. While the Italian Museum adds another voice to the telling of the history of Griffith, the discursive construction of the past in which it participates is also problematical.

The implications of what they do at Pioneer Park for multiculturalism in Griffith are significant and important. Pioneer Park does acknowledge that the Griffith community is culturally diverse, although the diversity of the community is not well reflected in the museum. The Italian Museum adds another voice to the telling of the history of Griffith, foregrounding the contribution of Italian migrants to the area. Voices outside of these two dominant groups are yet to be heard in any significant way.

The issues raised for multicultural Griffith by looking at local representations of the past ‘are not just about displays in glass cases, but about relationships—between individuals, between museums and communities, and between peoples of different

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160 See Chapter Seven.
161 This was one of the issues identified by the NSW Ministry for the Arts in 1994 in relation to regional and community museums (NSW Ministry for the Arts, 1994).
cultures—relationships which need to be built upon respect, tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of difference and similarity’ (Simpson, 1996: 3). There are also profound implications for reconciliation with Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people in Griffith. At a more practical level, if large numbers of the local community feel alienated, or even offended, by a museum, then the very future of the museum becomes threatened (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1997: 2).

The option taken by those with an Italian heritage is not an option for many other ethnic groups in Griffith for a range of reasons including economic. Nor, one might argue, should each ethnic group have to establish their own space to tell their story because it has been neglected by the ‘mainstream’ histories, both Anglo-Celtic and Italian. Possibilities for inclusion include collaboration, providing space for others to self-represent, inviting people from a range of backgrounds onto the committee and to volunteer, greater recognition of other groups in the permanent displays and hosting cultural events like national days, which are already celebrated in Griffith. Of course different cultures may have different approaches to collecting, displaying and interpreting material culture. What is culturally appropriate is variable and this needs to be taken into consideration (see Kreps, 2003).

It may be that smaller museums like Pioneer Park, and perhaps the Italian Museum, which are largely run by volunteers and which have limited resources, are less likely to expand their approaches and indeed may remain resistant to change (see Hooper-Greenhill, 1997). One interviewee, a woman born in India who in the established schema of multicultural Griffith would be considered a ‘recent arrival’, certainly found her attempts to become involved in the running of Pioneer Park, and her suggestions in relation to its activities, either dismissed, or blocked outright. She noted ‘a strong barrier’ to her participation, putting this down to the fact that ‘people have been doing their jobs for years and years’ and were therefore not open to alternatives (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004). She became disillusioned to the point where she has decided not to pursue any involvement.

162 Hooper-Greenhill (1997) provides examples of where such attempts have been made.
A lingering question is the extent to which local history museums, based on the experiences of a particular ethnic group, can or should try to capture the experiences of an entire culturally diverse community. When a claim is made that a site, for example, tells ‘the story of Griffith’, it is essential that a range of community perspectives be included. When the experiences of a particular ethnic group are the **raison d’être** however, an argument can perhaps be made in defence of exclusionary practices. One of the problems with not being inclusive is the failure to recognise interrelationships, interconnections, overlaps, and indeed the sheer complexity and messiness of multicultural Griffith.

Wiradjuri people fare the worst in representations of the past at both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum. It has been noted more generally that ‘the Aboriginal community has been poorly served in the State’s regional collections through the presentation of artefacts of culture, lifestyle and religion. Traditional owners have not always been consulted about the presentation of their culture and history’ (NSW Ministry for the Arts Museums Advisory Council, 1994:15). This is certainly the case here. Further, at Pioneer Park, Wiradjuri people remain marginal in both space and time (see Jones, 1992: 62) while the Italian Museum fails to acknowledge the existence of Wiradjuri people and culture at all. Both sites can be described as neo-colonial in their approaches.

Critical, however, is the fact that Pioneer Park, which could conceivably be a site of major resistance to the idea of multiculturalism in the Griffith context, incorporates this dimension of the cultural heritage of Griffith into what it does.

A key purpose of both Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum is commemoration. The following chapter further explores this by considering the cultural landscape of Griffith more widely in relation to commemoration, memorialisation, and other cultural inscriptions. As such we move from a physically bounded site, controlled by a relatively small group of people, to the townscape itself.
Chapter Four

Inscribing the Landscape: Soldiers, Settlers and Recent Arrivals

Prominent townscape features like monuments and memorials tell us something about multicultural Griffith. Monuments and memorials are cultural inscriptions that do discursive and representational work in relation to the community, its values and its identity. They have implications for all who live in the town. They are public declarations and monumental acknowledgments of the significance of particular groups, individuals, events and sites. They are politically charged and power-laden (see Mitchell, 1994a).

While state practices may institutionalise concepts like multiculturalism, it is in space that such concepts may become materially cemented and naturalised in everyday life (see Anderson, 1991: 29). A reading of how multiculturalism is constructed within the commemorative landscape, and of how Griffith is inscribed with/by multiculturalism/the cultural diversity of Griffith extends our understandings of the complexities and nuances of multicultural Griffith. Read in conjunction with the understandings of everyday life in Griffith derived from ethnographic research materials, some of the tensions and ambiguities of multicultural Griffith can be seen.

Anglo-Celtic dominance seems to loom large in several of the inscriptions examined which include memorials to the war dead, soldier settlers, and pioneers, and is supported by events like Anzac Day. War heroes—soldiers, airmen, even women—are key figures in the representations and, along with the settler/pioneer, have provided much of the impetus for memorialisation in Griffith in the past. A walk along the main street of Griffith, Banna Avenue, reveals a series of monumental features, many of which are dedicated to these figures. The relationship between the cultural inscriptions dedicated to soldiers and pioneers and the idea of multicultural Griffith is one that turns, in part, on a disavowal of cultural diversity and reifies these exemplary figures in relation to the development of Griffith.
Wiradjuri people and more recent migrants have been absent from these memorial endeavours. Recently, however, another commemorative feature has been added to the townscape. *Lifecycle* is the outcome of a community cultural development project undertaken in 2004. This more inclusive representation of the community illustrates the democratic potential of the commemorative landscape. The ‘different’ groups that are deemed locally to make up the ‘broader community of Griffith’ are overtly articulated through the *Lifecycle* mosaic sculptures. While it may be unable to fully challenge or subvert the older, Anglo-Celtic dominated memorial endeavour, it is an important addition to the commemorative landscape and illustrates the extent to which multiculturalism has permeated the cultural world of Griffith as a critical part of its identity and how cultural diversity is valued locally.

The next section serves to contextualise the chapter. This is followed by a closer reading of Griffith. The analysis is divided into three sub-sections, each concerned with a different aspect of the commemorative landscape. These are ‘War and the Supreme Sacrifice’, ‘The Agricultural Endeavour: Mythologising Pioneers and Settlers’ and ‘A Monument to Cultural Diversity: The Lifecycle Project’.

**Landscape Inscriptions**

Landscape inscriptions provide insights into both the present and the past including power relations and identity formation. Cultural landscapes generally are heavily immersed in discursive constructions and representations of the communities in which they exist. The commemorative landscape of Griffith is constructed in and through discourse but is also an active participant in that discourse. This landscape potentially both mirrors and produces power relations as well as being a site for constructions of local identity (see for example Anderson, 1991; Bender, 1993; Mitchell, 1994a; Robertson and Richards, 2003). As such, landscapes, and the cultural inscriptions they contain, can be used to perpetuate, support and legitimate, and indeed challenge dominant discourses. They therefore have an ideological function (see Crang, 1998; Robertson and Richards, 2003).

The landscape of Griffith displays its people as a culture (or a diversity of cultures), expressing cultural values, social behaviour, and individual actions worked upon the
town over time (see Meinig, 1979) and may be said to reflect the beliefs, practices
and technologies of (some) local people (Crang, 1998: 15). But more than this,
landscapes, and the cultural inscriptions contained therein, are also constitutive of
societies and cultures. While the approach adopted here is influenced by the idea of
landscapes as symbolic, it also goes beyond this (see for example Robertson and
Richards, 2003). I am interested in both what the commemorative landscape of
Griffith ‘is’ or ‘means’ as well as what it does, how it works as a cultural practice
(Mitchell, 1994a: 1) and the implications of this for multicultural Griffith.

Cultural landscapes like the commemorative landscape of Griffith are not only
material sites, which can be accessed using observation and induction; they are also
interpretive sites, which can be read as texts (Anderson, 1991; Barnes and Duncan,
1992; Duncan and Ley, 1993; Stratford, 1999: 5). Monuments and memorials,
cultural representations inscribed on the landscape, have both cultural/symbolic
dimensions and physical/material dimensions. They inscribe and naturalise relations,
revealing ‘the transformation into material form of past and newly forming beliefs
reveal something of past/present beliefs including those that have been formed more
recently in response to the cultural diversity of Griffith. Further than the ‘landscape
as text’ metaphor, Mitchell has argued for a conception of landscape as process, and
as a ‘process by which social and subjective identities are formed’ (1994a: 1; see also
Stratford, 1999: 5).

The landscape of Griffith is one that has, obviously, been worked on by people over
a long period of time. The townscape itself is a highly modified environment, from
the agricultural activity on the outskirts to the urbanised central business district.
There is limited publicly available information about local Wiradjuri relationships
and interactions with their country either before or after it was invaded, and much of
what is accessible comes from (other) non-Indigenous researchers (for example
Read, 1994; Kabaila, 1998). In Griffith the ‘Great Australian Silence’, more
appropriately characterised as ‘white noise’, can be seen in the obscuring and
overlying din of monuments and memorials (see Griffiths, 1996: 4). It is obvious,
however, that Griffith and the surrounding areas remain significant to Aboriginal
people in Griffith today (Kabaila, 1998; Macdonald, 2004; Interviewee 1, 6 Oct
The earlier Wiradjuri landscape has, however, been significantly reworked (at least in a physical sense) by the non-Indigenous people who have ‘settled’ here as well as by contemporary Wiradjuri people.\(^{163}\)

In Griffith and within the commemorative landscape in particular, public assertions of identity are still often bound up in older notions of Australian national identity, particularly those associated with the themes of war and pioneering. But Griffith’s identity is also beginning to be linked to the cultural diversity of the community, to the idea of Griffith as multicultural. How this is manifested in the commemorative landscape and what this says about multicultural Griffith are of particular interest. In the analysis, the understanding of how ‘myth’ functions in Griffith is extended through an examination of the (actual) concrete form it takes within the landscape (see Barthes, 1993).

A major function of cultural objects like monuments and memorials is the construction and articulation of identity (Gibson and Besley, 2004: 8). The significance of the monuments and memorials examined below in the context of multicultural Griffith derives from their ability to, and role in, saying something about Griffith and its people to both outsiders and the people of Griffith themselves. They are revelatory in relation to the control of public space in Griffith (cf. Hage, 1998) and have implications for local residents in terms of the practice of citizenship and belonging (Dunn, 2003). Erecting a monument is a significant and powerful act akin to planting a flag in the ground; it is an act of political colonisation of space (Gilfedder in Bulbeck, 1988: 1).

The next section introduces the cultural landscape of Griffith before analysing Griffith’s monuments and memorials under three sub-headings: ‘war and the supreme sacrifice’, ‘the agricultural endeavour’, and ‘a monument to cultural diversity’.

\(^{163}\) This rather benign sounding word, ‘settled’, does not capture the violence and turmoil associated with the takeover of Wiradjuri land. See for example Read (1994). One of the ways in which Wiradjuri people have more recently inscribed Griffith’s landscape is through the Three Ways housing estate (Kabaila, 1998).
Griffith’s Landscape
Most of the visits made to Griffith to conduct fieldwork were by plane. Flights are operated out of Sydney by a regional carrier three or four times a day. Flying into Griffith during the 2004 drought, the land surrounding Griffith (apart from a small range of hills that had obviously not been cleared for farming) was observed to be oddly green. The land, having been carved up into smaller, geometrically shaped, pieces — mapped, named, plotted out, fenced, cleared and re-planted — looked well ordered. Part of the aesthetic seemed to lie in its comprehensibility: rows and rows of grape vines and orange trees neatly planted on perfectly squared plots of land; long straight irrigation canals paralleled by long straight roads, and, as the aircraft’s descent continued, neatly arranged houses with very green lawns, seemingly, an ‘abundant, picturesque oasis’ (Griffith City Council, ndb).

The drive from the airport into the town itself takes five to ten minutes. In stark contrast to the agricultural landscape one has just flown over, much of the landscape one drives through is ‘bush’ consisting of a fairly low, open forest dominated by cypress pine, part of McPherson’s Range.\textsuperscript{164} Interspersed with the bush is the golf club and local radio and television broadcasters Radio 2RG, Star FM and WINTV. Just before the road heads down into the suburban areas of the town it sweeps around past Pioneer Park. It is a short drive south through part of the suburban area of Griffith, notable because it resembles many other suburban areas across NSW that are dominated by weatherboard houses and neat green lawns, and over the railway line, before one comes upon the eastern reaches of the main street, Banna Avenue.

Banna Avenue stretches for several blocks from east to west, providing the main entry to the town by road from the east and leading into a ‘civic’ area which includes the council chambers, Riverina College of TAFE (Technical and Further Education), and the Griffith Regional Theatre. The civic area is bounded by a circular street, the legacy of Walter Burley Griffin, who the NSW Government commissioned to draw up plans for the town in 1913.\textsuperscript{165} Banna Avenue itself is divided by a median strip

\textsuperscript{164} In 1817 English surveyor/explorer John Oxley called this range Disappointment Hills and described the landscape as desolate and the bush as impenetrable (Johnson, 2001: 67).
\textsuperscript{165} Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin is most famous in Australia for designing the capital city, Canberra. Griffith, Canberra, and indeed the town of Leeton not far from Griffith, have many features in common including the radial pattern, wide tree-lined streets, and the use of ‘ring roads’ and
planted with trees and lawn and which also allows parking in the centre. One side of the street is dominated by retail shops, while the other is dominated by public buildings and the Memorial Gardens.

One of the ways Banna Avenue, and the civic area to which it leads, functions is as a commemorative space, and most of Griffith’s monuments and memorials are located in this area. The monuments and memorials considered below are positioned either along Banna Avenue or within the civic area and most are highly visible on the landscape.

Like Pioneer Park and the Italian Museum, Griffith’s monuments and memorials commemorate the vernacular, while making reference to broader national themes. There are no monuments and memorials to any of the prominent individuals singled out in tourism representations as key figures in the development of the area, or any other ‘leaders’ for that matter and this is not unusual within Australia in more recent times (Hedger, 1995: 47). Most of the monuments and memorials in Griffith are dedicated to ‘ordinary’ people, either collectively or individually, who have become

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‘roundabouts’. Burley Griffin’s vision for the town of Griffith has only been adopted in part. See Murphy, 1983.
somewhat extraordinary through the mythologising that has taken place around them at both the local and national levels. Additional significance is conferred upon these commemorative features as they became tourist attractions (see for example Scancolor, 1984; Griffith City Council, nnd) or the subjects of local histories (see for example Chessbrough, 1982: 132-139). All three clusters of monuments and memorials operate through pre-existing myths held in collective memory — of war in the Australian context, of pioneering history, and of multiculturalism — and to which they in turn contribute.

War and the Supreme Sacrifice

The war memorial is an important memorial to consider in relation to multicultural Griffith, in part because ‘in Australian popular political culture, commemoration of war displaces the political formation of the nation through federation as the emotional locus of a sense of nationhood’ (Curthoys, 2000: 27). This may be a feature of white settler societies more generally so that war memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national myths (Inglis and Phillips, 1991: 179).

At the time of the First World War the town of Griffith did not exist. The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme (MIS) was still under construction and the temporary settlement that has come to be mythologised as Bagtown housed the workers a few miles south-east of the present-day town (Chessbrough, 1982; Kelly, 1988). Some of those employed by the administrators of the MIS were, however, involved in the war as part of expeditionary forces (Murphy, 1983) and the building of the scheme was affected by the slowing of work until the end of the war in 1918 (Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society, 1993). In relation to commemoration in Australia there are more war memorials than any other kind (Curthoys, 2000: 27) and Griffith commemorates World War I regardless of the community’s level of involvement. The Second World War affected the community more directly, and this too is recognised specifically.

166 Inglis points out that the term ‘war memorial’ as a way of conceiving of these kinds of monuments and memorials did not come to prevail until after 1918 in Australia ‘when the war had become a past experience and the memorial was created to stand as a community’s statement of bereavement, pride and thanksgiving’ (1998: 123-124).
Like elsewhere in Australia, the only battles to have been fought anywhere near Griffith were those involving Wiradjuri people and the invading British during the nineteenth century, battles which took place in a range of locations throughout Wiradjuri country over a number of years (see, for example, Kelly, 1988: 150-152; Read, 1994). The commemoration of war, death and sacrifice in contemporary Griffith does not, however, include any aspects of these battles, nor the Wiradjuri people who made the ‘supreme sacrifice’ for their country, something Griffith also has in common with elsewhere in Australia (see Bulbeck, 1991: 173). The wars that are commemorated are those that have been fought overseas involving ‘Australians’ and emphasis is on the first and second world wars.167

The monuments/memorials in Griffith that commemorate war include: the Memorial to all Airmen (also known as the Fairey Firefly); the Memorial Hall and associated commemorative plaque; and the Memorial Gardens, which includes the Cenotaph and the Italian Prisoners of War Memorial. All of these are along Banna Avenue proper, starting at the Eastern end with the Memorial to all Airmen outside of the Griffith Visitors Centre, followed by the Memorial Hall in the ‘bottom block’, and the Memorial Gardens in the ‘middle block’.168 These war memorials have been recommended for inclusion on the local heritage register in a recent heritage study identifying places which ‘contribute to an understanding and appreciation of Griffith’s heritage’ as part of the ‘Banna Avenue Heritage Conservation Area’ (see Kabaila, 1998).

The most significant of these monuments is the Griffith War Memorial or Cenotaph, located in the Memorial Gardens, both of which are maintained by Griffith City Council (GCC).169 The Dawn Service on Anzac Day is held in the gardens, next to

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167 None of the wars in which Australians have been involved since the Second World War are specifically commemorated. Hedger (1995) has noted such a trend across Australia and speculates that this may be to do with the conflicting feelings evoked by the Vietnam War.

168 Locals name the main blocks of Banna Avenue, which begin with the next block on from the GVC, as ‘top’, ‘middle’ and ‘bottom’. The middle block tends to be the busiest, the activity diminishing gradually as one moves outwards in either direction. The top block, which is the one nearest the civic area, is the least busy normally.

169 One of the other main uses of this space is for recreation. On an average day the gardens are used by workers on their lunch breaks, as a meeting place for teenagers after (or perhaps during) school, as
the memorial, and the Anzac Day March culminates here. The Anzac Day commemorative wreaths are laid around the memorial and the catafalque party stand guard throughout Anzac Day. The memorial ‘pays tribute to those whose lives were lost in war’ (Griffith City Council, ndi). It is a twelve metre-plus three-sided rendered concrete structure. The side that faces toward the main street is inscribed ‘1914’ at the top, with the words ‘Lest We Forget’ appearing about half way down. Beneath this are three bronze plaques, one commemorating the Unknown Soldier and two name plaques listing the names of local men who ‘made the supreme sacrifice’ in World War Two (Griffith War Memorial). The second side is inscribed ‘1918’ at the top and ‘To Our Glorious Dead’ about half way down. The third side has nothing inscribed on it but has a door built into it. The memorial itself was dedicated on Anzac Day, 1940 but the commemorative function has been extended since then with the addition of the bronze plaques, one of them in 1993.  

The Griffith War Memorial draws in part on British memorial forms and inscriptions, particularly the Whitehall Cenotaph in London erected in 1919, which also uses the words ‘(the) glorious dead’, composed by British prime minister Lloyd George (see Inglis, 1998: 155-156). However the art deco style of the structure also hints at a move away from traditional British/Imperial design towards an American one (see Inglis, 1998: 305-307).

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a place to wait on the day of ones court appearance and for activities associated with community events like La Festa (See Chapter Five).

170 This is the first plaque, which is ‘IN MEMORY OF THE FALLEN AND UNKNOWN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER, 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF REMEMBRANCE DAY, 11.11.1993’. The other two plaques are not dated but must at least have been added after the war ended in 1945.
Plate 22: The Griffith War Memorial is a prominent feature of the Memorial Gardens, which are located along the busiest part of the main street.

War is conceived of in this memorial as revolving around men, specifically those who were involved in the first and second world wars, and in particular those who ‘made the supreme sacrifice’. This narrow focus means that there is no scope here for remembering others who were involved in or at the very least were impacted upon by war. Again this seems to mirror the situation throughout Australia (see Inglis, 1998). This includes Wiradjuri people (except of course males who lost their lives in the Second World War but their identities are effaced here), Italians, women, and indeed those who served but survived. As the main war memorial in Griffith, these exclusions are important to an understanding of war commemoration in Griffith. The names inscribed on the Griffith War Memorial/Cenotaph of those who died are almost all English, Irish, Welsh or Scottish sounding names (one might be
French). None seem to be Italian for example, though some may well have been Aboriginal. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that the commemorations that go on around this memorial seem to have more resonance for people from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, as attendance at the 2004 Anzac Day service revealed.

Other war memorials are somewhat more inclusive in terms of the conflicts they remember, and in relation to gender. The Fairey Firefly is a World War II naval reconnaissance aircraft that was apparently acquired from HMAS Albatross (Nowra, on the South Coast of NSW) and is mounted on a pole, high above the ground, outside the Griffith Visitors Centre. It was ‘donated by the citizens of Griffith as a memorial to our airmen’ (Memorial to all Airmen). Despite the memorial itself being unveiled in 1969, it was not ‘officially dedicated’ as a ‘Memorial to all Airmen’ (sic) until 1997. It is an imposing presence in the landscape because of its size, height and location.

171 Fighting for Australia, however, did not put Aboriginal people on an equal footing with white Australians. One poignant example is that of the Aboriginal man refused entry into a RSL club for lunch after having marched on Anzac Day (Inglis, 1998: 447), probably not a one-off example. Further insight into the experiences of Indigenous Australians during World War II is provided by Robert Hall (1997).
Plate 23: The Fairey Firefly is a WW11 naval reconnaissance aircraft which is located outside the visitor centre and has been dedicated as a 'memoral to all airmen'. Like the Cenotaph it is a dominant inscription on the landscape.

Given that this aircraft saw service in Korea, and that the plaque itself is non-specific in relation to a particular conflict, this serves as a broader commemoration of war. Further, the GCC website has it as ‘a memorial to all the men and women of the district who served their country in time of war’ (Griffith City Council, ndi). Such a potentially inclusive memorial can conceivably include Wiradjuri people as well as non-Anglo Celtic migrants. There is also scope for those who returned from a range of conflicts to be remembered. So this is not an outright exclusion, but nor is it an overt inclusion. Given that many Australians do not automatically associate Aboriginal people or non-Anglo Celtic people with war service in the Australian context, this appears as a sort of slight-of-hand in relation to these groups. The issue then is not the memorial per se, but its ‘interpretation’ (in the tourism/museums sense of the word).
The Memorial Hall is the third space dedicated to war and those who participated in it. The building is a large pink and apricot-coloured art deco building built in the 1930s and located on Banna Avenue (Griffith City Council, ndh). One side of the building houses the Griffith Regional Gallery, the other side the hall itself, and the section in the middle is the headquarters of the local Returned and Services League (RSL) Griffith Sub-branch. Outside the hall is a large rock, upon which is mounted a plaque proclaiming that ‘THIS IS A MEMORIAL TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AUSTRALIA WHO PAID THE SUPREME SACRIFICE DURING WORLD WAR II. LEST WE FORGET’ (Memorial to the Men and Women of Australia). The memorial was erected as part of the Federal Government instigated Australia Remembers 1945-1995 program of activities which were organised to mark the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Victory in the Pacific (Inglis, 1998: 412-415). Erecting this memorial would have been a great opportunity to be inclusive of other Griffith residents, particularly Pacific Islanders, through reference to their experiences of war in the Pacific, but the opportunity has not been taken.

Plate 24: The Memorial Hall is also located along the main street of Griffith. It houses the offices of the local branch of the RSL (centre), a community hall, and the Regional Art Gallery.

It is significant that women are included here given that ‘most war memorials as official sites of commemoration ignore the contribution of women as citizens in wartime’ (Speck, 1996: 129). A case in point is the Griffith War
Memorial/Cenotaph. The 2004 Anzac Day service in Griffith is another example. At this event women played only a minor role either as wreath layers, musical performers or on-lookers. As Speck notes ‘this reflects a narrow viewpoint about whose sacrifice ought to be remembered’ (1996: 133). Earlier in the week, however, an article had appeared in The Area News that foregrounded the experience of women as members of the Land Army (Martinelli, 2004).  

While public rituals like Anzac Day are not necessarily indicative of private sentiments (Davison, 2003: 75), we can get a sense of who the key stakeholders are in relation to these memorials by closer examination of Anzac Day in Griffith. It has been claimed that Anzac Day is Australia’s main patriotic anniversary and despite earlier predictions of its imminent demise, it is currently enjoying a ‘mysterious resurrection’ (Davison, 2003: 77-78).

In Griffith in 2004 the main Anzac Day events, the Dawn Service and the March and Civic Commemoration Service, were attended largely by ‘white’ Australians. The surnames of the people who were photographed at these events by Area News are Anglo Saxon or Celtic sounding surnames. Further, the events themselves were orchestrated by the RSL (Griffith Sub-branch) whose public face consisted of a select group of older, probably Anglo-Celtic, males. Wreaths were laid by an ex-servicemen as well as representatives of the RSL, GCC, Legacy, the RSL Women’s Auxiliary, Griffith Ex-servicemen’s Club, the Country Women’s Association, the Salvation Army, school groups, scouts and guides, and Rotary and other community groups. Many of these groups tend to be associated with (older) Anglo-Celts, and groups representing other ethnic communities in Griffith did not participate. Similarly, all those who spoke at the Anzac Day events, with the exception of the then Deputy Mayor Dino Zappacosta representing GCC, appeared to be Anglo-Celtic Australians. The Anglican Minister was scheduled to conduct the service but was unable to attend and was replaced with the Uniting Church’s Reverend Matthew Trounce. The front page of The Area News shortly after Anzac Day brought

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172 On the implications of all this for women’s citizenship see Speck, 1996.
173 The research on which Davison has based his claim has also been challenged, however. See Atkinson, 2003.
174 I use ‘white’ here, as a slightly more inclusive category, because those in attendance may have been from Anglo-Celtic and/or Italian backgrounds or indeed from other European backgrounds.
Wiradjuri people into the story when an article appeared about local Wiradjuri man and military chaplain Ivan Grant who, as ‘an ambassador for the Wiradjuri people’ was ‘in charge of the Anzac Day service for the troops in Baghdad’ (Martinelli, 2004). This is an important inclusion because Wiradjuri people are rarely, if ever, included in local discourses on war. The idea that as a Wiradjuri man Grant is an ambassador for all Wiradjuri people is, however, also akin to what has been identified as the flip-side of ‘white race privilege’ whereby racist attitudes mean that Aboriginal people are seen by others as either re-enforcing negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people, or as a credit to their ‘race’, the latter being operative in this case (Tannoch-Bland, 1998).

Anglo-Celtic Australians, therefore, seem to be the group within the Griffith community for whom these monuments and memorials, and the commemorative activities associated with them, have particular significance. Indeed the idea of ‘race’, in particular the white race, were ideas that underpinned the conception in Australia of what these wars were about (see, for example, Inglis, 1998: 218-219).

Notably absent are Sikh, Pacific Islander and Turkish locals, each of whose countries of origin were affected in various ways by the wars commemorated in Griffith. Indeed, as a prominent member of the Sikh community in Griffith pointed out in a letter to the editor of *The Area News* prior to Anzac Day, many Sikhs were members of the British Army and had seen action in both the first and second world wars, many losing their lives (Tatla, 1999). Despite this, the Sikh community were not included in the general commemorations, and instead held their own celebration at the Sikh Temple (Tatla, 1999). It seems that Anzac Day in Griffith is not yet an inclusive event. Italians seem to be included by default as in the case of Deputy Mayor Zappacosta.

There was extensive coverage of Anzac Day activities and events in *The Area News* both before and after the day. These were replete with claims about the significance of Anzac Day and the wars it commemorates to the local community. Indeed ‘Griffith was born out of the valour of those who served in World War I and carries an enormous debt to those who fought and fell at Gallipoli’ (The Area News, 2004h:
A range of headlines proclaimed that the people of Griffith had turned out in force but personal attendance at the Dawn Service and later march suggested otherwise. This disparity does not seem surprising given that journalists, perhaps quoting RSL officials, are ‘notoriously unreliable’ and have persistently talked up estimates of attendances at Anzac Day commemorations (Davison, 2003: 78).

Although broader trends across Australia may reveal a change in the ethnic composition of Anzac Day marches, there is no evidence that the Griffith version of the event has ceased to be owned by the RSL and the conservative establishment. It remains quite an exclusive event (see Davison, 2003: 79-80). Anzac Day, and by extension the Griffith War Memorial, may well only reflect the heritage and values of a select group within the Griffith community, Anglo-Celtic Australians.

Italians may be marginalised by the discourses evident in these memorials and the associated events, but they are not completely absent from the commemorative landscape. Indeed in the Griffith context it is almost unimaginable that Italians would not be represented. The inclusion of a memorial to Italian POWs within the Memorial Gardens hints at another side to the story of Griffith’s wartime experiences (see Cresciani, 2003: 107-118).

The Griffith Italian Prisoners of War Memorial takes the form of a large rock that has been placed in one of the garden beds in the Memorial Gardens. It was almost completely obscured by vegetation the first time I visited it, and there was nothing to indicate its presence. It is located on a corner of the path leading from behind the cenotaph to the car park at the rear of the gardens. It was unveiled by an Italian member of council (Ald. J. P. Dal Broi, who was re-elected Mayor in 2004) in 1991 having been erected by the Griffith Association of Italian Ex-Prisoners of War and Internees ‘TO COMMEMORATE THE ITALIANS WHO SUFFERED AS PRISONERS OF WAR 1940-1947’ (Griffith Italian Prisoners of War Memorial).

The location and relative obscurity of this memorial suggests something of the power dynamic in Griffith, in 1991 at least, despite the shifts identified by Grassby (1985).

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176 The image included here was taken on a subsequent visit and clearly the surrounding vegetation has been pruned.
But its very existence is also indicative of the relative powerfulness of Italian locals, particularly when compared to their earlier disempowerment, including as POWs and enemy aliens.

Plate 25: The Griffith Italian Prisoners of War Memorial is a rather small monument. It is tucked away at the rear of the Cenotaph, in the Memorial Gardens. At times it becomes partially obscured by overgrown shrubs.

There were significant strains placed on what may already have been a fragile relationship between Anglo-Celts and Italians in Griffith by the entry of Italy into the Second World War in 1940. Many local Italians were interned as ‘enemy aliens’ or subject to a range of legislative controls during World War II. These included restrictions on land ownership, confiscation of things like fire-arms and wireless sets, restrictions on the possession of fuel and motor vehicles, a requirement to register weekly at an alien registration office, a prohibition on the use of the Italian language in public places (including on public telephones), the closing of the only Italian club in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA), and travel restrictions (Pich, 1975: 240-243).

177 On the broader experiences of Italians in Australia during this period see Pascoe (1987: 143-146) and Cresciani (2003). The local manifestations of these events are covered in some detail by Pich (1975: 240-256).

178 This often meant anti-fascists and fascists being thrown in together as a homogenous mob. Cresciani (2003: 73-96) reveals some of the complexities of the relationship between Italians in Australia and the fascist government of Mussolini in Italy.
Italian POWs, some of whom were transferred to and held in Australia, and local Italian people, ‘enemy aliens’, who were interned during the Second World War, are not included as part of war-related commemoration in Griffith apart from this (at times obscured) rock, which gives little detail. Yet these events were an important dimension of the impact of the war locally. The key protagonist in local anti-Italian sentiment at the time of World War Two was the RSL, although the local council supported much of their stance (Pich, 1975: 245-247). The RSL was involved in lobbying both state and federal governments to adopt measures that restricted the activities of local Italians, measures which re-asserted soldier-settler hegemony in Griffith (Pich, 1975: 243).

These experiences are still recounted locally, usually in fairly matter-of-fact kind of ways, without references to the specifics outlined above. Several Italian participants recounted how their immediate families were affected during this period and recommended books on the experiences of other Italians in Australia at this time. That these events and their local impacts still have currency, particularly among subsequent generations, suggests their significant effect on Italian families in Griffith. Given the silence in relation to this history in the other memorials, erecting the Italian Prisoners of War Memorial has allowed members of the Italian community to give voice to their very different experience of the Second World War.

A ‘cautious guess’, from someone who has done significant research in the area, puts Australia’s war memorials at more than four thousand (Inglis, 1998). They may well be the most widespread example of public sculpture in Australia and ‘a particularly Australian icon’ (Hedger, 1995: 25). Griffith too has its war memorials, with all the attendant implications for local people. These monuments and memorials, which commemorate war, death and sacrifice, fail to acknowledge the multicultural realities of Griffith and run the risk of being, at the very least, irrelevant to large numbers of local people. While the cultural diversity of the Australian population may be reflected in Anzac parades elsewhere (see Inglis, 1998: 475-476), multiculturalism is yet to have an influence on Griffith’s war memorials and Anzac Day activities.

Given the significance of cultural diversity and multiculturalism in Griffith generally, this is somewhat surprising and will likely change over time.

**The Agricultural Endeavour: Mythologising Pioneers and Settlers**

Pioneers, and especially a most exemplary pioneer, the soldier settler, are key figures within the commemorative landscape of Griffith and have had several memorials erected in their honour. In many country towns in Australia one will find a monument to the ‘pioneers’ or the ‘first settlers’ of the district (Bulbeck, 1988). The rationale, says Bulbeck, is the same rationale that underpins the construction of war memorials and monuments to great men: that the pioneers ‘travelled in the footsteps of the explorers’ and ‘helped build the nation’ (1988: 1). The other ‘piece de resistance’ of Griffith’s commemorative landscape, in addition to the Griffith War Memorial, is the Soldier Settlers Memorial, erected in the centre of the main street near its busiest point; ‘in the heart of our city’ (Griffith City Council, ndi).

The Griffith Soldier Settlers Memorial (GSSM) is a bronze sculpture of a soldier settler and his son and was executed by local resident Charlie Beltrame.¹⁸⁰ The sculpture sits on a raised stone dais around which are four text panels, interspersed with shrubs. This is in turn surrounded by a paved walkway.

¹⁸⁰ An ‘Italian’, presumably
Plate 26: Griffith Soldier Settlers Memorial. Prominently positioned along the main street in the centre of the road this monument is frequently a magnet for visitors who read the text panels and take photographs. In this way it instructs visitors about Griffith and its people.

The project to erect the memorial was carried out by a community committee, the Soldier Settlers Memorial Trust. It was financed by public subscription and unveiled in 1990 ‘by Mrs Belinda Kayess, widow of an original soldier settler, and mother of a soldier son killed in action in 1942 at the age of nineteen’ (GSSM). The Soldier Settlers Memorial is recommended for inclusion on the local heritage register as part of the Banna Avenue Heritage Conservation Precinct. It is described as a ‘belated recognition’ of the soldier settlers, which also ‘honours the sons of soldier settlers who lost their lives during the Second World War’ (GSSM). There is a larger agenda here too. It connects the local story to the national whereby the text panels ‘will remind present and future generations that the world-wide esteem in which our nation is held was largely brought about by the sacrifice of over 100,000 Australian
soldiers, sailors and airmen who had given their lives for freedom and justice’ (GSSM). The statue depicting two men, a father and son, appears as somewhat of an ‘icon’ — a bodily image, created to be revered (see Inglis, 1998: 6).

It is not the fighting prowess of the soldier settlers that gives them their currency here, however. The figure of the Soldier Settler has assumed mythological status in public discourse in Griffith and in some ways is even more revered than those who made the ‘supreme sacrifice’. Indeed ‘this district owes its survival to the courage and determination and the sheer hard work of these Soldier Settlers and their wives for without their efforts this fledgling irrigation scheme could well have failed’ (Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society, 1992: vi). Again it is instructive that there are no monuments or memorials dedicated to either Wiradjuri people or Italian settlers both of whom might be said to have been pivotal groups in relation to Griffith’s past (and indeed present). We are presumably meant to have an image of an Anglo-Celtic or white Australian in our mind when we think of these returned servicemen from World War I. This was not always the case, as a small panel in the Sharam Hall display in Pioneer Park Museum reveals. As an Allied Ex-servicemen, having served with the Italian Army during World War I, a man by the name of Angelo Pastego, having first come to Australia from Italy in 1912, was able to secure a Soldier Settlers Farm. This more nuanced version of who the soldier settlers were is not in evidence in this memorial.

World War I thus has additional significance for Griffith through the re-settlement of around 1000 returned servicemen after the war under the Returned Soldiers Settlement Act (1916) (Kelly, 1988: 119-120). The scheme to resettle the soldiers allowed those who were interested, and who qualified, to apply for a certificate which would then entitle them to apply for a portion of land for farming (Kelly, 1988: 121). Upon their arrival the men were put to work preparing land for their

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181 This number varies somewhat, depending on the purpose of the protagonist, I suspect. In BM Kelly’s reputable history of Griffith the figure is 1026, the same figure quoted by the Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society, presumably based on archival sources. The memorial to the soldier settlers claims that there were ‘some 2000’, a figure then adopted by Griffith Visitors Centre in its description of the monument on its website. In 2004, as part of their campaign to have this group of people further commemorated the RSL claims there were 3000, according to The Area News, a figure then repeated by GCC in their Meeting Minutes (GCC, 2004f). The first figure is probably the most reliable.
future farming activities as well as participating in training schemes (Kelly, 1988: 121).

The historical legend constructed around the soldier settlers is a tale of hardship and suffering at the hands of the authorities, as well as ‘nature’, but equally a tale of hard work and sacrifice. The soldier settlers are both innocents and victims, who succeed despite everything. While ‘many…carried wounds and illness’ and ‘worked in gangs…preparing farms for ballot as most of them had little prior knowledge of irrigation farming’, they ‘were used to hardship, and toiled under primitive conditions’ (GSSM). These men, and their families, ‘soon converted a desert into a Garden of Eden’ (GSSM). They are positioned as ‘the first on the scene’ (there are no Wiradjuri people in this story) thus conferring upon them a status above all others, who might then be represented as relative latecomers. But, as the story is told here, various outside forces conspired against these men. There was a lack of demand for their produce, the farm sizes were too small, the Great Depression hit, and many were ‘left with no alternative but to walk off’ (GSSM). This is not a story of outright failure, however, and in what seems to be a response to the popular mythology surrounding the soldier settlers, ‘we can now appreciate that not all of the soldier settlers were unsuccessful as many of them went on to provide the base for many of the facilities an opportunities now enjoyed by all who live and work in this unique irrigation area’ (GSSM).

The memorial was erected


182 Indeed many independently settled Aboriginal reserves in south-eastern Australia, which were being successfully farmed by Aboriginal people, were lost to ‘soldier settlement’ (Goodall, 1996: 198).
The idea that these men were victims, of both nature and the authorities, is a dominant theme in such histories. Indeed the ‘victimological narrative’ is ‘protean, durable and endlessly resurrected’ in Australian history writing more generally (Curthoys, 2000: 19). Importantly here, however, is the idea that some sort of debt is owed to these men by all who are deemed to ‘benefit’ in Griffith today.

This is also a tale of intergenerational struggle and sacrifice. The sculpture depicts a father, the soldier settler, with a plough in one hand as he hands a rifle to his son, the next generation, who having been raised in ‘poverty and adversity’ is now called upon to give his life as a soldier in World War Two (GSSM). This poignant story is told through both the sculpture itself and the accompanying text. Linking these figures to war and sacrifice also links them to a broader Australian history out of which a very particular Australian national identity is constructed. The soldier settler, and his son who too goes to war for his country are represented as exemplary nationalist subjects (Nicoll, 2001: xx). This discursive construction of ‘digger nationalism’ and the exclusive concepts of identity that flow from it marginalise or exclude many of Griffith’s residents. The only ones that might find themselves in this story are white or Anglo-Celtic Australians.

The idea of ‘debt’—that present generations are somehow indebted to these (ethnically inscribed) historical figures—is critical to maintaining and supporting ideas about contribution and legitimacy in Griffith in relation to Anglo-Celts. In the context of multicultural Griffith the notion of indebtedness establishes a power relation between those who can lay claim to this particular (Anglo) pioneer/settler heritage, and those who cannot. In this sense being named a ‘recent arrival’, as many non-Anglo-Celts are, makes this even more explicit. If one does not have a link to this history, which many in Griffith do not, then one is potentially accorded a different, presumably lesser, mode of belonging. As with Pioneer Park, not all Griffith residents can be seen to have contributed equally, not all are accorded the same status and not all therefore, can make the same claim on Griffith. This memorial has serious implications for identity and belonging, membership and participation, and relative power. The ethnic dimension is critical to its efficacy, and importantly, very few locals of Italian background can lay claim to this history. The soldier settlers have also become key figures in other (public) local histories of
Griffith, where much the same tale is told. This includes the four volume collection by the Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society, tourism histories, and Pioneer Park Museum, all of which reinforce the myths.

In the everyday talk of many local people, however, there is either impatience with this mythologising, or an outright denial of it. What those deploying these counter-discourses sought to stress was the importance of the Italian community in the development and prosperity of Griffith. Some participants were merely dismissive of the contribution of the soldier settlers, downplaying their contribution in favour of that of ‘Italians’. Others stressed the soldier settlers had failed in their endeavours, and had simply given up and walked away from their farms. The fault, rather than lying with either the authorities, market forces, or the weather, was entirely their own. In this telling the soldier settlers, and indeed sometimes other Anglo-Celtic ‘pioneers’ are ignorant, individualistic and lazy. Italians, on the other hand, are described as having worked hard, made many sacrifices, supported each other and ‘stuck it out’. These and other qualities that the ‘Australians’ did not possess were deemed by participants to be the keys to their success, and in such a telling it is to these people that the development and prosperity of Griffith can be attributed. So while the Soldier Settler Memorial might have been erected, it is seriously undermined by oral histories. There is a tension between the intent of this memorial and its efficacy when it is considered in relation to wider discursive constructions. It can therefore be understood as both a powerful landscape inscription in the potential it has for reinforcing Anglo-Celtic hegemony, and as a futile and perhaps even desperate attempt to do so given the threats posed to this hegemony it in reality.

The less specific ‘pioneer’ is commemorated in Griffith by the Memorial to MIA Pioneers, a fountain located outside of the Griffith Visitors Centre, erected in 1957 by the Griffith Ex-servicemen’s Club. The term pioneer, in this local manifestation of a broader theme in Australian historiography (see, for example, Hirst, 1978;
Thomas, 1996), generally refers to those people who established themselves in the area as a result of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme in the second and third decades of the twentieth century (see for example Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society, 1993). Although ‘pioneer’ is a potentially more inclusive category than soldier settler, it is constructed in particular ways in Griffith, and indeed within Australia such that this too is a rather exclusive term. The important thing here in the context of multicultural Griffith is that both the soldier settler and the pioneer are (already) ethnically inscribed. In this way the local resonates with what others have noted about Australia more generally (see Curthoys, 2000: 19-21) and indeed ‘race’ was a crucial element of pioneering history in Australia (Hirst, 1978; Thomas, 1996). Griffith’s memorials do present a challenge to these claims, although other local discursive constructions do illustrate differences between the local and the national.

There is a tradition within Australia of including women as pioneers (see Curthoys, 2000: 20), so it is not unusual for memorials to pioneers to feature women, who are seen to have ‘carried the burden of the success of settlements’ (Hedger, 1995: 70).\(^{186}\) It is in relation to the category pioneer that the women of Griffith come to be included in the commemorative landscape of Griffith through the Memorial to Pioneer Women, a bronze statue located outside the GCC office building, erected in 1977.\(^{187}\) The pioneer woman stands tall, proud of bearing and stoic in the face of hardship. It is noted in the local history publication that refers directly to this memorial that life was hard and times were tough but ‘pioneer women took it all in their stride’ (Western Riverina Community Library, 1986: 3).\(^{188}\) Indeed in this telling it is women to whom the success of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and the high quality of life derived from it should at least in part be attributed (Western Riverina Community Library, 1986: 9).

\(^{185}\) On several occasions I witnessed people who appeared to be tourists reading the text panels that surround the memorial. \(^{186}\) Indeed women, mainly after and as a result of 1960s feminism, have been increasingly depicted in Australian monuments usually as either pioneers, in relation to war, or as individuals (see Bulbeck, 1992). Cf. Hirst (1978). \(^{187}\) The sculpture was executed by Tom Bass, paid for by public subscription and unveiled by the Governor of NSW Sir Roden Cutler in August 1977 (GCC, ndi). \(^{188}\) Cf. Pettman, 1996: 28.
The pioneer women of Griffith are notable for their ‘loyalty, courage and integrity’ (Memorial to Pioneer Women). This too, however, is a racially inscribed figure, and one who is ambiguously positioned in relation to Wiradjuri women, in particular. The experience of white women in Australian settlement history differs significantly from non-white women, and white women are heavily implicated in the colonial project, certainly as beneficiaries but also as co-conspirators (see Pettman, 1996: 25-44; McCubben, 2001: 29-33). The overt temporal dimension and the more subtle racial dimension of the construct ‘pioneer’ mean the exclusion of non-Anglo-Celtic migrant women as well. Many of the women of Griffith, then, are not, and can not be represented by this memorial. Further, Griffith is not immune to broader national discourses and there is some resonance here (cf. Schaffer, 1988).

Plate 27: Memorial to Pioneer Women. Located outside the council building, this memorial specifically recognises the role of women in the ‘pioneering’ endeavour.

Two individual women have also had memorials dedicated to them in Griffith. Both Nancy Blumer and Kathleen Aiton were local women deemed to have contributed to the community such that permanent reminders of their lives were erected in the form of memorials. The Nancy Blumer Memorial is a fountain prominently located in the
civic precinct while the Kathleen Aiton Memorial is a curved brick wall with a drinking fountain placed in it. It is located in the CWA Park on Banna Avenue. These two women are the only individuals who have had memorials dedicated to them along Banna Avenue and its environs. The males commemorated in Griffith tend to have been to war and either not returned, or have returned to establish and develop the MIA. These two women, however, seem to have been working quietly behind the scenes involved in teaching, as is the case with Kathleen Aiton, or participating in groups like the Girl Guides, the Women’s Australian Nursing Service and Women’s Land Army during World War II, and the Country Women’s Association (CWA) (see Chessbrough, 1982: 135). Both women are constructed as significant contributors to their communities. The links between the commemoration of these two women and the conservative, ‘white’ CWA, and indeed the backgrounds of the women themselves, suggest that again this is not ethnicity-neutral. The temporal aspect continues to be important here and the result is that the primacy and legitimacy of Anglo-Celts in Griffith is both established and confirmed.

There is another ‘pioneer’ of Griffith who is not commemorated in this cluster of monuments and memorials. ‘Italian pioneers’, who are also at times configured as ‘early settlers’ and ‘pioneering immigrants’ do not find their story in this cluster of monuments and memorials. With the recent opening of the Italian Museum, however, this other pioneering history is now being told in an ‘official’ way. It is still, however, not recorded within the commemorative landscape of Banna Avenue, a space seemingly reserved for Anglo-Celtic soldiers/settlers/pioneers.

In what seems like ‘upping the ante’ given the extent to which the Italian heritage of Griffith in particular is increasingly coming to the fore, there has been a recent proposal by the Griffith RSL to ‘dedicate’ the entire Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area to the soldier settlers and erect an ‘honour roll board’ listing the names of local men.

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189 Nancy Blumer’s ‘story’ has recently been flagged for ‘development’ as part of the local tourism industry and the lack of maintenance of the memorial has been raised as an issue that council needs to rectify (GCC, 2004b).
190 At the very least both have surnames, and in the case of Nancy Blumer, her maiden name (Griffin), with English, Irish, Scottish and/or Welsh histories.
191 The museum, discussed in detail in Chapter Three, might itself be said to be an important commemorative feature of the landscape of Griffith given its concern to recognise and remember this important aspect of the area’s history.
and women who have served in conflicts over the past ninety years (Demmery, 2004).\footnote{This might be thought of as ‘symbolic accretion’- the appending of further commemorative}

There’s no doubt that a lot of nationalities have come into the area since. They’ve bought up a lot of the farms and they’ve developed them even further than what they were originally, there’s no doubt about that. But the important thing is to recognise the ones that struggled hard to establish those farms and to never forget them (RSL President Alan Sara quoted in Demmery, 2004).

One gets a strong sense here that there is a real threat to their hegemony being felt by the RSL and those for whom they speak. This study suggests, however, that it is unlikely that the RSL and others like them can ‘turn back the clock’. The monuments and memorials discussed above do not provide an accurate account of multicultural Griffith. Recently other voices have begun to be inscribed within the commemorative landscape of Griffith revealing other accounts of both the past and the present.

**A Monument to Cultural Diversity: The Lifecycle Project**

While memorials to soldiers and pioneers in Griffith exclude many of the people of Griffith, there is another memorial form that is not only more inclusive, but has the cultural diversity of Griffith as its *raison d’etre*. In relation to the commemorative landscape of Griffith the *Lifecycle* project examined in this section suggests both an up-dating of the story of Griffith that is told, as well as the increasing influence of multiculturalism/cultural diversity. Indeed in Griffith it would seem that it is increasingly impossible for the Anglo-Celtic hegemony in which the memorials that have been discussed participate—for the ‘white nation fantasy’—to be maintained (cf. Hage, 1998).

Cultural landscapes are constantly being worked upon, they are in process, and in much the same way that histories change or are re-written at different times in light of emerging understandings of the past, monumental landscapes are also ‘edited’ (see Bulbeck, 1988: 21). In this sense, *Lifecycle* can be seen as an attempt to update
Griffith’s story, as inscribed through the town’s monuments and memorials, to match the contemporary realities. It is essentially a state-sponsored inscription in terms of both initiative and funding but is also one with strong community support and involvement. Not surprisingly then, it is not a radical departure from the official or state-sponsored versions of Australian multiculturalism, particularly in the way that Griffith is conceived of as being comprised of different and discrete groups or communities. This ‘mosaic’ model of multiculturalism has meant that the project’s success in furthering *everyday* multiculturalism, in particular substantial and ongoing interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, may be somewhat limited.\(^{193}\) There are also limitations to the extent to which this commemorative feature is able to foster the idea that each of the ‘communities’ are of equal value and to further the actual empowerment of non-Anglo Celtic groups.

*Lifecycle* is comprised of a series of artworks — mosaic sculptures — that were erected outside the Griffith Regional Theatre (part of the civic precinct) in 2004. Funded in the main by the Australia Council, and overseen by GCC’s Cultural Services Manager, this community cultural development project ‘celebrates the contribution of our communities to Griffith’s vibrant cultural life’ (Griffith City Council, ndm). It is positioned at the very top end of Banna Avenue, outside the theatre, and is a large and prominent addition to the Griffith townscape. It is premised upon the idea that some form of recognition and celebration of the cultural diversity of Griffith is both necessary and desirable. This location also says something about how this monument is conceived — as an arts/cultural project — as well as about where it might find the most sympathetic audience — the realm of theatre goers. Its impact and potency would be even greater, given what we have already established, had it been placed outside the Ex-servicemen’s Club, or in the Memorial Gardens, for example. It remains a powerful representation nonetheless.

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\(^{193}\) The limits of the mosaic model of multiculturalism have prompted recent calls from one respected writer on multiculturalism for a more integrative, interactive model of multiculturalism (Ang, 2006).
The sculptures were executed by four groups of residents, configured as Indigenous/Wiradjuri, pioneer/soldier settler, Italian and recent arrival. This is generally consistent with the federal government’s conceptions of the Australian population. Each of these four ‘groups’ executed their own contribution to the project, facilitated by a local artist. Participants were recruited through existing community groups and organisations like the Griffith Multicultural Community Council, the Griffith Adult Learning Association and the local TAFE College (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). Those who helped execute the pioneer/soldier settler contribution were recruited through advertisements in the local newspaper (see The Area News, 2004i). The result has been a cluster of six ‘totem poles’, two low ‘retaining’ walls (on one wall the Italian contribution and on the other the pioneer/soldier settler contribution) and a sculpture designed to resemble a carpet or rug. The spatial arrangement of the sculptures is such that the ‘Wiradjuri poles’ are positioned alongside the path leading to the theatre doors. The Pioneer/Soldier Settler and Italian contributions are joined together at right angles to each other on the corner of the path, near the doors. The recent arrivals contribution is located a short distance away, to the left of the doors.

194 I’m going to use these descriptors/categorisations throughout this section myself. This way of conceiving of the composition of the Griffith community, as has been discussed, has much currency locally.
195 See Chapter One
196 Technical and Further Education Colleges in NSW are known as TAFE colleges. In Griffith the college runs programs in Aboriginal art and culture as well as programs for recent migrants.
Plate 28: The 'pioneer/soldier settler' contribution to the Lifecycle project. A range of members of the 'broader community' were called to action through word-of-mouth and local newspaper advertisements to contribute to this landscape inscription.

Plate 29: The 'recent arrivals' contribution to Lifecycle. Participants came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and were recruited through existing community organisations and based on the assumption that they were ‘new’ to Griffith.
Plate 30: The 'Indigenous/Wiradjuri’ contribution to Lifecycle. Designed to resemble totem poles, a range of local Aboriginal people participated in their ‘decoration’. They are perhaps the most striking feature of the installation.

Plate 31: The 'Italian' contribution to Lifecycle was completed largely by older women identifying as ‘Italian’. It depicts a country scene in Italy.

One of the outcomes of the Lifecycle project is that the commemorative landscape of Griffith is now inscribed with multiculturalism, as well as with digger nationalism and white pioneering history. The sculptures are a public declaration of the cultural diversity of Griffith, and of its value to the local community and have provided an
opportunity for groups who are not normally given much of a voice in the public arena to ‘make their mark’. The artworks were carried out over a number of months and ‘provided an avenue for the community to explore sense of place and their cultural identity’ as well as ‘advancing the aspirations of our community members’ (Griffith City Council, ndm). The sculptures were unveiled at a ‘launch’ in July 2004. This event included a Welcome to Country by a Wiradjuri elder, a series of speeches from the organisers and several participants, a dance performance by a Cook Island group, and an Indigenous smoking ceremony and dance performance outside, after the speeches. The theatre foyer was crowded with attendees. It was one of the most culturally diverse audiences witnessed at a public event in Griffith throughout the course of this fieldwork.197

It is significant that no one group is constructed as being more important than another, particularly in light of the claims about multiculturalism from Hage (1998) and Stratton (1998). The content of each sculpture, not surprisingly, varies. While those named recent arrivals have drawn on symbols and motifs that are deemed to be in some way emblematic of their particular cultures, the pioneers/soldier settlers cast their gaze over the entire landscape of Griffith and the MIA, taking in the town centre, farms, and the irrigation system.

The conception of multicultural Griffith deployed here is based on a mosaic model of multiculturalism. This model has been questioned by many, not least because of the lack of interaction between the different groups that are constructed the model facilitates (see for example Ang, 2006). The way the different groups that are deemed by the organisers to constitute Griffith are constructed is somewhat problematical.198 In part a temporal distinction is being made by the organisers to cluster participants. Different ‘phases’ of settlement can be seen in: Indigenous; the British and Irish; Italians; and more recent migrants. This kind of distinction matters because how long a particular group is deemed to have been in Griffith (except in the

197 My participation in this project included taking part in the execution of the pioneer/soldier settler contribution, at the invitation of another participant, and attending the launch. Relevant interview material has also been incorporated into the analysis.
198 It needs to be remembered that this way of conceiving of the Griffith community has much currency locally, and that GCC worked with several other groups and organisations in establishing and executing the project.
case of Wiradjuri people), and the ‘contribution’ which can then be attributed to them, is a powerful way of conferring legitimacy.\footnote{See also Chapter Three.}

Closer examination of \textit{Lifecycle} reveals other flaws and inconsistencies in such constructions and my own situation is a case in point. My family is white, Anglo-Celtic Australian, but we have only had a family presence in Griffith since the 1960s. We have no connection to either the ‘pioneers’ or the soldier settlers. But my Anglo-Celtic heritage, and perhaps my whiteness, made my participation in the pioneers/soldier settler’s contribution conceivable for the organisers. Indeed it seemed the ‘logical’ way to incorporate me as a participant. Whether an English migrant who had lived in Griffith for only a few years, for example, would be placed in the same category, or whether the organisers would have deemed such a person to be a recent arrival is an interesting question (cf. Stratton, 2000). The categories were also disrupted by a woman born in Griffith to Italian migrant parents, from a well-known family, some of whom were pioneers in the wine industry, and who positioned herself as part of the pioneers/soldier settlers group. There is just enough flexibility in the way Griffith’s population is understood to make this a tenable option, particularly given this woman’s family history.

While equal status was ultimately given to each of the four different groups constructed for \textit{Lifecycle}, people constructed as pioneers/soldier settlers were initially excluded from the project. ‘About half way through, because we’d been talking to these communities, a couple said, well listen you’ve got the first peoples—you’ve got the Indigenous population, you’ve got the next wave of migration—or a wave of migration, which is the Italian community, and you’ve got a wave of migration which is the recent arrivals…what about the Soldier Settlers? What about the Anglo farm people that came out?’ (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). It was then decided to ‘invite the general community to participate’ (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). An advertisement was subsequently placed in \textit{The Area News} calling for ‘all interested community members’ (The Area News, 2004). The call for ‘the general community’ or ‘community members’ to participate in what came to be called the pioneers/soldiers...
settlers contribution reinforces the idea that these people are the template for ‘ordinary’ Griffith residents, the ‘mainstream’. While speeches were made at the launch by individuals representing Wiradjuri, Italian and ‘recent arrival’ participants, no-one spoke on behalf of the mythical pioneers/soldier settlers. But in Griffith they are getting used to the idea of Anglo-Celts being just another ethnic group among many and this project is a step towards that.

As a way of furthering inter-cultural understanding and awareness the project seems somewhat limited. The casual observer may learn little about the different cultures that were involved; and in fact diversity itself is obscured by the uniformity of form and materials and indeed the aesthetic appeal of the sculptures. There is no on site explanation of the various symbols and motifs that were used to refer to specific cultural traditions. These include representations of a flower, a house, a camel, a sun, a boat and a person, as well as the geometrical patterns one might associate with Islamic decoration. The lack of interpretation may be less of an issue with the Italian and pioneer/soldier settler contributions given that they are representations of European landscapes, familiar to many Griffith residents, and ones which already have currency locally. It is, however, more of an issue for the recent arrivals sculpture, where a range of symbols and motifs from cultures as diverse as ‘Asia’, the Pacific Islands, India, Turkey and Afghanistan are placed alongside each other. Nor can one make assumptions about non-Indigenous understandings of Wiradjuri/Indigenous cultures. There was little culturally specific explanation at the launch or in the related printed material of the diverse cultural traditions from which these symbols and motifs are derived, with reference made instead to ‘the richness and diversity these cultures bring to Griffith’. The discourse of enrichment is thus part of the rationale behind this project (Hage, 1998).

One of the other serious limitations of the project was that interaction between participants was limited because each ‘group’ worked in isolation from the others. One participant, an Indian-born woman, observed in relation to the project that despite a broad welcoming of more recent migrants in Griffith, ‘there is still a little

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200 Indeed the mosaic made by the pioneer/soldier settlers group is based on the ‘soft-sculptured curtain’ which hangs inside the theatre as the stage curtain and is constructed locally as a tourist attraction (see for example GCC, ndd and nde).
bit of a gap…still lacking behind something and that has to be removed. Yes people can come, but what happens when they do those types of activities? ‘They come but then later everything is forgotten’ (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004). So even for the recent arrivals, no longer term relationships or ongoing understanding of other lives and cultures can be assumed to have emerged, as was this woman’s experience. She also observed that much of the credit for the project had gone to the organisers and not to the participants. ‘The people who really got involved, their names were not even too much mentioned but the people who were granted to do this project were the ones’ (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004).

There is some coherence here in relation to the other commemorative features because although ‘it charts the various journeys and relationships different cultures have with this region’ it does not fully subvert the hegemony of the Anglo-Celtic pioneer/settler. While the cultural diversity of the Griffith community is recognised, this has been done in a way that has resulted in it being unable to challenge power relations in Griffith. Although Lifecycle effaces the specific ethnicities of both the pioneers/soldier settlers as well as the recent arrivals, the effects are different. Effacing the ethnicities of the pioneers/soldier settlers has conferred on them an a priori position within the Griffith community, but effacing the ethnicities of those deemed recent arrival has in part undermined their status. While the pioneers/soldier settlers group may well be largely fictitious, the effects of continuing this myth are not.

Part of the rationale for the project was to strengthen relationships between the local authorities and the various ethnic communities (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). This might also be read as a management strategy, a way of managing cultural diversity and perhaps facilitating ‘harmony’ by allowing disempowered groups to see themselves in the landscape, and is in keeping with state-sponsored multiculturalism.\(^{201}\) However the project can also be seen as a way for people who might otherwise not be able to participate and have a stake in multicultural Griffith and the broader cultural life of the community, to do so, and a

\(^{201}\) See Chapter One.
way of increasing individual empowerment through participation and increased knowledge of, for example, how GCC works.

So *Lifecycle* is an overt and pointed construction of multicultural Griffith that is not unproblematic in the way it conceptualises the community. Yet it is also a project and vision which seems to have been wholeheartedly embraced and supported by many of those who were involved, and may well have benefited those individuals. It has also meant that the commemorative landscape of Griffith now records the presence of groups other than just Anglo-Celtic Australians, for both locals and visitors alike. It is a large, striking, commemorative feature.

The project may well have achieved what it set out to do, to create ‘innovative pathways for communities to start engaging with local government, as well as a real public awareness raising’ and ‘to create a model that enabled the communities to discuss through visual arts and practice issues surrounding their cultural identity, and at the same time have access to local government and access to professional artists’ (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). At least one participant, a Fijian-born woman, was happy with what had been achieved, felt it had been worthwhile, and had enjoyed her involvement, as her collection of photos revealed (Interviewee 8, 12 Oct 2004). There are obviously limitations to what can be achieved with such a project, but an important outcome has been the addition of a monument dedicated to cultural diversity as part of the commemorative landscape of Griffith. It may also have provided the impetus for ongoing collaboration and individual relationships, given that the ‘Lifecycle group…will now be an ongoing group of people working together’ (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004).

**Conclusions**

The commemorative landscape that began developing in Griffith in 1940 with the establishment of the Griffith War Memorial has, up until very recently, been the province of (racially inscribed) soldiers and settlers/pioneers. Because of what, who, and how they commemorate, these monuments and memorials construct an image of (multicultural) Griffith that enables and shores up the dominance and legitimacy of
those who might be described as Anglo-Celtic or white Australians, marginalising Italian Australians, Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people, people with an Indian heritage, and other non-Anglo Celts. In this sense, representations of multicultural Griffith have been less democratic and inclusive than the official discourse especially that emanating from Griffith City Council, indicates. A reading of monuments and memorials inscribed on the central townscape seems to accord different modes of belonging to different ethnically/culturally/racially inscribed residents.

In 2004, however, the addition of the Lifecycle public art project expanded the range of commemorative inscriptions. This installation, outside the Griffith Regional Theatre, recognises the cultural diversity of the Griffith community and has attempted to capture something of this, as well as to further the agenda of the local government authority in relation to multiculturalism. While it is unable to fully subvert the dominant tropes and effect a complete paradigm shift, it is a significant addition that is further evidence of the way Griffith has imbibed multiculturalism as part of the collective identity of the community. Part of Lifecycle’s significance also lies in the fact that it is a public declaration and indeed celebration of the value of cultural diversity to the broader community of Griffith. While multiculturalism in Griffith is increasingly prominent and can be said to be valued by the broader community, it is still, however, substantially a mosaic model which may offer limited sustained engagement and intercultural interaction and can be used to hierarchically position the different groups it interpellates.
Chapter Five

Celebrating Diversity: The Multicultural Festival

Celebration has been an important dimension of Australian multiculturalism (see for example Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 5), and although muted in more recent government policy, is still seen as one aspect of the official response to cultural diversity (see for example Commonwealth of Australia, 2003b: 6). The display and celebration of cultural diversity through the staging of a ‘multicultural’ festival in Griffith is also in accordance with the vision of Griffith City Council (GCC). Irrespective of ‘official’ formulations, celebration is a key tenet of multiculturalism as it is configured in Griffith and resonates strongly with many local people as one of the ways in which they as a community can acknowledge and show support for the cultural diversity of Griffith and its cultural identity. It is part of how they live multiculturalism; part of their ‘multiculture’ (Hodge and O'Carroll, 2006).

One of the most overt and public ways in which multiculturalism is celebrated in Griffith is through the staging of a large, community wide, festival held each Easter. The festival, La Festa: Faces of Australia, is in part designed to promote the cultural diversity of Griffith and to further develop the identity of Griffith as an inclusive multicultural society. Contrasted with the Anzac Day events, this event has strong broad community support, including through attendance. It is generally seen by both organisers and participants as strengthening the community as a whole and furthering understanding and appreciation between people from different backgrounds.

A relatively small and powerful group in the community control the festival’s direction and form, yet it also provides an opportunity for a range of other less powerful groups in Griffith to claim the space of the main street, to assert their cultural identity and to work towards engendering greater understanding, appreciation and respect among the broader community. The festival re-enforces the value of the plurality of cultures in Griffith and may also foster cultural maintenance among those who participate as both performers and spectators. Griffith’s

202 Hereafter referred to simply as La Festa.
multicultural festival La Festa is an important dimension of the story they tell themselves about themselves (Geertz, 1973: 448) as a culturally diverse community.

In Griffith La Festa is also significant because it brings people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds together. It is an important way in which ‘different’ groups can become more familiar with ‘other’ groups, allowing Griffith’s diverse peoples to be ‘together-in-difference’ (Ang, 2001a). Observation suggests, however, that the opportunities for intercultural interaction that the festival provides are not necessarily taken or may not have realised their full potential.

Multicultural festivals have formed part of the broader critique of multiculturalism in Australia. I will begin by outlining this critique to contextualise the study of La Festa before turning to the festival itself.

**Multicultural Festivals: Performance and Celebration**

Several commentators on Australian multiculturalism have included ‘multicultural festivals’ as further evidence of the kind of multiculturalism that they claim is problematical in Australia. Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey have critiqued what they describe as the reduction of multiculturalism in Australia to ‘the level of Trivial Pursuits: song and dance, food and folklore’ (1992a: 6). Jupp has claimed that public displays of exotic culture, ‘pasta and polka’ type activities, were initially acceptable because they ‘made life more interesting without challenging Anglo-Australian hegemony’ (2002: 26-27). Gunew has claimed that multiculturalism in Australia was acceptable as a celebration of costumes, customs and cooking, but not as ‘high culture’ (Gunew, 1994a). For Hage, Australian multiculturalism has increasingly conceived of ethnicity as an object of consumption, leading to cosmomulticulturalism, a kind of multiculturalism without migrants, and part of a discourse of enrichment (Hage, 1997; Hage, 1998). These are important and insightful analyses in relation to multiculturalism in Australia, but as the following study of La Festa reveals, they are unable to account for the complexities and nuances of multicultural Griffith, including those that arise in the festival context.
Hage does, however, make several distinctions that are useful ones for analysing the multicultural Griffith that emerges from a consideration of *La Festa*. The first is between those he calls migrants, and those who consume or engage with migrant culture. The second is between two types of consumers/types of engagement, delineated by class and power.\textsuperscript{204} One of these types of engagement, the most problematical as Hage has it, is cosmo-multiculturalism, and the other is grounded in the everyday experiences and intercultural interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds living side by side (Hage, 1997: 99-100). What emerges from this reading of *La Festa* is more complex than Hage’s formulation suggests. Certainly any clear distinction between migrants and consumers is spurious in this context. On his second distinction, the study of *La Festa* reveals a range of types of engagement that include but are not limited to either cosmo-multiculturalism or the presumably less problematic type of engagement articulated by Hage which might be seen as a more ‘genuine’ intercultural interaction. In any case, because of the size and structure of Griffith, the ‘multiculturalism without migrants’ that characterises cosmo-multiculturalism is impossible—everyday life in Griffith demands intercultural interaction.\textsuperscript{205}

A different kind of assessment has been made of the multicultural festival which also suggests something more than simply cosmo-multiculturalism, ‘trivial pursuits’ and ‘pasta and polka’ (for example Bramadat, 2001; Permezel and Duffy, 2003).\textsuperscript{206} Permezel and Duffy have found that ‘the engagement with the performances of multiculturalism within a festival framework does more than provide a set of stalls exhibiting the cultures of Others…for the white culture’ (2003: 20-21). Indeed ‘the framework of the multicultural festival is one significant site for opening up a political dialogue to accommodate and incorporate the diversity of interests and aspirations within a culturally plural society’ (Permezel and Duffy, 2003: 21). The study of *La Festa* shows that the multicultural festival has the potential to be an important site for a more positive form of multiculturalism, the kind that Hage

\textsuperscript{203} See also Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{204} Cf. Hodge and O’Carroll’s critique of such ‘two body’ analyses (2006: 9)
\textsuperscript{205} See Chapter Six.
\textsuperscript{206} Although Bramadat considers Canada rather than Australia, much of what he says has resonance here.
describes as turning on migrant home-building practices and intercultural interaction (see Hage, 1997: 100-118).

Festivals are generally underpinned by a combination of pedagogy, family-oriented entertainment and spectacle in an attempt to attract sufficient visitor numbers (Gold and Gold, 2005: 4). They communicate messages about authenticity while invoking pleasurable experiences (Karp, 1991: 282). They also have a legitimating function (see Karp, 1991). In the case of La Festa this can be seen in its recognition, embracing and celebration of the cultural diversity of Griffith. The festival legitimises cultural diversity and multiculturalism as enriching, entertaining and pleasurable, as well as being valuable to the community, thereby adding to the impetus of cultural diversity as a feature of the population, and to multiculturalism as a means of incorporating it.

Festivals, through their promotion of particular ideologies and perceptions of place, have the potential to promote different values and ideologies in political and purposeful ways that can have a range of effects on those who are constructed and represented (see Jarvis, 1994). Falassi claims that ‘both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognises as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival’, which is what festivals ultimately celebrate (Falassi, 1987a: 2). In the case of La Festa, the value of multiculturalism and cultural diversity are recognised as integral to Griffith’s identity, historical continuity and its physical survival.

The notion of celebration has been a long-standing feature of multiculturalism in Australia, including through the festival form (see for example Stratton, 2000; Permezel and Duffy, 2003). Drawing on Manning’s conception of what constitutes celebration, the central features of La Festa are performance, entertainment, its public nature, and its participatory nature (see Manning, 1983: 4). Importantly, in the context of multicultural Australia, and particularly given the spectre of cosmomulticulturalism, ‘celebration actively involves its constituency; it is not simply a show put on for disengaged spectators’ (Manning, 1983: 4).
La Festa is a celebratory event with significant potential to further multicultural Griffith, particularly in relation to familiarity, intercultural interaction, and non-dominant group agency. Such cultural productions are powerful forces in shaping and directing the myths, lifestyles and even world views of groups of people and indeed may allow diverse groups to communicate emotions and complex meanings (MacCannell, 1999: 29-32). Multicultural festivals specifically may also be useful indicators of the current status of cultural diversity in Australia/Griffith (cf. Bramadat, 2001: 91).

In the case of multicultural Griffith, it is worth remembering that despite its long history in the west (see for example Jarvis, 1994; Gold and Gold, 2005), the festival is not just a western or European cultural form, and that festivals are encountered in virtually all human cultures (Falassi, 1987a: 1; Stoeltje, 1992: 261).

‘La Festa: Faces of Australia’

Griffith stages three major festivals throughout the year and at these times tourism visitation peaks (J. Rolles, personal communication, July 18, 2005). One of these is La Festa: Faces of Australia, held annually at Easter along the main street, Banna Avenue. The festival drew large numbers of both locals and visitors to Banna Avenue on Good Friday and Easter Saturday in 2004. The promotional material

207 Festivals are popular in many of the places from which Griffith draws its population, including the Pacific Islands. See Kaeppler, 1987.
208 The two other major festivals, UnWINEd and the Festival of Gardens, take place in June and October respectively and are held over a period of several days and rely on the participation of either local wineries, in the case of the former or local garden owners. UnWINEd, described in the promotional material as Griffith’s premier wine and food event, had thirteen local wineries participating in 2004. In addition to wine-tasting, many of these wineries held activities like cooking demonstrations and provided live music and food. The 2004 Festival of Gardens involved both visitors and locals visiting one or more of the ten local gardens that were open to the public during this period. For the past ten years the Festival of Gardens has been accompanied by a series of sculptures made from oranges, which line the first blocks of Banna Avenue, the main road into Town. Known as the ‘citrus sculptures’, these creations are installed in the week leading up to the Festival of Gardens by a range of local businesses and community groups. They remain in place at least throughout the festival and are heavily promoted by the GVC as a tourist attraction. They are certainly a striking addition to the landscape as one drives into the town along Banna Avenue. These two events are both temporally and geographically dispersed and are not as intimately linked to multiculturalism in Griffith.
209 Despite taking place over Easter, an overtly Christian celebration, the only references to Christianity was the ‘Combined Churches Free Children’s Brunch’ which was held in the Memorial Gardens on Saturday morning. While Easter is not a neutral time/space, many non-Christians attended La Festa and the fact that it was held on the Easter weekend seemed to be as much about
made overt references to multiculturalism and cultural diversity and the festival drew its audience from a wide cross-section of the Griffith community. Visitation to Griffith is generally high over the Easter weekend and around half of those who attended the festival in 2004 were locals (J. Rolles, personal communication, July 18, 2005).210 La Festa, therefore, might be seen as an inwardly directed event as much as an outwardly directed one; as much about communicating cultural diversity and multiculturalism to local people as it is about the ‘visitability’ of Griffith for tourists (Dicks, 2003). If festivals are always events at which something is being celebrated (Gold and Gold, 2005: 12) then what La Festa celebrates most overtly, and according to the public declarations, is music, food, wine and cultural diversity. It has as a key focus the celebration of local cultural diversity and Griffith City Council (GCC) are heavily involved in its staging. The following analysis begins by tracing the festival’s history, before turning to a detailed consideration of the 2004 event.

**Griffith’s Easter Festival: An Historical Sketch**

The first Easter Festival was held in Griffith in 1956 and was called the ‘Water Wheel Festival’.211 It recognised both visitors and locals as its constituency, and emphasis was placed on ‘culture, entertainment and recreation’ (Waterwheel Festival Committee, 1956). This first festival included three (unmarried) women vying for the title of ‘Queen of the Water Wheel Festival’. Each of the women had already been named either ‘Continental Queen’, ‘Sports Queen’ or ‘Commerce Queen’ (Waterwheel Festival Committee, 1956). Italians, then, were included from the first, constructed here as ‘continental’, and indeed in 1956 the title went to the ‘Continental Queen’.212 The second Water Wheel Festival in 1957 included on its program a ‘Venetian Carnival’ described by the local paper as ‘the most spectacular highlight’ (The Area News, 1957:1). Another feature of the festival, in this first incarnation at least, were Italian ‘House Parties’ (see, for example, Waterwheel Festival Committee, 1956).

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210 By comparison, only 20 per cent of attendees at one of Griffith’s other major annual festivals, the Festival of Gardens, were local people (J. Rolles, personal communication, July 18, 2005).

211 This festival seems to have run until at least 1963 after which time there is a gap in the primary data sourced from the Griffith Library Local Studies Collection.

212 The Italian Museum also recognises this award as important to local Italian history.
From 1971 the Easter festival was known as the Vintage Festival and was held bi-
annually over the Easter long weekend until about 1985. Wine was a focus of this
festival and the events included a wine dinner, a grape-picking competition, a grape-
crushing competition, and the crowning of a ‘King Bacchus’ and a ‘Queen
Bacchante’ (Vintage Festival Committee, 1973). Bacchus was the Roman god of
wine and the reference here is probably related to wine, rather than local Italian
culture. One of the main ideas behind the Vintage Festival was to raise funds for
community facilities and projects like the Griffith Civic Centre (The Area News,
1975: 3). The Venetian Carnival was part of the 1971 Festival, but seems to have
disappeared from the Vintage Festival after this date. There are several factors that
may or may not have played a part in this. By the 1970s many of the people who had
emigrated from the Veneto region had passed away, so the direct link to this culture
through those who had been born in Italy was decreasing. The 1970s and 1980s have
been identified by one participant as a period of decline in relation to overt pride in
Italian culture in Griffith (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004).
Relations between Italian and Anglo-Celtic locals were fraught during this period in
part because of claims about local Italian involvement in organised crime.213

In 1989 the Easter Festival became known as the ‘Griffith Wine and Food Festival’,
soon becoming an annual event and sometimes extending over periods as long as 10
days. The 1989 organising committee included both Anglo-Celtic and Italian
Australians. The 1989 program describes the festival as simply ‘a celebration’,
presumably of local produce, aimed at both visitors and locals (Griffith Food and
Wine Festival Committee, 1989). The Venetian Carnival made a comeback, at least
for the first year, and the Bacchus and Bacchante crowning continued until the early
1990s. Beyond 1989 there was no overt recourse to Italian people or culture in any
of the Festival events. It may be that Italian culture had lost some of its novelty
value for non-Italian locals.

For the last years of the 1990s through to 2001, the event was staged as the Festival
of Griffith and held over the Easter weekend, with a strong emphasis on food and

213 See Chapter One.
wine. In descriptions at the time, Griffith was described as ‘food and wine country’ and the Festival ‘a taste sensation’ (Festival of Griffith Committee, 1997). A range of restaurants and wineries were involved and, as with La Festa, the main street was closed to traffic. In 1998 the language of multiculturalism began to enter descriptions of the Festival for the first time. At the Festival of Griffith one could ‘experience the excitement of our many cultures who will present traditional song, dance and cuisine’ (Festival of Griffith Committee, 1998). The language suggests that this is an appeal to the tourist-cum-cosmo-multiculturalist (see Hage, 1997). In 2000 and 2001 the theme of multiculturalism gained momentum such that, prefiguring La Festa, the 2000 Festival was subtitled ‘Faces and Flavours of Australia’ (Festival of Griffith Committee, 2000).

La Festa, which began in 2003 in recognition of the need for a new format for the festival (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004), was a continuation of the Easter festival in Griffith which had gradually been updated in line with community realities and new perceptions, that in turn mirrored similar changes that had taken place within local government policy and planning. The emphasis shifted slightly with La Festa to music and culture generally, rather than simply food and wine and this can be seen overtly in the 2004 event.

In 2004 La Festa was modelled on other music festivals and attempted to capitalise on the cultural diversity of Griffith (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004). It was organised and run by volunteers, many of whom were prominent local people, with a significant financial contribution from Griffith City Council, including the provision of an event co-ordinator. Sponsorship of the festival also came from a range of local businesses (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004). The purpose of La Festa from the perspective of the organisers was two-fold: to hold an event that would go on to become a major music festival; and to showcase Griffith and its unique diversity, music, food and wine to outsiders (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004). It was deemed to be as much about bringing people into town, about tourism and economics, as it was an event for locals (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004). Indeed one person who had been involved

214 No festival was held in 2002 at least in part because of lack of enthusiasm among the organisers due perhaps to fatigue (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004).
in Easter festivals in Griffith for many years asserted quite curtly that *La Festa* was ‘not a multicultural festival’ when I described it as such. In keeping with the economic imperative, a survey was conducted in 2004 to establish who the target markets were so that future advertising could be directed at these groups (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004).

There is strong community support for *La Festa*. The recent community consultation undertaken by GCC in preparing its Cultural Plan revealed that events like *La Festa* were seen as an important means of educating the broader community, addressing social issues, providing entertainment and broadening the community’s horizons (Griffith City Council, 2005a). Further, they were seen as an investment in the community, for which council should extend support (Griffith City Council, 2005a: np). There were calls to further celebrate the cultural diversity of Griffith by acknowledging individual cultures through events like *La Festa*, which itself could be expanded to include a program of workshops ‘to develop local skills’ (Griffith City Council, 2005a). Indeed suggestions were also made by those involved in the consultation to expand Griffith’s program of multicultural festivals (Griffith City Council, 2005a). We can see in these demands/suggestions a desire among many in the local community to push multiculturalism at the official level further.

Interview material also suggests strong support for *La Festa*. The perception among interviewees generally was that *La Festa* did ‘a good job of bringing people together’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004), that it furthered people’s participation in the life of the broader community, that it increased peoples understanding and appreciation of different cultures, and that it ‘made people happy’ and gave performers a ‘good feeling in relation to their own culture’ (Interviewee 7, 8 Oct 2004). One interviewee pointed out that as a Seventh Day Adventist she was unable to attend the event because it was held on a Saturday. From the perspective of her ‘community’, however, this didn’t matter because the Fijian community had things worked out such that if an event fell on a Saturday the Methodist part of the community would

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215 The person who made the comment did not at this time know I was a researcher. It may be that this person, who can be described as a white or Anglo-Celtic local, was unhappy with the direction the festival had taken. The survey conducted by GCC in preparing their Cultural Plan also revealed ‘some sentimental attachment’ to earlier incarnations of the Easter festival (GCC, 2005a: np). I am
attend/participate, and if it was on a Sunday, the Seventh Day Adventists would represent the Fijian community (Interviewee 8, 12 Oct 2004). The important thing from their perspective was that the Fijian community at least be involved and show support for local events and activities. All interviewees responded positively and enthusiastically to the 2004 event and saw it as something worth fostering.²¹⁶

Personal observations have also revealed that, compared to many other events in Griffith including the two other major events the *Festival of Gardens* and *UnWINEd*, this event has much broader community support, and cuts across the normal class and ethnic divisions at least in relation to the participants—both performers and audiences.

**Celebrating Multiculturalism Griffith-style: La Festa 2004**

In 2004 *La Festa* was organised by a committee of community members with assistance from Griffith City Council (GCC). The committee consisted of about 15 people. The committee members who were at the meetings I attended were all either Anglo-Celtic or Italian Australians, but the background of those on the committee was deemed irrelevant by the chair of the committee (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004). By this he meant that there was no deliberate exclusion of people from particular backgrounds, and that the cultural or ethnic background of committee members didn’t matter. This approach effectively excluded less powerful or assertive groups in the community from being on the committee and valuable insights from a diverse range of perspectives were presumably missed. Several of the organisers had been involved with previous Easter festivals, although members of the broader community had been invited to become involved in the organisation of the 2004 event if they so wished (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004).

¹¹⁶ Indeed the enthusiastic responses to questions about La Festa were a marked contrast to responses to the question of their engagement with other cultural events and facilities, which included ambivalence from many in relation to Pioneer Park Museum, for example.
The festival took place along part of Banna Avenue, including the Memorial Gardens, and the ‘middle block’ was closed off to traffic on Saturday morning. Several sideshows (rides, food carts, games) had appeared in town for the weekend and were positioned slightly away from the main area in various locations along Banna Ave. Estimates put attendance at the event in the order of 6000-7000 people (Martinelli, 2004e). The festival consisted of an ‘opening spectacular’ on Good Friday evening which was held in the Memorial Gardens, and a street festival consisting of musical and dance performances, and a series of food stalls, located along part of Banna Avenue on Easter Saturday. On both occasions attendance was free and both appeared to have drawn an audience from a wide cross-section of the Griffith community.

The Friday night ‘opening spectacular’ can be conceived of as just that, spectacle, in the sense that it was a relatively large-scale, extravagant cultural production, replete with striking visual imagery and dramatic action watched by a large audience (Manning, 1992: 291). In 2003 the festival organisers had secured a grant of $20,000 from Festivals Australia (a federal government body) to hire a group of community artists from Melbourne known as Burning Sensations (Department of Communications, nd).

The Friday night opening was co-ordinated by this group and ran for about an hour. It began with an acknowledgement from the Burning Sensations MC of Wiradjuri people and a ‘Dreaming’ story about the beginning of the world told largely through dance, illustrated with a representation of a snake carried by several young adults and involving a local Koori man and child. This was followed by a lantern parade involving local schoolchildren each of whom

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217 The word spectacle also has a number of other meanings beyond the sense in which the word is being deployed here, for example in the work of Debord (1995).
218 Jupp notes the significance of how cultural activities like those associated with La Festa are conceived by policy and funding decision-makers, that is whether something is a ‘mainstream’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ creative activity (Jupp, 2001: 271). In the case of this grant to La Festa, the précis of the activity/event for which funding was awarded notes that participants will be drawn from ‘various ethnic backgrounds’ (DCITA, nd). The grant itself, however, seems to have come out of the ‘mainstream’ Festivals Australia cultural grant program.
219 Given what we have seen so far in Griffith in relation to respect for Wiradjuri culture from non-Indigenous locals it is possible that the overt and extensive recognition accorded the traditional owners in this instance occurred as a result of the disposition of the city-based Burning Sensations artists as much as any local sensibility.
carried a small lantern they had made, and a procession through the site of a series of larger lanterns made by various ‘ethnic’ groups.

Plate 32: La Festa 2004 was opened with a lantern parade by local school children in the Memorial Gardens.

There was a pre-recorded sound scape that talked of ‘harmony’ and ‘understanding’, the projection of a series of images onto the cenotaph, choir performances, puppetry, and dance performances. The evening culminated in a display of ‘fire twirling’ by the Burning Sensations artists and several local youths. Themes included fire and water, food/produce, and multiculturalism. Official discursive constructions of multiculturalism can be seen to have influenced Friday night’s celebration, particularly in the language that was used and the themes that were deployed.

Saturday’s program, the ‘main event’, consisted of music and dance performances from a range of local groups as well as three non-local acts: The Borderers (an ‘Irish Celtic sensation’); Kim Sanders and Friends; and Totally Gourdgeous. A large stage was erected part of the way along Banna Avenue. The chair of the festival organising committee was the MC for the event, which was declared officially open by the then Mayor of Griffith, also a member of the organising committee, prior to a Wiradjuri Elder and a teenage Wiradjuri girl welcoming the attendees in their language. This was an important recognition of Wiradjuri people and culture and not one that is particularly common in Griffith. From the perspective of the organisers it
suggests that Wiradjuri culture and heritage is valued and that there is a willingness to include Wiradjuri people under the auspices of multiculturalism. From the perspective of Wiradjuri people it suggests a willingness and desire to participate in La Festa as more than just audience members.

Plate 33: La Festa 2004 consumed the space of the main street, closing it to traffic. Many local people attended the festival.

The event was well promoted on local radio and television and in the local newspaper in the weeks leading up to the event. This included interviews about preparations and the program with the GCC funded event coordinator, and calls for volunteers to work on the day of the event. Posters advertising La Festa were displayed prominently around Griffith including in the windows of many shops along Banna Avenue. The local monthly publication Go Magazine was used to distribute programs, as was the local newspaper The Area News. The Griffith Visitors Centre also played a key role in promoting the event and distributing programs and various staff of the centre attended La Festa committee meetings. A range of businesses in Griffith and the nearby town of Leeton also advertised the event and distributed
programs.\textsuperscript{220} This level of participation and engagement from the local business community is indicative of the broad support for \textit{La Festa} as a local event.

\textit{La Festa} seems to have generated a range of meanings among those involved in its organisation and promotion. When interviewed, the chair of the organising committee placed emphasis on tourism, promoting the town to outsiders and developing the event as a nationally renowned music festival comparable to other well-known music festivals in Australia, while capitalising on the cultural diversity of the town (P. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2004).\textsuperscript{221} This is somewhat reminiscent of the Federal Government’s conception of cultural diversity as a resource, from which benefits need to be derived (see Commonwealth of Australia, 1999).\textsuperscript{222} Much of the promotional material and the local media coverage, however, emphasised the local nature of the event and its relationship to the local community: ‘in their second La Festa event, Griffith community members prepare to embrace an inspirational mix of international music, food and wine, as well as pay homage to the importance of their own cultural heritage’ (La Festa Committee, 2004a). This interpretation of what the festival was about was in accordance with how many local people understood the event.

In line with the range of meanings deployed by event organisers, media coverage prior to the event varied in emphasis. At times the three ‘international’ music acts seemed to be the festival’s \textit{raison d’être} (for example Go Magazine, 2004a), while at other times the emphasis was on ‘an exciting mix of local multicultural performances in addition to some of the region’s premium food and wine’ (La Festa Committee, 2004b). On GCC’s website the festival was described as both ‘Griffith’s International, Music, Food and Wine Festival’ (sic) and ‘a celebration of Griffith’s diverse ethnic community and its premium food and wine industry’ (Griffith City Council, 2004c).

\textsuperscript{220} Probably in an attempt to draw visitors to town for the event, many of these were tourism related businesses, like wineries. The program also served as a comprehensive guide to the Easter weekend in Griffith generally.

\textsuperscript{221} In this formulation La Festa is about ‘place promotion’, ‘the conscious use of publicity and marketing to communicate selective images of specific geographical localities of areas to a target audience’ (Gold and Ward, 1994: 2). Cf. Quinn (2003) on the role played by tourism in reproducing official meanings and sustaining myths in relation to festivals.
Local newspaper *The Area News* ran front-page items on various aspects of the festival as well as advertisements. Here too the emphasis varied and both the local and ‘international’ nature of the festival were brought to the fore at various times (The Area News, 2004a; The Area News, 2004b; Martinelli, 2004c; Martinelli, 2004d). The Friday night ‘opening’ was described as a ‘celebration of multiculturalism’ (Martinelli, 2004d) and food, described as ‘multicultural edibles’, was part of this celebration generally (Martinelli, 2004e). In the post-event coverage the editor described the event as having been ‘a celebration of who we are and why the cultural melting pot of Griffith is the envy of almost every other city in Australia’, standing for ‘understanding and friendship’, and ‘restoring some faith in our collective ability to embrace and involve different cultures’ (Johns, 2004). Indeed ‘it’s more than just a mere celebration of multiculturalism, it’s an affirmation, on every level, of the success story that is Griffith’ (Johns, 2004). The local nature of the event and its significance as a celebration of multicultural Griffith is prominent in these formulations.

Interviewees responded in a number of ways to *La Festa*, all substantially positive and exhibiting pride in the event. They emphasised the entertainment value of *La Festa* as well as its celebratory nature and its potential for bringing people together and increasing awareness among local people of cultures different to their own. It has been observed that ‘native readers of festival texts always want to see the ideals of the culture expressed there: that is the theme of speeches during the festival itself and of wholesome articles afterwards’ (Swiderski, 1987:4) and this was no exception.

Although *La Festa* can be seen as a local event, informed in part by locally-derived understandings of multiculturalism, many of the familiar themes and images of official multiculturalism, that is the kind of multiculturalism critiqued by Castles et al (1992a), Jupp (2002), Stratton (1998) and Hage (eg. 1998), were deployed at various stages throughout the festival. The themes that were articulated, the language that was used, and the various elements that went to make up the festival, like food and dance, were, for the most part, in keeping with broad general understandings of

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222 See Chapter One
multiculturalism in Australia. There was talk of ‘harmony and understanding’ as part of Friday night’s event, the provision of a range of ‘ethnic’ food, the costumes that decorated the stage and were presumably meant to symbolise particular cultures, and the performances themselves. Notions of the value of cultural diversity and of particular cultural groups, were implied as was the idea that ‘the multicultural community’ would provide an enriching experience for audience members (cf. Hage, 1998).

While local discourses and understandings are clearly informed by official discourses, the way the community responded to the event, demonstrates some of the limits of state-sponsored multiculturalism to control and dictate the experience of multiculturalism, as it is lived, at the local level. While the festival was not a radical departure from official discourses and configurations of multiculturalism, upon closer examination, the kind of multiculturalism enacted through this local festival suggests a genuine and substantial embracing of multiculturalism that goes beyond the cautious and conservative government rhetoric. Analysis of the festival also calls into question the ability of critiques like those from Hage (especially 1998) to fully capture what multiculturalism might mean to those who live it.

**Performing Community: Griffith’s Multicultural Mosaic**

Multiculturalism implies a multiplicity of cultures, in its Australian variation at least. Thus at a multicultural festival, one would expect various different cultures to be articulated. At *La Festa* various ‘groups’ were constructed, seemingly with broad general consensus. But rather than this being simply about ethnic others being asked to entertain the so-called mainstream, *La Festa* is also substantially about asserting ones own cultural identity and communicating its value to both those who identify with the same cultural heritage, and those who don’t.

The participation of most of the performers in the festival turned on their ethnicity, or perceptions of it by the organisers and these seemed to be generally accepted by both the performers and audiences, at least outwardly. The 2004 festival was to ‘include a range of energetic performances from Griffith’s ethnic communities including Pacific Islanders groups such as Tongan, Samoan and Fijian, Punjabi dancers, Italian
singers and Wiradjuri dancer performances’ (sic) (Griffith City Council, 2004c). It appeared to be important that a particular ethnic or cultural label was attached to each performance and in so doing, a series of discrete culturally/ethnically defined groups were constituted and deployed both through the creation of the lanterns for the Friday night’s display and through the programming and performances on Saturday. Dance performances in particular were constructed around the ethnicity of the performers. Tongan dancers performed ‘Tongan dances’, the Cook Islanders ‘Cook Island dances,’ for example. While the cultural background of those involved in organising La Festa might be deemed irrelevant by those same organisers, culture/ethnicity is a critical dimension of those groups from whom the organisers secured participation as performers. In this way La Festa had much in common with conventional staged multiculturalism and the cultures of those constructed as in such a way often seemed tied to an essentialist, romantic past and were represented as static rather than dynamic. This is one of the limitations of this kind of identity politics (see for example Scott, 1995; and Hall, 1996b).

Performers and their audiences colluded in these constructions of culture and ethnicity. As Hall has observed, identity, including ethnic or cultural identity, has to be spoken by the subject, collectively or as an individual, who is being positioned, as well as by the external dominating system. In the process, which is incomplete and partial, emerges the notion of ‘identification’ (Hall, 1996c: 130). At La Festa these identifications were more specific identifications than those articulated in the Lifecycle project discussed previously, which gathered people together under spurious categories like ‘recent arrival’ and ‘pioneer/settler’. The construction of ethnicity in the context of La Festa is therefore much more appropriate to individual and collective self-identification and is less likely to efface its specificity.

Jupp has noted the centrality of dance in multicultural festivals in Australia (Jupp, 2001: 272) and displays of culture by local groups on the main day of the festival, Easter Saturday, were largely dance performances. The audience, which seemed to represent the extent of cultural diversity in Griffith, played a critical role in dictating the kind of event that emerged, including the ambience. Mirroring what was taking place on stage, festival attendees clustered themselves in specific ethnic groups and also seemed to show most support for performers from their own backgrounds. The
composition and size of the audience varied throughout the day according to who the performers were on stage. The front rows of the audience changed with each performance and those who either got up and danced along to the relevant performance or applauded most enthusiastically afterwards seemed to be drawn from similar backgrounds to the performers. This suggests a high degree of support for performers from those who identified with them. Not surprisingly, these performances may have resonated most with those whose culture was being represented.

The performance by a group of ‘traditional’ Tongan Dancers, the first for the day, was closely watched and loudly applauded by what seemed to be friends and family, who occupied the front rows of audience seating and some of whom got up and danced in front of the stage during the performance. Indigenous performer Merv Firebrace, a non-Wiradjuri man who was endorsed by local Wiradjuri people as a spokesperson, began by acknowledging the Wiradjuri people and country, before sharing two Indigenous stories with the audience including one about the didgeridoo, which he then went on to play. The audience for this performance were large and enthusiastic and appeared to reflect the cultural diversity of Griffith. But the other Indigenous performers, Another World, were applauded most loudly by Indigenous people in the audience, who moved in from the sidelines for the performance, providing encouragement and support. Other local acts, such as the Cook Island dancers and a young Samoan boy from the 7th Day Adventist Church, who sang religious songs, drew sizable crowds of a mix of locals and were applauded loudly but the composition of the front two or three rows of the audience changed in a way that appeared to mirror the ethnicity of the performers. At times things seemed almost competitive as each new group of performers took to the stage and were encouraged by audience members of the same cultural background, who would move to the front for the performance.

On the whole, audience members responded enthusiastically in ways that suggests both a sense of ownership of the event and a sense of its value to the community. The dances, and the dancers, were exuberant and the audience imbibed this to the extent that many responded to the performances by getting up and dancing along.
Plate 34: ‘Community performers’ on stage at La Festa. The implication from the festival organisation was that those who took part as performers would communicate aspects of their ‘cultural traditions’ to the audience. The back of the stage was decorated with ‘costumes’ intended to represent a range of ‘cultures’.

Plate 35: The audience at La Festa was large, enthusiastic, and culturally diverse. The front rows often mirrored the ethnicity of the performers.

Despite being constructed by organisers as the main ‘drawcard’, the non-local performers, who were not labelled ‘multicultural performers’, often didn’t get the
same level of applause and enthusiasm from the crowd as the local performers did. Indeed the Uniting Church Tongan dancers drew one of the largest crowds and were loudly applauded. While the so-called headline act The Borderers were generally popular, they were not as well received as many of the local groups, at least for their first performance of the day.\(^{223}\) The composition of the audience suggests that this was not cosmo-multiculturalism; this was as much for non-Anglo locals as it was for the cosmo-multiculturalists and other Anglo multiculturalists in Griffith, whatever the organisers’ intentions (cf. Hage, 1997).

But while many of the people of Griffith were conceived of as being members of particular discrete ethnic groups, others were not. As in many of the other representations examined previously, cultures/ethnicities derived from the United Kingdom are effaced in the multicultural festival context also. None of the symbols or imagery used throughout the festival was suggestive of English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh cultures. Indeed people born in England, who make up the fourth largest migrant group in Griffith at 6.3% of the ‘OSB’ population (CRC, nda), were not represented at the festival at all, unless they went as spectators.\(^{224}\) Nor did anyone claim to be selling English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh food.\(^{225}\) Neither Anglo-Celtic Australians, nor more recent migrants from England, for example, were included in representations of multicultural Griffith and remained unmarked by ethnicity. Members of this ‘group’ were not called upon to ‘perform’ with reference to any form of cultural identity. It is not that Anglo-Celts were excluded. Indeed the Sing Australia Choir who sang as part of the performances included many from Anglo-Celtic (and Italian) backgrounds. But they were not appearing by virtue of their ethnicity. While Stratton (2000) has noted recent assertions of English ethnic identity in Australia, this was not the case at La Festa. Multiculturalism in Griffith, then, is

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\(^{223}\) Their second performance, the grand finale to La Festa, drew an enthusiastic if small crowd. Anybody who was left at the event, and they were almost exclusively ‘white,’ sang and danced and cheered loudly in what may well have been an alcohol-fuelled loss of inhibition. Many of the family groups who were present throughout the day had left and these white Australians, some of whom had kept their distance from the stage earlier the day, hovering around the wine tents instead, moved into the space at the front of the stage.\(^{224}\) Cf. Stratton (2000).

\(^{225}\) Scottish traditions (at least) in Griffith have been in decline in Griffith since the early 1960s partly because of an aging of migrant population and a lack of commitment by younger people to maintain the traditions of their forbears (B. Pringle, personal communication, October 22, 2004).
still partly conceived of as being about non-Anglo-Celts (cf. Sollors, 1995; and Hall, 1996c).

Italian Australians were at times marked by their culture/ethnicity, but at other times were not. Italian culture was more overtly deployed in earlier incarnations of the Easter festival but at *La Festa* Italians seemed to have lost their status as part of the ‘multicultural community’ in this context at least, and therefore do not ‘perform’ as part of the festival. Italian style food sold at *La Festa* was also, to a large extent, subsumed into an array of fairly standard ‘Australian’ style fare. Given that people from Italian backgrounds played a key role in the organisation of the event, they have, in this context, essentially transcended their status as ‘ethnics’ and therefore ‘objects to be governed’ (Hage, 1998).

Wiradjuri people were at times recognised as the traditional owners, and therefore given some primacy, but at other times they were constructed as just another ethnic group. On both Friday and Saturday Wiradjuri people were acknowledged as the traditional owners either by the MC, as on Friday night, or through a welcome by an elder, as was the case on Saturday. This was an important recognition and one that occurred infrequently in Griffith. But the scheduled appearances of Wiradjuri people as just another group of ‘community performers’ potentially undermined their status as the ‘first people’.

The inclusion of (‘Aboriginal’) rap band Another World went part of the way to challenging essentialist constructions based on traditional culture because festival organisers allowed them to stand on their merit as musicians rather than bill them as another group of ‘community performers’. Given that this is a rap band of four teenage boys their inclusion also offered an alternative version of Aboriginal culture in Griffith with the possibility to subvert stereotypes and challenge assumptions that may be made by non-Aboriginal people (see Bramadat, 2001).

Further insight into how the cultural diversity of Griffith is articulated at *La Festa* can be seen through what took place around Friday night’s event. Burning Sensations artists had been involved in running workshops with various local people in the weeks leading up to the event including primary school children and several
community groups. One of the pavilions at the Griffith Showground was used to work with several local groups to make the lanterns that were paraded on Good Friday night. The groups who participated were identified by an informant as Chinese, Cook Islander, Indian and Wiradjuri, each of whom made a lantern deemed to be somehow emblematic of their culture. Observations suggest that some of those called upon to participate as members of particular ethnic groups may have been, at the least, ambivalent about their involvement.

The ascribing of ethnic identity by others can be fraught with difficulties and incorrect assumptions. Several days were spent watching and assisting a local Indian artist construct a large effigy of an Indian woman from rods of cane tied together to form a frame which was then covered with large sheets of glue-soaked paper. After the paper had dried the figure was painted and decorated. The artist was constructed within the festival context as ‘Indian’, yet her primary identity in relation to this project was as an artist, and one with artistic skills, as much as something related to her ethnic or cultural identity, to bring to the project. Although used in the festival context as a symbol of Indian culture and identity, this lantern did not receive broader support from the Indian community, at least in its construction, and therefore those who came to assist the artist were not from Indian backgrounds. Given that a majority of Indians in Griffith are Sikh, and the artist involved in this project was Hindu, the lack of interest shown by local Sikhs in this project is probably not surprising given both the very different traditions of these two groups and the historical animosity between them in India.

Friday night’s lanterns drew on specific emblematic symbols associated with each of the cultural groups that had been constructed, many of which were the same ones deployed as part of the Lifecycle project. Examples include the use of flowers to symbolise some Pacific Island cultures. There is a degree of correlation between the construction of multicultural Griffith within the context of La Festa and what has so far been observed in other spheres within Griffith. This kind of intertextuality is

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226 She did, however, draw on elements of the Hindu festival Holi in her work.
227 Other lanterns that appeared on the night, for which I was unable to identify a specific creator, included a fish, a bunch of grapes, an orange, a bottle of wine and a wine glass, many of which are locally recognised generic symbols of Griffith/the MIA.
common generally in relation to the construction of Griffith as multicultural and/or culturally diverse.

Plate 36: The 'Indian lady', the ‘piece de resistance’ of the lantern parade was designed by a local artist born in India.

Plate 37: A flower symbolising Cook Islander culture was made by a group of local people originally from the Cook Islands.
While the embracing of ‘other’ foods is often seen as a merely superficial engagement with cultural difference and as part of a problematical discourse of enrichment, it is also critical to migrant practices of home-building (Hage, 1997). A range of foods were available at La Festa. There were about 16 food tents arranged along Banna Avenue including: ‘Sita Devi Kumar: Indian Food’, staffed by some local Sikhs, which was raising money for the Griffith Base Hospital; a local Rugby Club selling steak and sausage sandwiches; a local Australian Rules Football club selling pasta and pizza; a ‘Polynesian Food’ tent; several local cafes, restaurants and takeaway shops selling arrange of rolls, pasta, pizza, fruit salad, fried food, pies, chips, noodles, and Chinese food; Italian cakes and biscuits; and Dutch pancakes.

Plate 38: One of the food stalls at La Festa was run by members of the local Sikh community who donated the proceeds to Griffith Base Hospital.

Rather than existing as an ethnic smorgasbord catering for cosmo-multiculturalists, these food stalls also, and perhaps more so, served their own ethnic constituencies as well as other attendees (cf. Hage, 1997). The range of foods, provided here in the context of the multicultural festival, suggests a more inclusive or broader definition of ‘the multicultural community’ than did the performances. From the perspective of
the Sikh community, fund-raising for the local hospital was a clear part of the rationale. Further, rather than drawing on notions of authenticity, there was a mixing of cultural traditions evident in the food that was served. The provision of food at La Festa was not about exoticism, but rather revealed something of the local cultural world of Griffith, a world which has incorporated a diverse range of traditions as its own.

The question of celebratory control is ambiguous and can be negotiated (Manning, 1983: 7). La Festa could be read as a space in which members of the dominant group enact a fantasy of dominance and control (see Hage, 1998). Because of their inclusion on the festival program, performances by locals at La Festa were framed as ‘multicultural performances’ from ‘the multicultural community’. Because of this framing, a particular status was accorded the performances and the performers, as well as a particular function within the life of the town of Griffith. A limitation was imposed by the fact that, although there was power accorded those who ‘spoke’, permission to speak essentially had to be granted by the organisers. Further, through the programming, it set one group within the community as the arbiters of what constituted a worthwhile (multicultural) performance from others.

But at La Festa, groups and individuals who are not always afforded the opportunity to speak in such a public way to the broader community were able to do so. Part of what was communicated was the significance and value of various cultural traditions, traditions which others from different backgrounds may have little understanding of. Those who were part of the audience were from both the same cultural backgrounds as performers, as well as the broader Griffith community. In this way La Festa can be seen to have empowered the performers, and provided an opportunity for them to consciously deploy particular aspects and versions of their cultural identity and to communicate this to a wide audience (see Bramadat, 2001).

The construction of some groups within the Griffith community as ‘ethnic’, and who are then accorded the status of ‘community performers’ within the festival, serves in

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228 An informant who described themselves as a Cook Islander pointed out that a local Cook Islander dance group were invited to perform at a range of other functions in Griffith, many of which were either church or GCC events.
part to maintain the status of those who are not simply ethnic performers or exotic others. Thus those from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, and to a lesser extent from Italian backgrounds, appear as the ‘mainstream’, and maintain their privileged position and their power to manage the local space (see for example Hall, 1995; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Hage, 1998).

While divisions are evident here, and there are clear constructions of ethnicity and difference, there is also some consensus. There was a high degree of local support for the event and significant opportunities for non-dominant groups to become involved and to challenge dominant group constructions of multiculturalism, drawing as they do on official versions. La Festa and perhaps multicultural festivals generally do allow some room for negotiation and debate, albeit within a particular established and sometimes conventional framework.

Conclusions

Security, familiarity, community and sense of possibility, are critical dimensions of life for migrants (see Hage, 1997: 102-104). La Festa may well have furthered each of these aspects of individuals’ lives. It created a space from which one could derive a sense of belonging (see Hage, 1997: 102). In this way La Festa can also be conceived of as having furthered migrant home-building (see Hage, 1997: 100-118) and empowerment. It provided opportunities for intercultural interaction as well as possibilities for more recent migrants to have a voice, participate in broader community life, and become more familiar with the social world of Griffith.

While the organisers of La Festa may have had a particular agenda and an idea of how the event would unfold, both performers and their audiences were key agents in shaping the event and, in a sense, took control. Although members of particular ethnic groups appear to have colluded in how they were constructed, they also clearly took charge of their own involvement and were active participants in the consumption as well, blurring Hage’s distinction between migrants and those who consume aspects of migrant culture.
As a cultural event, *La Festa* might be described as inclusive. Attendance was free and it was held in a prominent location familiar to all local people. Much of the promotional material that appeared in the weeks leading up to the event emphasised the local community and a wide range of people attended the event.

While to varying extents many of Griffith’s ethnic groups are marginalised within tourism, representations of the past, and monuments and memorials, *at La Festa* they take centre stage. Indeed the success of *La Festa* relies on groups conceived of as part of the ‘multicultural community’ being willing to perform, and to a lesser extent, to provide food. These groups can be seen to be both rising to an expectation and simultaneously projecting a pride in their cultural identity, in a space allotted to them to do just this. There is an ambiguity here that is mirrored in Australian multiculturalism more generally. *La Festa* is, importantly, about more than ethnic others, albeit local others, being asked to entertain the rest. There is a high degree of community support for and participation in *La Festa*. Indeed there was a real air of excitement and anticipation in town in 2004.

It has been claimed that at contemporary events like festivals, diversion and entertainment predominate, promoting the mass culture of individualism and no longer celebrating or illuminating collective futures (Jarvis, 1994:190). At *La Festa*, however, celebration and coming together, albeit largely still within the framework of one’s inherited cultural identity, are key rationales that are also supported by participants. The festival enables the imagining of a collective identity and future.

While *La Festa* may not completely invert the social realities of Griffith (see, for example, Stoeltje, 1992), it does articulate and modify power relations (Manning, 1983: 6). Thus the festival organisation remains largely within the control of a small group of ‘elites’ with ‘others’ being asked to share their culture through performance. But observation indicates that these ‘performers’ bring with them an audience that is not substantially made up of the dominant group, and indeed the festival provides a forum in which those who are not generally part of the dominant group can guide the direction of the festival (through their responses) and transform the space of the main street (cf. Permezel and Duffy, 2003). *La Festa* goes beyond the version of
multiculturalism that has been shown to be limited and problematical and the so-called multicultural community have ‘made the festival their own’ to a large extent.

*La Festa*, as a multicultural festival, is about *both* cosmo-multiculturalism and the everyday reality of migrant home-building and intercultural interaction in Griffith (see Hage, 1997). On the whole, it conforms to the vision of multicultural Griffith held by those who might be described as multiculturalists, both ‘white’ and ‘non-white’, including Griffith City Council. It is not a radical departure from the broader agenda of state-sponsored multiculturalism in Australia.

There is, however, strong community support for the event and through the exuberance of participants and their ‘ownership’ of the event, both performers and spectators, these constructions are subverted or at least called into question in terms of the actual ability/power of the festival organisers to manage and control definitions of multiculturalism and the celebration of cultural diversity. *La Festa’s* significance lies as much in how the community engage with it as it does in what the organisers intend it to be. This multicultural festival has the potential to further understanding, appreciation and respect, and indeed personal relationships, reducing fears of difference and undermining stereotypes, as well as increasing the cultural and social capital of the Griffith community as a whole. *La Festa* created a space in which Griffith’s diverse peoples could be together in difference.
Chapter Six

Living Cultural Diversity

‘We’ve got ‘em all here. We’ve got Pollywollys, Coconuts, Jungle Bunnies, Towel Heads, Dagos, Wogs, Barrys, Skippys, Bomb-throwers, Camel-trainers, Slope heads, Curry-munchers, Spaghetti-munchers, non-reflectives…’ (Griffith-born participant of Italian background)

Some of those present at the table laugh at what is clearly an attempt to be humorous, while others look at me for a reaction to this ‘un-politically correct’ assertion. The dinner conversation continues and by the end of the night the topics covered have included: the similarities and differences between Northern and Southern Italians (named by those present as ‘Polos’ and ‘Calos’); Italian regionalism generally; Italian food and culture; the migration experience; life in contemporary Italy; how outsiders perceive Griffith; and the local Indigenous community. ‘We’re not just doing this because you’re here, you know’, says one person. ‘We always have these kinds of conversations’.229

Alongside the official discourses and programs of governments in Australia are the everyday experiences of those who live cultural diversity.230 This chapter tries to capture something of how a range of people experience everyday life in the ‘cultural worlds’ (Anderson, 1999b) of Griffith, and the ‘maps of meaning’ (Clarke, Hall et al., 1976; Jackson, 1989) that emerge.

I met and spent time with many Griffith residents while living in the town as a researcher. When people became aware of the research I was conducting, almost all had a story about multicultural Griffith that they wanted to share. Some of these

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229 These exchanges took place at a dinner party in a local home to which I was invited shortly after arriving in Griffith. Those present were all Australian-born Griffith locals from Anglo-Celtic, Northern Italian or Southern Italian backgrounds. The evening was recorded in a field journal shortly after the event as part of the ‘participant observation’ method of collecting research material. This is not the same dinner party as the one I refer to below, which was digitally recorded as part of a series of formal interviews with local people and which I call ‘group discussion’.

people were subsequently interviewed formally, and their voices are included below.\textsuperscript{231} Others were incorporated through the ‘participant observation’ method of data collection (see Gray, 2003: 79-106) and some of this material is woven into the analysis as well.

The world in which I was essentially ‘embedded’, largely because of family, was dominated by people of either Anglo-Celtic or Italian heritage. The research material is therefore framed by that positioning and by the particular experience that arose from being part of that socio-cultural and indeed economic, milieu. A broader experience of Griffith has been gained from moving out of this world and attending ‘other’ kinds of events and activities where appropriate, and by conducting interviews with individuals who described themselves variously as Fijian, Tongan, Samoan, Cook Islander, Turkish, Indian, English and Aboriginal/Koori. Several ‘Italians’ and ‘Anglo Saxons’, many of whom emphasised their identity as ‘Australian’ as the most significant descriptor, were also formally interviewed.\textsuperscript{232} As I describe below, these ‘Australians’ can be said to constitute the ‘dominant’ groups in Griffith and have a longer history there than most other migrant groups. In many ways they have set the tone and guided the development of the town in the post-invasion period.

Life in multicultural Griffith is both complex and at times paradoxical. Participants generally agreed that Griffith was ‘a success story’ in relation to multiculturalism, indeed it was held by many to be a model of tolerance, harmony, equity and community. On the whole participants believed that Griffith was largely free from the kinds of problems and tensions that they thought multiculturalism had led to elsewhere, often using Sydney as a case in point.\textsuperscript{233} Participant observation also suggests that multiculturalism in Griffith has strong local support and might be

\textsuperscript{231} As outlined in the Introduction to the thesis, thirteen formal interviews of about one hour were conducted with individuals from a range of different cultural backgrounds. In addition, a two-hour long group discussion was recorded with seven individuals from both ‘Italian’ and ‘Anglo Saxon’ backgrounds. The former are referred to as ‘interviewee’ and numbered one to thirteen. That latter is referred to as ‘group discussion’.

\textsuperscript{232} When talking about a particular individual I use their self-ascribed cultural or ethnic identity. When talking about groups of people I generally use the descriptors/names that I have ascribed because of their currency in Griffith, as outlined in the Introduction.

\textsuperscript{233} This perception would have, I suspect, been re-enforced by the so-called race riots and associated violence that occurred in several Sydney beachside suburbs, particularly Cronulla, in December 2005.
described as ‘robust’. It is not, however, without its problems and limitations. Not only are the people of Griffith interpellated differentially, as a series of discrete groups, each of these groups are positioned, and indeed position themselves, differently within the socio-cultural life and power structures of the community as a whole. This is one of the limitations of this form of multiculturalism.\textsuperscript{234} One of the most striking, but perhaps not surprising, features of Griffith to have emerged from this study is how local Indigenous people are positioned, something which warrants substantial attention and will therefore be drawn out in the next chapter (Chapter Seven).

The following analysis uses the conception of the Griffith community constructed within local multicultural discourse, but also works against this construction. In doing so I consider power structures, how the different groups that are interpellated are positioned, and how relationships between these groups are perceived by participants, as well as how they appear in light of the other research material. What emerges is a kind of three-way conversation between participants, the researcher and the historical record, against a backdrop of the official discourses outlined in the preceding chapters. The voices of individuals in Griffith who took part in the research either formally or informally remain critical in trying to capture something of what it might mean to live cultural diversity in Griffith. As Anderson has noted, ‘frames of mind’ are sources of control, conflict and contest, as well as being sources of cultural understanding and identity (1999b: 8). Analysis also reveals that while ‘centres’ and ‘margins’ are potentially useful ways of describing how various groups are positioned in multicultural Griffith, they are variable and contextual, especially in relation to ‘Italians’ (see Gunew, 1994b).

I will begin by trying to capture something of how cultural diversity and multiculturalism are valued by Griffith residents. I will then consider, in turn, the different groups interpellated by local multicultural discourse and what some of the implications of this are. The final part concludes the chapter by looking at some of the limits of multicultural tolerance in Griffith and how manifestations of ‘intolerance’ are dealt with locally.

\textsuperscript{234} Cf. Ang (2006), who calls for a more integrative and interactive multiculturalism.
Multicultural Griffith: ‘Quite an Exceptional Town’

I would hate to think what we’d be like without it…we wouldn’t nearly have the wealth, and wealth in so many ways…its brilliant…it is what has made Griffith…without it we’d be nowhere…we can be a landmark for that, to the rest of Australia for that matter, and for the rest of the world perhaps, to say look, it works, look at it…its not utopia, but it works’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004).

Individual responses to questions about how multiculturalism in Griffith was working, and what Griffith was like as a place to live, were overwhelmingly positive. Participants were generally comfortable and happy with the description of Griffith as ‘multicultural’ and described multiculturalism as both a positive and distinctive feature of the town. By multiculturalism they meant that Griffith was culturally diverse and that cultural differences were/should be acknowledged, accepted and respected. The notion of ‘acceptance’ was used by several different participants to describe multiculturalism in Griffith. The word acceptance as it was used by participants implies something beyond ‘tolerance’,235 without necessarily implying an unequivocal embracing of cultural diversity/multiculturalism. The notion of acceptance, as it is deployed by those of the dominant groups (see below), also carries with it a sense of the inevitability of multicultural Griffith. Indeed many in the dominant groups recognise that, in reality, they have no choice but to accept cultural diversity and multiculturalism and are therefore less wedded to a ‘white nation fantasy’ (Hage, 1998).

Overwhelmingly, local people were proud of what they perceived had been achieved in Griffith. ‘I think it’s better than other areas... The whole place has changed, and I mean for the better. We’ve got a wealthier place...the impact has been all good...it’s made us so strong...I would hate to think what we’d be like without it. We’d be narrow, we’d be paler, we’d be little...we’d be back to the pommy thing’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). For this person, who described themselves as ‘Australian’ and whose ancestry includes a range of European and British elements,
multiculturalism was a definite strength and was indeed ‘what has made Griffith. It’s not perfect, but it has worked’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). Others agreed saying things like ‘I think it’ll work- it has worked’ (‘Italian’ Participant, Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004).236

Another participant went further claiming that ‘Griffith is quite an exceptional town’ (Interviewee 6, 11 Oct 2004). This person, Australian-born and whose parents had migrated from Italy, had travelled extensively throughout Australia and expanded on this point by comparing Griffith with other towns that had been encountered over the years. ‘We’ve come to realise how good Griffith is in so many different ways- in the obvious acceptance of different races, in the food availability, in our mentality, we’re quite open in our acceptance of other races’ (Interviewee 6, 11 Oct 2004). Griffith was compared to other country towns in Australia which were described as ‘quite insular’. For this person Griffith is the way it is because of both the diversity and the number of ‘people from other backgrounds’.

One participant was surprised at the cultural diversity that had developed. ‘I always thought that Griffith would be exclusively an Italian town. I never thought Griffith would become such a multicultural town, which is great, it’s a fantastic thing, I’m all for it’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). 237 The people of Griffith, ‘even Anglo Saxons’, were deemed by this ‘Australian of Italian background’ to be more caring and accepting of other cultures because of multiculturalism (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004).

Several participants who were not born in Australia had spent time in Sydney before coming to Griffith. In the experience of one of these people Griffith had been ‘welcoming’. A woman who described herself as a Cook Island’s Maori observed that ‘down here it’s quite different. I hardly hear of any problems’ (Interviewee 7, 8 Oct 2004). For another participant, an older woman born in Fiji, Griffith was better than Sydney because ‘here when you go into town and you see someone, its just like you knew them before ... people talk to you’ (Interviewee 8, 12 Oct 2004). This may

236 Using concepts like egalitarianism, a range of outsiders to Griffith have made similar claims about the town. See for example Huber (1977: 116-123). Al Grassby felt that Griffith epitomised multiculturalism in Australia (for example 1985).
237 I return to the idea that Griffith is ‘an Italian town’ below.
be as much to do with the nature of country towns more generally than to do with multiculturalism *per se*.

Participants from a range of backgrounds who were born in Griffith also used Sydney as a point of comparison. Contemporary Griffith was seen as more progressive than Sydney in terms of ‘accepting other cultures’ and ‘intermarriage’. Interviewee 5, whose background is Italian, thought that multiculturalism had ‘come more quickly here because it’s more isolated here, you’re out in a country town and its right in your face, day in day out, without being able to escape from it’. He thought Sydney was ‘much more segregated’ and that ‘assimilation and [the] acceptability of multiculturalism ... probably developed a lot quicker in Griffith’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). As another participant put it, ‘we all get along well in Griffith…as well as any other community…I think we’re all content with the way we live, that we all get on with one another, we’re tolerant of one another’ (‘Anglo-Saxon’ Participant, Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004). This same person conceded, however, that if ‘times got tough’ economically, this situation might change and people might not be so tolerant.  

Several interviewees claimed that there were generational differences in accepting and embracing multiculturalism. They said that attitudes had changed over time and that younger people in Griffith were more comfortable with cultural diversity because it had always been part of their lives. They saw the education system as playing a critical role in fostering and furthering multiculturalism, as well as local sport/sporting activities and church groups.  

Though such attitudes were only occasionally encountered, multiculturalism was experienced as threatening by some members of the dominant groups. An Anglo-Celtic Australian tradesperson, who informed me that he often worked on properties rented out to more recent migrants, said that multiculturalism was ‘not working well’. Reluctant to be drawn further on this perception, and unwilling to be formally

\[238\) I suspect that the word assimilation is being used here to describe the mutual adaptation that has transpired between Anglo-Celts and Italians in Griffith. This is the same interviewee he described Griffith as ‘an Italian town’.  

\[239\) Cf. DOTARS, 2005.  

interviewed, the suggestion that multiculturalism was problematical seemed to be linked to this individual’s perception that more recent migrants were untidy or unclean and either had no respect for other people’s property or were more likely to cause damage to the property.\footnote{This perception of multiculturalism and migrants may be part of a larger counter-narrative in Griffith. It has not been possible to explore the extent of this counter-narrative within the scope of this study and the discourse of multiculturalism is so pervasive in Griffith as to essentially ‘drown’ these voices out. There may be a class dimension in operation and having been embedded within a}

Another thirtyomething male tradesperson of a similar cultural background was convinced that one particular migrant group, ‘the Indians,’ had a clear agenda to ‘take over’ Griffith. He claimed that Indians were lowering wages as well as the standard of living in Griffith. This was in part couched in terms of their being ‘a lot of them’ (Interviewee 4b, 22 Oct 2004. Cf. Hage, 1998: 27-47). Several participants involved in the group discussion, who were all members of the dominant groups, also expressed concern that Indians were ‘changing the face of Griffith’ (Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004). Other more recent migrant groups, however, were not perceived as a threat and were therefore more acceptable to these same participants (Interviewee 4b, 22 Oct 2004; Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004).

Interviewees and other participants generally felt that multiculturalism in Griffith was not only a success, but that it was more successful than other country towns and, as noted above, Sydney. This was the case because: a precedent had been set by earlier waves of Italian migrants and therefore more recent migrants were easily accepted; the size of the town facilitated greater engagement with each other; country towns were naturally more friendly; and because the scale and diversity of migrant groups in Griffith was great. As one more recent migrant, a thirty-something Tongan man, put it, Anglo-Celts and Italians ‘have accepted it because there’s so many groups out there…they have to because I think they’ve realised that they can’t do anything about it’ (Interviewee 9, 19 Oct 2004). For another interviewee, a thirty-something Sikh Indian male, ‘somehow Griffith has done better than many other places and maybe because it has had that gradual changeover’ and everyone has gradually ‘mingled with each other’, unlike Sydney where opportunities to mix are more limited. But despite this interviewee’s claims that in Griffith ‘they don’t care
where you come from’, he noted that more recent migrants still have to ‘prove’
Themselves. ‘It is always that we have to prove ourselves…I have to be better, heaps
Better, to be treated the same’ (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004).242

On the whole, the public face of multicultural Griffith articulated by Griffith City
Council and other local ‘multiculturalists’, including a range of service providers and
Advocates, was maintained by participants, suggesting both broad general support for
cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as well as a desire to see it ‘succeed’ in
Griffith.

The Managerial Gaze: ‘Anglo Saxons’ and ‘Italians’

Influence and Power

Multicultural Griffith appears to be most heavily influenced by Anglo-Celtic and
Italian peoples and cultures. This ‘power-sharing’ arrangement is one of the most
remarkable things about multiculturalism in Griffith, particularly in light of critiques
like those from Hage and others who see multiculturalism as a way of maintaining or
reinforcing Anglo-Celtic power.

One observer, having moved to Griffith from Sydney about six years earlier,
described it as a ‘partnership’ in which Italians are ‘at least equal, if not stronger’
(Rev. P. Gobbo, personal communication, October 18, 2004). This can be seen in
relation to food, language, cultural representations, attitudes and values and the
general ambience of the town. People from these backgrounds together comprise
what I have called the dominant group/s. While the notion of these two diverse
groups, with their further internal fractures, and given their historically tense
relationship, being seen as one is clearly problematical, it is possible to see them both
as being equally empowered when compared to more recent migrants, as well as
Wiradjuri people. There is also a high degree of intermarriage between people from

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242 A similar sentiment was expressed by an Indigenous interviewee, as discussed in Chapter Seven.
these two backgrounds such that the lines are further blurred in Griffith. They also generally inhabit a shared socio-economic, and therefore social, world. An example of this can be seen in relation to Griffith Regional Theatre attendances. While in Griffith I attended a range of performances at the Griffith Regional Theatre as part of the 2004 season. Observationally, and anecdotally, attendees were, on each occasion, almost exclusively Anglo-Celtic or Italian. There are also a range of other places and events that reveal the shared cultural world of these two ‘European’ groups such as the more expensive restaurants, art galleries, dinner dances and festivals like UnWINEd and the Festival of Gardens. Issues of class, however, are also an important dimension of power relations in Griffith and of course not all Anglo-Celtic and Italian Australians can be seen to be equally empowered.

Looking at earlier studies of Griffith reveals how much things have changed. Pascoe notes of the two decades immediately after World War Two that Griffith ‘crystallised into two ethnic communities- the “British” group, comprising Irish, English and Anglo-Australians who dominated the town’s service industries, and the “Italians”, a term which embraced a wide variety of Southern Europeans’ (Pascoe, 1987: 150). Grassby described the situation during the same period as one of ‘defacto apartheid’ (sic)(Grassby, 1985: 1). Phillips (1981: 11) too noted tension between ‘Italo-Australians’ and ‘Anglo-Australians’ though he was at pains to point out that ‘Griffith is better off than most other places with regard to social tension’ (Phillips, 1981: 12). Importantly it was ‘Italians’ that were marginalised during these decades.

The most influential and powerful people in Griffith today, including within local government, and public, community, church and business sectors, tend to be from either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds. Research material gathered from the local newspaper, The Area News indicates that the leadership of these groups and

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243 While in 1977, reporting on her 1969 fieldwork, Huber was able to ‘refer to all those with an Italian name as Italian even though they may be Australian citizens or born here’ (1977: 60), high levels of intermarriage (Fr. S. Mikulek, personal communication, October 12, 2004) as well as the fact that people with an Italian surname might be second or third generation Australian make doing this increasingly problematical.

244 An informal survey of local businesses such as law firms, real estate agents and other professions where owner’s surnames are overt suggests almost all are owned by people of either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds. Anecdotal evidence from local farmers suggests the same is true in relation to local farm ownership.
organisations also seems to be male dominated. Observation, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggests that the wealthiest people in Griffith tend to be from either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds as well.

A closer look at leadership within local government illustrates the point further. Local government elections were held in NSW in March 2004, including for the Griffith LGA. Almost all of the twenty-four candidates in Griffith were from either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds. Of the twelve elected to council, all were from either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor, both of whom had held these positions before, identify as Italian (D. Zappacosta, personal communication, July 27, 2004). These Councillors are involved in both decision-making at the level of local government as well as being delegates to a wide range of organising and advisory committees in Griffith, both internal and external to GCC, related to issues a diverse as waste management, recreation, town promotion, health, emergency services, development, cultural services, and natural resources (Griffith City Council, 2004e: 13-17). They play a powerful role in setting the local political agenda and in decision-making at the local level. The presence of significant numbers of Italians/people from Italian backgrounds on council appears to have happened gradually over the last few decades.

Spatial Managers and Governmental Belonging

In White Nation Hage describes two modes of belonging people may experience in relation to the nation. One is what he describes as a passive mode of belonging and

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245 This newspaper is issued three times a week. Approximately six months worth of newspapers have been collected as part of this study. Kelly (1985) noted the lack of Italian women’s inclusion and participation in a range of social groups and organisations within Griffith.

246 Because of the size and somewhat bounded nature of the broader Griffith community, people know (or think they know), and talk about, who owns which bits of real estate, what income level they have, whose business is doing well, who is having financial difficulty and so on.

247 Six were women, three of whom were elected to council and one candidate, who was not elected to council, was Indigenous. There were no Indian, Tongan, Samoan, Fijian or Turkish candidates. But if the predictions of one Indian interviewee are right, ‘it’s only a matter of time’ before an Indian will be elected to council (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004).

248 For a list of current councillors see Griffith City Council, ndl.

249 In September 2006 the Mayor’s term ended and his deputy, Dino Zappacosta was elected Mayor. The current Deputy Mayor is now an Anglo-Australian.

250 On a list of names of councillors for the LGA since 1928, provided by Griffith’s local studies librarian, the first Italian surname appears in 1956. In the 1960s there were two Italian surnames. There were five in the 1970s, nine in the 1980s and nine in the 1990s. Cf. Kelly, 1984.
the other form he calls ‘governmental belonging’. Governmental belonging is the belief that one has a right over the nation, and involves the belief in one’s possession of the right to contribute to its management (Hage, 1998: 46). It differs from formal state or government power in that it can be ‘merely be the feeling that one is legitimately entitled in the course of everyday life to make a governmental/managerial statement about the nation’ (Hage, 1998: 46). It is intimately linked to an experience of ‘homely belonging’, that is, to the nation imagined as ‘home’ (see Hage, 1998: 39-40 and 47). It is against such a backdrop that the experiences and associated claims of research participants can be analysed.\footnote{Hage explains how what an individual experiences in their own street, for example, can be extrapolated to the national (Hage, 1998: 38). For my purpose here I am treating the research material in its local context only.} We can see, in particular, how those who are interpellated as part of the dominant groups are more likely to experience governmental belonging. The significance of this for multicultural Griffith is that not all residents are or feel equally empowered.

Those most comfortable talking about what multicultural Griffith was like, how they felt about the Griffith they described, and what the problems were and what should be done about them, tended to be longer-term Australians from either Anglo-Celtic or Italian backgrounds. This cluster of interviewees and participants generally perceived themselves as having a right to cast their gaze over and assess the local world, as well as to predict various futures for Griffith. They spoke confidently about both themselves and their perceived group, as well as about others. Interviewees and other participants who had migrated to Australia/Griffith more recently, like those from Fiji, Tonga, the Cook Islands, and Turkey, in contrast, tended to speak hesitantly, and only on behalf of themselves or their ‘community’ and did not tend to make overarching statements or express opinions about the management of cultural diversity in Griffith more generally. People originally from India, however, seemed much more assertive and did at times make ‘managerial’ statements.\footnote{Hage explains how what an individual experiences in their own street, for example, can be extrapolated to the national (Hage, 1998: 38). For my purpose here I am treating the research material in its local context only.}

Speaking about what multicultural Griffith was like, older Anglo-Australian woman outlined how Griffith was ‘accepting’ in relation to perceptions that people from the
same or similar cultural backgrounds tend to ‘stick together’. She expressed a form of ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage, 1998: 45-46) by endorsing this perceived behaviour. ‘It’s very accepted here that the groups will join together. And it is okay. It doesn’t mean that they’re not mixing with us, they’re just feeling comfortable with their own, which is understandable’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). Continuing to speak about multicultural Griffith more generally she said, ‘I think it’s better than other areas. The face of the whole place has changed, and that’s for the better, not for the worst…we’ve got a wealthier place…we have had this wonderful growth…the impact has been all good…and we haven’t lost that country feel’. Indeed ‘I wouldn’t like to think of it if all these wonderful people hadn’t come here’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). Cynically, this person might be described as a ‘good white nationalist’ engaging in a ‘fantasy of white supremacy’ (Hage, 1998: 78-104).

Another interviewee, a middle-aged male from an Italian background, described Griffith as a ‘very strong, modern, influential, cultural, town’ using their personal experiences to elaborate those of ‘migrants now’. This person thought it was ‘good’, but ‘never thought Griffith would become such a multicultural town’ and claimed that ‘my generation and onwards of Italian origin can see history repeating itself now with more migrants coming in’. After describing how Italian migrants in the 1920s and 30s, and even the 1950s, had come to ‘the arse end of the world- it was a hell. It was dry, it was dusty, and there was very little irrigation. It was primitive’, he went on to claim that ‘migrants that are coming in now will find that it’s a great place…its well-established, its green, there’s nice shops, there’s nice houses, there’s a lot of money…straight away they can get a job and get good money…you can buy a house, you can do this, you can do that’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). In this interviewee’s perception more recent migrants were reaping rewards that were the result of the presence and hard work of preceding generations of migrants, namely Italians (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004).

Others were harsher in their assessment, but no less confident about their right to speak. One participant, a thirty-something Anglo-Celtic woman, observed that ‘its

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252 See discussion below.
still quite friendly…though there’s a lot of ethnic sort of people moving into town now, you’ve noticed that over the last few years or so…and it’s getting a bit more city orientated with the more people that come…but other than that it’s pretty good’ (Interviewee 4a, 22 Oct 2004). Although these ‘ethnic people’ were associated with this interviewee’s perception that the town had become more violent, ‘they’re okay while they’re working…as long as they’re not bludging. They’re probably on the increase, but they’re productive’ (Interviewee 4a, 22 Oct 2004). This ‘Australian’ participant too experienced a governmental mode of belonging, imagining herself as spatially empowered and entitled to make such pronouncements (see Hage, 1998: 42-46). The attitude that ‘they’re okay while they’re working’, that is, contributing to Griffith’s economic prosperity, signifies what may well be an important limit of multicultural acceptance in Griffith for some people (see also DOTARS, 2005). It is in accordance with the federal government’s support for immigration and multiculturalism as long as economic benefits can be derived.

The tendency of those from the dominant groups to position themselves as the spatial managers of Griffith and indeed Australia and to experience a governmental form of belonging took a number of forms. Participants in the group discussion, which consisted of people from ‘Anglo Saxon’ and ‘Italian’ backgrounds, as they described themselves, revealed some differences between those close to the migration experience and those who were several generations removed from it. Those whose parents had come from Italy tended to believe that there was ‘more help provided for migrants today’. Another participant claimed that life was too easy because of ‘everything they hand out to migrants in this country today’. Another elaborated by telling me ‘they know all their rights and they get everything’. Most of the participants from an Italian background believed that more recent migrants had it easier because ‘we’re more educated now, so they’re more accepted socially’. Seen in light of the historical discrimination Italians have suffered these sentiments are

253 Because Griffith has a relatively low unemployment rate (4.9% in 2006) and there is often a shortage of people willing to do unskilled work like fruit-picking, debates about migrants taking jobs from ‘Australian’ workers have not been prominent in Griffith. See section ‘Multicultural Griffith’ below.

254 Most of those involved in the group discussion initially insisted that they were simply ‘Australian’ but then went on to refer to their Italian-ness in some detail or, in the case of those who reluctantly described themselves as ‘Anglo Saxon’, differentiated themselves from ‘Italians’.

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perhaps not surprising. Most of the ‘Anglo Saxons’ felt there was just as much
discrimination and that the migration experience was just as hard.

The broader national discourses about immigration also have currency in Griffith and
one ‘Italian’ participant felt strongly that ‘all these boat people’ were of particular
concern.255 ‘I say send them all bloody back, the ones that are coming’. All were
more than sure of their right to speak about more recent migrants, but tended not to
‘mix with them’. This is again indicative of the limitations of a mosaic model of
multiculturalism to stimulate intercultural interaction and suggests that the
opportunities available in Griffith for intercultural interaction (such as La Festa and
projects like Lifecycle) were not being taken up by this group of Anglo-Celtic and
Italian Australians.

Others within the dominant groups were also quite comfortable talking about what
each of Griffith’s ‘different groups’ were ‘like’. As mentioned previously, ‘the
Indians’ were perceived by many as a threat to their dominance, while other more
recent migrants were viewed as being relatively benign. Pacific Islanders in
particular were acceptable because ‘they are just here to have a better life’
(Interviewee 4b, 22 Oct 2004). Despite occasionally being associated with violent
behaviour related to alcohol consumption, on the whole they were considered to be
‘nice placid people’, particularly ‘the Fijians’ (Interviewee 4b, 22 Oct 2004). Other
more recent migrants were generally viewed with some sympathy, as was the case
with local refugees from Afghanistan (N. Tehan, personal communication, July 30,
2004; The Area News, 2004d). Indeed part of the discussion about refugees in
Griffith in 2004 was not about whether or not their presence was desirable, but
whether or not signs welcoming them should be erected in the town (The Area News,
2004f). The response was mostly positive. They are not currently perceived as a
threat, and the fact that many are Moslem, and that many women wear a hijab, was
not mentioned by participants.256 A local church leader believed that there was no

255 None of the other participants in the group discussion pursued this line, which seems to have been
a reference to the arrival of several boats carrying asylum-seekers in Australian waters in recent years.
The Federal Government responses, including ‘border protection’, have been discussed by a range of
256 There is one mosque in Griffith which appears to have been set up in an existing building. It is
located quite near to the centre of town but is not immediately recognisable as a mosque. Indeed it
took me several attempts to locate the building despite a small sign mounted on the exterior which
major anti-Islamic sentiment in Griffith because people in Griffith ‘haven’t been pushed far enough for this to come out’ (Fr. S. Mikulek, personal communication, October 12, 2004). The comment, of course, signifies the potential for this to change.

The experience of a governmental form of belonging, and the managerial rights that flow from it, are derived in the main from the histories of Anglo-Celts and Italians in Griffith, as they are understood locally. For those of Anglo-Celtic descent, even if not directly descended from earlier local settlers, legitimacy is derived from and conferred by the ‘pioneers and settlers’ narrative which details the ‘contribution’ of these mythical figures, which flows on to those presumed to be associated with this heritage. For Italians it is derived from a range of factors most notably the length of time Italians have been in Griffith compared to other more recent migrant groups, the size of the Italian diaspora, and the image of Italian migrants as having ‘made Griffith’. For Italians too, ‘contributing’ confers legitimacy, which in turn qualifies one to speak. Classification (‘Anglo’, ‘Italian’, ‘Australian’) is subordinate to a practical function (the right to speak and to be listened to as authoritative)(Bourdieu, 1991: 220).

**Centres and Margins: Positioning Italians**

As well as ‘Italians’ having achieved real power and status in Griffith, and experiencing a governmental mode of belonging, by 2004 Italian culture in Griffith had essentially become ‘mainstream’ or ‘ordinary’, part of everyday life in Griffith. One way of reading this is to apply Hage’s white nation thesis and say that Griffith’s Italians have adopted the majority discourse and in effect assimilated. They have adopted the fantasy position of cultural entitlement and dominance, becoming part of Griffith’s ‘aristocracy’ (see Hage, 1998: 19-20; 48-67). But such a reading does not fully capture the complexity of the experiences of Italians in Griffith and their ongoing (self-proclaimed) insider/outsider status. Nor does it allow for the influence of Italian peoples and cultures on those in Griffith from other backgrounds and traditions. Rather than Italians in Griffith having simply become ‘white’ (in Hage’s reads ‘The Kotku Mosque of Griffith established 2000’. Set up by the Turkish community, it is now ‘mainly used by Pakistanis’ (B. Miller, personal communication, July 29, 2004).
sense), what we see is a significant challenge to Anglo-Celtic hegemony that should not simply be dismissed. Further, Griffith is distinctive in part because of the influence of Italian peoples and cultures.

The success of the agricultural enterprise in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, and the prosperity that is deemed to have flowed from it, are commonly attributed to hard-working and enterprising Italian migrants. This is commonly expressed through the popular idea that ‘Griffith has been made on the Italian’s back’, as an interviewee of Italian parentage put it (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). In this discourse Italian migrants came to a place that was ‘primitive’ and made it vibrant and viable. Comparison is often made with the ‘Anglo’ soldier settlers, who are popularly constructed as having failed in their farming endeavours. Italian settlers are interpellated as the key contributors Griffith’s economic prosperity in everyday discourse. Griffith’s ‘success’ is commonly seen as being a legacy of Italian immigration—the result of hardworking, enterprising and resilient Italian migrants.

The beginning of multiculturalism in Griffith was also often linked by interviewees to Italian immigration and the perceived current success of the multicultural project attributed to the precedent set by Italian migrants. Discursive constructions of Griffith as cosmopolitan, used to promote the town to outsiders and to self-ascribe an identity which sets Griffith apart from other country towns, derive their potency from Griffith’s Italian heritage. Italian migrants had made the broader community more cosmopolitan in the minds of most interviewees, and had also made them less fearful of those perceived to be different. Indeed multicultural Griffith as it is lived today is undoubtedly attributable in the main to the legacy of Italian immigration.

While many Griffith locals with an Italian heritage may derive their legitimacy from this history, Italians remain an ambiguous inclusion as a dominant group. At the local level Italians are constructed, and construct themselves, as both powerful, ‘this is an Italian town’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004), and as marginalised—part of the so-called multicultural community.

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257 See especially Chapters Three and Four.
258 See Chapter Two
The strategic positioning of Italians as part of the multicultural community can offer privileges not usually accorded those contrastingly constructed as ‘Australians’ and named at times as Anglo-Saxon. This includes the right to speak from a position of ethnicity, understood widely as being associated with disadvantage, marginalisation and relative powerlessness. Those deemed ‘ethnic’ are also deemed to have insight into the experience of migrants/migration generally; something the average ‘Australian’ is presumed not to have. Thus when a person identified as being ‘Anglo’ ‘slipped through the system’ and got themselves appointed to the (NSW State Government’s) Community Relations Commission Regional Advisory Council (CRCRAC) for the Griffith area there was some consternation among other members at what was seen as an inappropriate appointment, in part because this person wasn’t representing an ethnic community (D. Zappacosta, personal communication, July 27, 2004). It may also be that maintaining this sense of distinctiveness, and the right to speak as part of the ‘the multicultural community’, provides the space for those Australian Italians who want to resist assimilation to do so (cf. Andreoni, 2003). Whether Italians are ‘central’ or ‘marginal’, then, is contextually driven (see Gunew, 1994b).

As a response to the mainstreaming of Italian culture and heritage since the 1960s and 70s, as well as in response to the perception of many local Italians and Australian Italians that proactive cultural maintenance is needed to address cultural change identified as ‘loss’, a range of people have been involved in undertakings designed to revitalise and reinvigorate ‘Italian’ culture (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). This has included festivals and other special events as well as the opening of the Italian Museum. Part of the rationale for using the festival form to further Italian cultural life in Griffith is that ‘festivals are very big in Italy’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). They form an important part of Griffith’s ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992).

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259 I can’t be certain of this particular individual’s migrant history, but the English are, according to 2001 census data, the fourth largest migrant group in Griffith, behind those born in Italy, India and New Zealand (CRC, nda).
One of the festivals that exemplifies a desire to maintain, indeed re-invigorate, a semblance of Italian culture and identity is the annual Festa Delle Salsicce,\(^{260}\) which was in its fourth year in 2004. The festival is one of a planned series of three to be held throughout the year in Griffith in conjunction with the Italian Museum (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). From the point of view of the organisers, the festival furthers what is seen as the role of the museum to ‘develop the different cultural aspects of Italian life’ (J. Raccanello, personal communication, July 19, 2004). It is an opportunity for those who have made salami to enter a competition to see whose is judged to be the best. Because Italian culture is so familiar to many longer-term non-Italian Griffith residents, the event was perceived by many attendees, from both Italian and Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, as a Griffith event rather than an ‘ethnic’ one, despite its framing as ‘Italian’.\(^{261}\) In this way then we might say that local Anglo-Celts have actually had their cultural traditions and understandings altered in some ways to conform to Italian culture, as it appears in Griffith. As Interviewee 5 put it, ‘the Italian community has really got a hold on this place from a traditional point of view’.\(^{262}\)

Griffith’s Italians have, of course, at times faced significant ‘racism’ and discrimination, often the most virulent coming from those claiming to represent the soldier settlers, like the RSL (Pich, 1975).\(^{263}\) This has included prohibitions on Italian being spoken in public (Pich, 1975: 243), internment during World War Two, described by Pascoe as ‘a pointless exercise instigated by irrational fears’ (Pascoe, 1987: 146; see also Cresciani, 2003: 97-118), attempts by local authorities to prevent Italians, including those who had been naturalised, from owning irrigated farms (Pich, 1975; Huber, 1977; Cecilia, 1987: 154-160)\(^{264}\) and a more general animosity and xenophobia (Pich, 1975; Huber, 1977; Cecilia, 1987: 154-160). There have also

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\(^{260}\) Literally, Festival of the Sausage and sometimes referred to locally as the ‘salami-making competition’

\(^{261}\) Indeed in the last couple of years an Anglo-Celtic Australian is reputed to have won the competition, but in 2004 an Italian Australian won it.

\(^{262}\) Cf. DOTARS, 2005: 23.

\(^{263}\) There is a long history of this in Australia more broadly. See for example Andreoni (2003) and Cecilia (1987).

\(^{264}\) This matter actually went to the Full Court of NSW in 1947 where it was found that the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission ‘had no right to discriminate on the grounds of national origin’ (Huber, 1977: 59). They appealed this decision, which was subsequently overturned by the High Court of Australia which ‘conceded that under the provisions of the relevant acts the
been various negative and indeed racist newspaper articles published in the local press in the past, often associated with what were broader national attitudes and perceptions (see for example Pich, 1975: 91-96 and 161-162). The most recent example is the graffiti at the proposed site proposed for Italian Museum in 1995. This instance could be read to suggest the provisional nature of Italian hegemony, but it also shows Anglo-Celts engaging in a white nation fantasy. It reveals an ongoing power-play between the two dominant groups.

Contemporary Italian hegemony in Griffith therefore remains one of the most interesting things for multiculturalism, and indeed the biggest challenge to Hage’s thesis. Although in Hage’s formulation Griffith’s Italians could be dismissed as simply having become ‘white’ (Hage, 1998: 88-89) by having accumulated enough national capital/governmental belonging (Hage, 1998: 54-55) there is much more than this going on in Griffith. What such a reading elides are the very real differences they have made in challenging Anglo-Celtic dominance. It fails to recognise power and agency, and the significance of this in the context of White Australia with all that this implies and has implied historically. Indeed in many instances local Italian people/culture/heritage eclipses its Anglo-Celtic counterpart/s. The centrality of Anglo-Celts as ‘governors’ (Hage, 1998) has been partially, but significantly, displaced by ‘Italians’. This is particularly evident in the not uncommon assertions that ‘Griffith is an Italian town’ and ‘Griffith has been made on the Italian’s back’. These assertions have also achieved a much wider currency, and national media representations continue to recognise the significance of local Italian culture and heritage. Griffith can be seen to be a space structured, not insubstantially, around (an) ‘Italian’ cultural heritage (cf. Hage, 1998: 18).


263 See Chapter Three and discussion below.

264 Cf. Andreoni (2003) who considers how the colour olive has been associated with ‘Australian Italians’ as both a derogatory label and a self-prescribed ethnicity marker. At another level Italians can be seen as ‘white’, particularly with regards to Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people, and Indian and Pacific Island residents.

265 See Chapter One.

266 There are numerous examples. Among these are ABC TV’s Dynasties series, which featured the De Bortoli family, the ABC Radio series From Olives to Eucalypts, and the recent ABC Radio National (2006) Street Stories feature entitled ‘Bella Banna’.

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Constructing Others: ‘The Recent Arrivals’

In addition to ‘Anglos’ and ‘Italians’ there is a third type of resident of multicultural Griffith who is interpellated by local discourses. These are the ‘recent arrivals’ who are part of the ‘the multicultural community’ (as opposed to the non-multicultural community), but of a different order to ‘Italians’ when they are configured a part of the multicultural community. For the same reasons that Italians are acknowledged locally as legitimate spatial managers and experience a governmental form of belonging, they also have superior status to the ‘recent arrivals’. Those constructed as relative newcomers to the local scene are accorded quite a different status within the community. Bizarrely, this classification normally includes: Indians, who collectively have a history of at least thirty years in Griffith (see Kelly, 1988: 181-183); Pacific Islanders, a diverse group that includes Fijians, Tongans, Samoans and Cook Islanders (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004); people from Turkey, some of whom are Kurdish (B. Miller, personal communication, July 29, 2004); and humanitarian migrants from Afghanistan (N. Tehan, personal communication, July 30, 2004).  

Importantly, as Foucault has observed, ‘not all the regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some are largely forbidden (they are differentiated and differentiating), while others seem to be almost open to all winds and put at the disposal of every speaking subject, without prior restrictions’ (Foucault, 1981: 62). Being interpellated as a ‘recent arrival’ places limitations upon what one can say, and when and where one can say it. ‘Recent arrivals’ are not called upon to speak on behalf of the Griffith community as a whole or on issues that affect the broader community, as a member of the general community. They may, however, speak from the position of ‘recent arrival’, or on behalf of their ‘community’ in relation to issues deemed to be within their area of concern.

In the area of local government this can be seen with regard to the kinds of issues on which the ‘multicultural community’ are consulted, as well as the processes

\[269\] We could continue to follow Hage on this and reveal a fantasy of Italian supremacy but that is not the point.

\[270\] A good example of the conception of Griffith as being made up of four types of residents, Anglo Australian, Italian, recent arrival and Indigenous, is the public art project Lifecycle discussed in Chapter Four.
surrounding the issues on which they are consulted. Social/community/cultural planning is one of the contexts in which the ‘multicultural community’ are approached for input. Members of ‘the multicultural community’, along with community groups and organisations, are encouraged to have input into the development of these plans because they are seen as appropriate forums for such people and groups to speak within (see Griffith City Council, 2004a; Griffith City Council, 2005a). Control, however, remains firmly with the dominant groups. The (state government) Community Relations Commission Regional Advisory Council\textsuperscript{271} is another space officially allocated to the ‘multicultural community’ to speak (D. Zappacosta, personal communication, July 27, 2004) as indeed is La Festa.\textsuperscript{272}

This differentiation can also be seen in the local print media, which provides a forum in which the voice of the broader Griffith community can be heard. Those who are called upon to speak about general issues that pertain to the whole community are almost always from the dominant groups. This may be in their capacity as elected representatives of the community,\textsuperscript{273} as public officials representing various authorities, as local business people, as farmers, as high school students, as member of ‘the public’,\textsuperscript{274} or as interested parties in relation to particular issues like road safety, hospital funding, the activities of GCC, drought, and almost any other issue deemed by the newspaper to be topical (\textit{Area News}, various dates, Mar 2004- Oct 2004). In contrast, the voices of those deemed part of the ‘multicultural community’ can be heard in the local media on occasions like the death of the former Fijian Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (Martineilli, 2004g) or in relation to sport (for example The Area News, 2004c: 7).

Another local publication was more overt in designating a specific (physical and metaphorical) space from which the ‘multicultural community’ could speak. Local monthly free publication \textit{Go Magazine} had a regular segment called ‘go cultural’\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{271} See Chapter One
\textsuperscript{272} See Chapter Five
\textsuperscript{273} This is the case with Kay Hull MP, Adrian Piccoli MLA, Tony Catanzariti MLC and the twelve GCC Councillors.
\textsuperscript{274} The particular examples I have in mind here are the regular \textit{Area News} segments ‘On the Soapbox’, ‘Vox Pop’ and ‘Midweek Spotlight’ which almost never include voices other than those of Anglo-Celtic and Italian Australians.
\textsuperscript{275} Other sub-sections include, for example, go letters, go read, go news, go district, go community, go business, go social, go sport and so on (\textit{Go Magazine}, 2004b).
which provided ‘all the latest news from our multicultural community members’ (Go Magazine, 2004b: 3). Even in these designated spaces, members of the dominant group may speak in place of or for the multicultural community/recent arrivals, including in relation to issues that might well be conceived of as appropriate ones for the ‘multicultural community’ to comment upon (see for example Taylor, 2004; Martinelli, 2004f; Drape, 2005). This is a case of what Gunew has called centrism in relation to such discursive positioning (Gunew, 1994b: 88). As Hage observes ‘the voice of the “ethnic other” is made passive not only by those who want to eradicate it, but also by those who are happy to welcome it’ (1998: 17).

To some extent more recent migrants can be said to accept the way they are interpellated and positioned locally. This can be seen when considering collectively the series of individual personal interviews conducted for the study. While those who variously described themselves as Anglo-Saxon, Italian or simply Australian spoke confidently and assertively about Griffith, more recent migrants, with the exception of those who described themselves as Indian,276 were more hesitant and often referred back to their personal or community experiences rather than speaking openly and comfortably about multicultural Griffith generally. The composition of the organising committee for La Festa further illustrates the point.277 While members of the ‘multicultural community’ are invited and indeed expected to participate in the festival itself, the organisation and running of the event remains firmly in the hands of members of the dominant groups.278

While a more passive mode of belonging is accorded to ‘recent arrivals’, those designated as such don’t necessarily experience a ‘passive’ mode of belonging (see Hage, 1998) despite sometimes appearing to accept the position accorded them by the dominant groups. As Anderson highlights, ‘the process by which cultural understandings become constructed and reproduced…is complexly negotiated. It involves not just the efforts of powerful groups to secure conceptual and instrumental control, but also the struggles of weaker groups to resist definitions that marginalise them’ (1999b: 10).

276 See below.
277 See Chapter Five
When Cook Islanders perform at *La Festa*, or when Fijians participate in projects like *Lifecycle*, they don’t necessarily do so in deference to the dominant group. Participants cited a number of reasons for their involvement including the idea that participation was an integral part of their community’s commitment to Griffith; to educate the broader community about their culture; and to foster cultural maintenance among the young. Participation, then, is perceived as doing much more than simply enriching the dominant culture (cf. Hage, 1998) and is at the discretion of the participant. One interviewee noted that ‘here in Griffith we don’t have a set time to have Cook Island practices…but there are a lot invitations from organisations like the council so we try our best to take part in those activities’ (Interviewee 7, 8 Oct 2004). In this instance, agreeing to perform in public allowed cultural practices to be maintained where they otherwise might not be.

Another indication of a non-passive engagement is the dissatisfaction expressed by some interviewees with the limited role accorded those interpellated as a ‘recent arrival’ in the life of the broader community. Although happy with the job done by the 2004 *La Festa* organising committee, one interviewee felt that there needed to be a greater inclusion of ‘Pacific Islanders’. ‘La Festa is a very big time for us…it’s a pity we only got given fifteen minutes. We would like to do more’ (Interviewee 7, 8 Oct 2004). Although feeling like ‘part of the team—they do ask me for information and advice—I would like Pacific Islanders to get involved in the committee’ (Interviewee 7, 8 Oct 2004). While taking the opportunities offered to participate, as well as being proactive, this participant also recognised the limits of this inclusion and expressed the desire for greater inclusion. Another so-called recent arrival, a middle-aged Hindu Indian woman, talked about the ‘barriers’ she had encountered when actively seeking to participate within the art world in Griffith. ‘Griffith is a very multicultural town…they may be very good to you, but if for instance you want to join that particular group they feel a little bit threatened…they are used to doing certain things their way’ (Interviewee 11, 7 October 2004).

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278 Something similar can be observed in other spheres. See, for example, the analysis of Pioneer Park Museum in Chapter Three.
Thus there is a tension between the different mode of belonging that is accorded the ‘recent arrivals’, and which they may themselves experience, and the desire for greater inclusion and recognition of their agency. There is resistance to the dominant discourses and the position more recent migrants are expected to adopt.

**Asserting Sikh Identity**

One of Hage’s central assertions is that ‘White multiculturalism cannot admit to itself that migrants and Aboriginal people are actually eroding the centrality of White people in Australia’ (1998: 22). It does seem that some Griffith locals, while in no way relinquishing their right to speak, do perceive a threat to their governance, something akin to a ‘discourse of Anglo decline’ (Hage, 1998). As outline above, it is often the Indian community that is seen as posing the greatest threat (Interviewee 4b, 22 Oct 2004; Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004).

In Griffith, Indians are seen by many as ‘the new Italians’ (see also DOTARS, 2005: 24). Like Italian migrants were, they are the non-dominant group deemed by many individuals who are part of the dominant groups to most threaten the current power structure within Griffith. They are also subjected to the same kinds of negative stereotypes that have been deployed against Italians at various times in the past. People originally from India may indeed be the best placed to again alter power relations, as well as the broader cultural milieu, of multicultural Griffith.

Indian immigration to Griffith was beginning to be recognised locally as significant by the late 1980s. Historian BM Kelly described ‘a smaller “chain migration” [that] has emerged in recent years- small, but significant, for it too is changing the overall ethnic composition of Griffith. Since 1974 there has been a trickle of Sikhs into the area, an ethnic group different from the Europeans but moved by the same circumstances’ (1988: 181). The idea that Sikhs are ‘different from the

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279 I have opted to use the word Indian to identify Sikhs because this was how a Sikh community spokesperson and key informant described the group’s identity. The relationship between Sikhs, or the Punjab area of India where many Sikhs are from, and the Indian nation has, however, been an uneasy and often violent one and has, in fact, contributed significantly to Sikh migration to Australia. See for example Tatla (1999) and Bilimoria (1996). While there are a range of other Indian groups in Griffith, I am referring to the Sikh community here unless otherwise stated.

280 Sikhism is a religion, not an ethnicity.
Europeans’ continues to inform much of the thinking about Indians in Griffith by non-Indians. Kelly did claim, however, that ‘although more visible…[Sikhs] are accorded a degree of tolerance perhaps greater than that shown earlier immigrants’ (1988: 183), a claim supported by several interviewees.

2001 census data puts the number of Griffith locals who were born in India (but not necessarily in the Punjab) at 12.3 per cent of the overseas-born population, or around 2 per cent of the overall population of Griffith (see CRC, nda). Most Sikhs who were born outside of Australia arrived between 1976 and 1991 (see Bilimoria, 1996: 48). The agricultural industry and employment opportunities associated with the industry are what drew many Indians to Griffith (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004. See also Kelly, 1988: 181).

The notion of cultural difference seems to have contributed to the development of negative stereotypes about Indians by non-Indians. While food may be an acceptable dimension of multiculturalism in Australia (see for example Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a; Gunew, 1993; Hage, 1997), for some non-Indians in Griffith even this dimension of Indian culture brings unfavourable comment. Several derogatory comments were made in my presence by Anglo-Celtic and Italian Australian locals at various times including a claim by one person that they didn’t like Indian food to be cooked in their home because it made it ‘smell like Mr Singh’. Another informant recalled how she had interrupted a discussion about Indians ‘smelling bad’ by reminding those from an Italian background involved in the conversation that ‘that’s what they used to say about us’.

Children from an Indian background may be teased at school about being a ‘curry-muncher’ (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004). For some the concern was about more than food and the associated smells. One non-Indian participant claimed that Indians had a clear agenda to ‘take over’. They were ‘buying up the farms and bringing out their families’ and there were ‘lots of them living in the same house’ (Interviewee 4b, 22 October). This Anglo-Celtic

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281 It is interesting to note that for all the claims about cosmopolitanism, in 2004 Griffith did not have an Indian restaurant. One had been open for a short while in the main street but by the time this fieldwork was being conducted it had closed down, apparently due to lack of custom, and only the exterior signs remained. There is, however, a grocery store in town, Singh and Sons, which stocks ingredients for Indian food and a specific ‘Indian Food’ section in the local Coles Supermarket.
According to an interviewee who described themselves as an Indian from the Punjab, Indians are, in fact, increasingly asserting themselves, becoming more wealthy, and moving into positions of power within the community (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004). Close examination of *Area News*, observing Indian participation in the broader life of the Griffith community, and claims made by a range of informants, also suggest this is the case. It may be that ‘Indians have adapted more quickly than other groups because of their familiarity with the Commonwealth system’ (Fr. S. Mikulek, personal communication, October 12, 2004). A non-Sikh Indian participant observed that an individual’s education level was critical to their confidence and therefore their ability to participate (Interviewee 11, 7 Oct 2004).

It seems that ‘the Sikhs, both in India and elsewhere, are conscious of being a distinct community, in terms of both their religion and their ethics’ (Bilimoria, 1996: 5). The Sikh community is visible in the Griffith landscape in a number of ways. Many people dress traditionally and can be seen in town going about their business. A Gurdwara, Shri Guru Singh Sabha, known locally as the Sikh Temple, has been built in Griffith, although it is located in an outlying village of Griffith, Yoogali, rather than within the town area. Bilimoria claims that the Gurdwara symbolises the struggles of maintaining distinctive communities within multicultural Australia (1996: 74). Sikh voices can also be heard frequently in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ pages of the *Area News*. One frequent contributor is an older Sikh man whose expansive letters were published on several occasions during 2004. These letters are quite didactic and are presumably intended to educate the non-Sikhs of Griffith about

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282 See also Andreoni (2003).
a range of things including the Sikh religion, happenings in the local Sikh community, and colonial India (see for example Tatla, 1999).

Further overt assertions of Sikh identity in Griffith occurred as a result of the annual Sikh Games which were held on a long weekend in June in 2004.\(^{283}\) This series of sporting events, held at a local sportsground over a two-day period, was a strong local assertion of Sikh identity and culture. Participants come from all over Australia, but had to be Sikh to enter any of the events (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004). Non-Sikh members of the community were included as spectators, sponsors and award presenters and were encouraged to attend through the local television, radio and newspaper coverage that surrounded the event (see for example The Area News, 2004e). Despite this, attendance at the two-day event appeared to be overwhelmingly Indian. This was ‘a bit of a disappointment that we didn’t get too many…but at the end of the day we think this is our fault…we should allow other teams to play…then you’ll bring the communities together…they will come’ (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004).\(^{284}\)

Few compromises appeared to have been made for any non-Sikhs that did attend the Sikh Games. All of the commentary over the loudspeakers by the MCs was in Punjabi, the food was vegetarian Indian food, the occasional Indian song was performed, and with the exception of the soccer competition, the sporting contests were unfamiliar to me as an Anglo-Australian.\(^{285}\) The only concession in relation to language from the MC was to inform ‘anyone out there that can’t understand Punjabi’ that they are ‘most welcome’ and that ‘the food and drink is free’. The Sikh Games illustrate both the strength of local Sikh culture and its refusal to be compromised or contained by the discursive construction of Indians as ‘recent arrivals’ with all that this implies.

Despite being interpellated within the dominant local discourse as ‘recent arrivals’, a containment strategy, Indians are perceived by some non-Indians as a threat to the

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\(^{283}\) There are a lot of Sikh festivals and events held throughout the course of a year but most are not ‘done publicly’ (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004).

\(^{284}\) There are diversity of opinions within the Sikh community about the desirability or otherwise of allowing non-Sikhs to participate (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004).
power of the dominant group and may indeed also see themselves this way. It is the confidence and assertiveness of the Griffith Sikh community, as well as their high visibility, that Interviewee 4b, and others, found so threatening. This suggests the inability of the dominant groups to actually effect the strategy of containment and is indicative of the interplay between the ‘multicultural Real’ and the ‘white nation fantasy’ (see Hage, 1998: 133).

**Multicultural Griffith: ‘Forging Friendships’**

Multiculturalism in Griffith, and the embracing of cultural diversity, co-exists with intolerance, racism, exclusion and marginalisation (see for example Hage, 1998: 84). The dominant discursive construction of multicultural Griffith at the local level is as a series of different ethnic or cultural groups- ‘mosaic multiculturalism’. Between these groups there is at times tension, which has been alluded to above. Something more can be said about the nature of multiculturalism in Griffith by looking at the kinds of responses that are generated by various significant issues and incidents that arise or occur occasionally.

While interviewees and other participants revealed that people from particular backgrounds might sometimes be discriminated against, for example when attempting to secure a rental property, on the whole discrimination was not something they felt was a serious problem in Griffith. While not raised specifically by interviewees and participants, the fact that negative stereotypes were held by some people about particular groups of ‘others’ did become apparent. More overt forms of ‘racism’ seem to occur much less frequently in Griffith. Those that came to my attention include the previously discussed graffiti incident at Pioneer Park in 1995, violence at one of Griffith’s high schools involving male students from different ethnic backgrounds in 2003, and attempts by the right-wing nationalist party Australia First from Sydney to generate local resentment against ‘refugee

285 They included Kabaddi, the final of which was competed in by teams from Sydney and Brisbane illustrating the national status of Griffith’s Sikh Games. See Storey, 2004.

286 I have discussed this incident in Chapter Three. I learnt about the graffiti as the result of an off-the-cuff comment by someone involved with PPM. The people that I attempted to pursue the matter with, both ‘Italian’ and ‘Anglo-Celtic’, gave the distinct impression that they did not want to discuss the matter by being vague or evasive. They tended to claim that it was ‘a long time ago’ and was not indicative in any way of how people in Griffith generally felt.
labour’ in 2003. As discussed below, local responses to each of these incidents reveal something about multicultural Griffith.

The murder of Donald Mackay in Griffith in 1977 caused a significant rupture in the relationship between Italians and non-Italian locals (see for example Totaro and Pangallo, 1979; Phillips, 1981; Kelly, 1988). In 2004 the relationship was, on the whole, a harmonious one. There were few informal negative comments made about ‘Italians’ by Anglo-Australian participants but the graffiti incident at Pioneer Park reveals that even in 1995 there was the potential for ‘racism’ to surface. While participants in 2004 may not have wanted to discuss the incident, at the time it was front-page news (The Area News, 1995a). The article quotes the then Mayor John Dal Broi, who was also the then President of the Italian Museum Committee, as being surprised and disappointed at the appearance of the words ‘pioneers of oz not wogs’ spray-painted in two locations near the proposed site of the Italian Museum, an incident the Mayor described as ‘racist’ (The Area News, 1995a). On the following page was an editorial comment on the incident. This described the ‘attack’ as ‘unacceptable’ and ‘un-Australian’ and went on to say that ‘the only ones who can truly lay claim to being here first are members of the Aboriginal community. All the remaining residents are descendents of immigrants to this country’ (The Area News, 1995b). The idea that all non-Indigenous people in Griffith are immigrants is quite an enlightened one given the conservative nature of official multiculturalism in Australia. While both the mayor and the editor felt compelled to reassure ‘Anglo-Saxons’ that no-one was attempting to undermine ‘their’ history, this was a strong and very public condemnation of the graffiti, suggesting an intolerance of what was described as ‘racism’.

A similar rejection of ‘racism’ can be seen in the aftermath of an attempt by the right-wing nationalist political party Australia First to stir up local resentment against what they claimed was the use of ‘refugee labour’ on local farms and other places in and around Griffith. A little bit of market research would have indicated quite quickly that this was never going to be a success in Griffith where there are constant calls for more people to do farm-related work, regardless of how long they have been

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287 See also Chapter One.
in Australia, because of a shortage of ‘unskilled’ labour generally. Nevertheless, the party took issue with the local employment of refugees from Afghanistan in particular (M. Neville, personal communication, July 19, 2004) and the then Mayor Mike Neville responded in such a way that an Australia First Party candidate running in the seat of Miranda in Sydney in the state election went on to make claims in public that members of his party had been threatened with physical violence, something denied by the mayor (McCalman, 2003). Regardless of who said what, the party were clearly not welcome in Griffith and seems to have failed in its bid to create tension among local residents. The Griffith response can be seen as a marked contrast with the ‘successful’ involvement of the Australia First Party in the ‘Cronulla riots’ in Sydney in December 2005 (Australia First, 2005).

In 2003 there was another incident, or perhaps a series of incidents, at one of the local high schools that reputedly involved a group of young men from a range of Pacific Island backgrounds, some (male) refugees from Afghanistan and some Indigenous young men, all of whom were students at the school. Two things bear mentioning about this incident, which apparently involved violence. Firstly, the details are sketchy because all of the people that were approached for further information about the event, including the person who drew it to my attention initially, refused to be drawn further. At this level then there was what appeared to be a strong desire not to again conjure up the spectre of racism, but perhaps also not to reveal to an outsider the limits of multiculturalism in Griffith. Secondly, the local response to the incident, the culmination of which was advertised without reference to the actual incident in the local paper, suggests the rapid and comprehensive response to this kind of rupture.

Shortly after the incident a range of government departments and community groups and organisations came together to deal unequivocally and firmly with the young men involved in what I imagine was a fight or fights in the school yard. After discussions and consultations involving, among others, the police, the education department, the Griffith Multicultural Community Council (GMCC) and community

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288 This is quite a different outcome to the success of a campaign in 1969 to ‘stop coloured immigration’ which was directed at sitting member for the Riverina Al Grassby, who subsequently lost his seat (Catanzariti, 2005).
leaders from the same cultural backgrounds as the young men involved, the ‘Forging Friendships Cultural Fest’ was held. This was a ‘community gathering’ hosted by the GMCC and the Department of Education and Training held at the Memorial Hall to ‘celebrate and promote the Griffith community’s success as a multicultural society and to affirm the respect and goodwill that exists between the city’s cultures’ (The Area News, 2003). Further, the event would ‘celebrate the newly formed friendships between the old community and newly emerging ones’ (The Area News, 2003). Those invited to attend were the Afghan, Indigenous, Tongan, Samoan, Fijian, Turkish and Punjabi ‘communities’ (The Area News, 2003). All of this took place largely outside of the sphere of official multiculturalism. It can be seen as a particularly local response and despite the involvement of various state government departments, was instigated and executed by local people (D. Erika, personal communication, July 15, 2004). It also specifically excluded Anglo and Italian Australian locals, undermining their hegemony.

These incidents and the responses to them demonstrate the importance and significance of multiculturalism to Griffith collectively. The community is prepared to go to great lengths to defend and protect it. Although multiculturalism in Griffith co-exists with intolerance, marginalisation, exclusion and racism, it remains a strong and distinctive feature of the town. On the whole multiculturalism in Griffith appears relatively robust, in part because of the broader community efforts to deal comprehensively and decisively with any ruptures. In short, they will not ‘tolerate’ anything that undermines ‘harmony’ in multicultural Griffith.

Inter-group tensions do, however, continue to be manifested in Griffith in a range of ways. These include individuals expressing racist views and denigrating those they perceive as different in private, to public violence. The former is the more common form of expression and was almost immediately apparent as those who presumed I would share their attitudes and understandings were more than forthcoming. Occasionally multiculturalism was linked to a perception of high levels of violent behaviour in public places late at night, but most participants dismissed claims that such incidents were anything to do with multiculturalism, claiming they were the same problems experienced in any town in NSW and were to do with young men and alcohol. Indeed racism and racial tension is often located elsewhere. The dominant
groups in particular often claim that any racial tension that does exist is between ‘other’ groups. It is the Aborigines and the Islanders who hate each other and are always fighting/violent/aggressive, for example. Others located racism in the past or with ‘outsiders.’

One of the most interesting things is the length the community seems to go to address these blights on multicultural Griffith. When ‘racist’ incidents do occur, they are addressed immediately and are often dealt with in interesting and innovative ways. The community event ‘Forging Friendships’ is one such event. The key to establishing and maintaining a well-functioning multicultural community was deemed by many to be about individuals getting to know each other. To this end a range of groups and organisations in Griffith work towards ‘bringing people together’. Prominent among them are the Uniting Church, several community groups, and some pro-active individuals within various government departments and agencies. Indeed a range of participants used their churches as cases in point when making claims about Griffith being multicultural and about multiculturalism being a success. The church leaders who were interviewed generally agreed, despite some of them openly displaying their personal prejudices.  

Multiculturalism in Griffith has been imbibed substantially by many individuals, community groups and organisations and within local government and is of great value to many local people who are strong and vocal supporters of it. While not a radical departure from state-sponsored multiculturalism, everyday multiculturalism in Griffith goes above and beyond official discourses in ways that suggest the limitations of government attempts to contain or dictate multiculturalism to those who live it.

If racism is a feature of multicultural Griffith, it appears most starkly in relation to the thinking of a range of non-Indigenous people about Indigenous people. Sometimes it was quite subtle, and at other times it was more overt. It did, however, appear to be pervasive. Many non-Indigenous participants displayed attitudes

289 There are nineteen places of worship in Griffith itself. These include the main Catholic Church in Griffith, as well as several other Catholic Churches in the surrounding villages, several Protestant and
towards Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith that were particularly problematical, suggesting what may be a broad failing of Australian multiculturalism to improve Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations and to foster respect and understanding among non-Indigenous people. The following chapter considers this in some detail, drawing out the implications for Australian multiculturalism.

Pentecostal churches, a Jehovah’s Witness church and a Mormon church. There is a mosque close to the centre of town and a Gurdwara in the nearby village of Yoogali.
Chapter Seven

Multiculturalism and Indigeneity in Griffith

Arguably the biggest challenge to and for multiculturalism is that posed by Indigenous Australia. Certainly there is something arrogant about the descendants of those who invaded Australia, along with a host of other beneficiaries, all of whom are implicated in the dispossession, murder, marginalisation and attempts to silence Indigenous peoples in Australia, now attempting to impose ‘multiculturalism’ upon those same peoples. Indigenous Australians are then perhaps supposed to be grateful for the inclusion multiculturalism might offer them. And yet contemporary Australia is in reality a plurality of peoples and cultures from all over the world. Non-Indigenous peoples in Australia are not simply going to leave, even if Indigenous sovereignty were to be recognised, and even if Indigenous peoples desired them to! This raises the question, ‘how might we live together?’ and ‘multiculturalism,’ with all its limitations, continues to be one way of responding.

The issues this raises are numerous and complex and have complicated histories. As Ann Curthoys has asserted, it is ‘an uneasy conversation’ that one has when one brings the two discourses together (Curthoys, 1999). Many of the issues have been raised in the preceding chapters and it is to these and other emerging issues around which my own uneasy conversation will be structured. The study of Griffith shows that Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are interpellated by Griffith’s multicultural discourse but that this is done in a way that ensures there is no disruption to, or undermining of, non-Indigenous people and especially the dominant groups and their hegemony. It is, therefore, the ‘safer’/’softer’ aspects of Wiradjuri culture and heritage that tend to be incorporated into public declarations and performances of multicultural Griffith and any overt recognition of Wiradjuri people and culture that poses any kind of political threat is studiously avoided. Some attention is also paid to the ongoing efforts of Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal

\(^{290}\) The word Indigenous is used when I am referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The word Aboriginal is used when I am referring to Aboriginal people generally. The word Wiradjuri is used when I am referring specifically to Wiradjuri people. Cf. Langton 1993: 28-32.
people to secure an appropriate representational space for themselves, to insert themselves into local discourses, and to further their identities as Wiradjuri and/or Aboriginal.

Non-Indigenous people in Griffith understand themselves as the legitimate inheritors of contemporary Griffith, a Griffith which they understand as not only being theirs in the present, but existing as a result of their and their forebears efforts. This conception of non-Indigenous legitimacy can only be sustained through the denial of Wiradjuri people, culture and heritage, aided by local manifestations of *terra nullius*. The collective non-Indigenous identity of Griffith, as it is currently configured, would begin to unravel if substantive recognition, such as a regional or local treaty, were negotiated with Wiradjuri people. There is, then, much at stake in all this for non-Indigenous people.

In Griffith they don’t approach any substantive kind of recognition and what is already a partial and limited inclusion of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people is countered by the ongoing deployment of racist attitudes and negative stereotypes; histories that efface or ignore Aboriginal contributions; and silences around historical and contemporary injustices. The collective identity and history assigned to non-Indigenous locals relies on discourses of progress and development—of the transformation of an ‘uninhabitable wasteland’ into ‘the multicultural oasis of today’. The story is a powerful and pervasive one that it is yet to be called into question or rethought in light of postcolonial critiques and revisionist histories of Australia.

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292 There is a tension between recognising that non-Indigenous people in Griffith, especially those of the dominant groups, are in reality powerful and recognising the precariousness of their position when Wiradjuri people/history/culture are acknowledged. In this sense many non-Indigenous people can be said to be participating in another kind of fantasy in addition to that identified by Hage in relation to those he calls ‘white’ (1998). This fantasy is one that non-Indigenous people, beginning with the original colonisers and their descendants, have created to explain their tenure in Australia. The co-existence of real power and this other kind of fantasy of white supremacy needs to be kept in mind in relation to the argument about multicultural Griffith.
293 A treaty does not have to be between nation-states and could therefore be negotiated at either a regional or local level (National Treaty Support Group, 2001). A treaty would fundamentally change the relationship between Wiradjuri people and non-Indigenous locals (see National Treaty Support Group, 2001).
294 On postcolonialism see for example Thomas (1994), Hall (1996d) and Gandhi (1998). On revisionist histories in Australia see below.
In some ways then, multiculturalism is actually part of the problem because it has provided a ‘safe’ framework for the inclusion of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people without challenging the legitimacy that the dominant groups in Griffith understand themselves to have. The ways in which Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are interpellated by local multicultural discourses reveals what may be serious limitations and significant flaws in multiculturalism’s ability to appropriately account for Indigenous peoples, and indeed even to offer the kind of recognition and respect that form part of the *raison d’être* of multiculturalism, and which it is presumed to offer other marginalised groups. Further, the whole idea of Australia being comprised of a plurality of equal and different cultures may work *against* recognising (in this case) Wiradjuri people’s status as the first people/traditional owners/indigenous people. While discursive constructions of Griffith as culturally diverse/multicultural have made Wiradjuri people and culture more ‘palatable’ and meant that they are interpellated, this has happened in ways that do not significantly or substantially disrupt the hegemony of the dominant groups and the legitimacy of non-Indigenous people.\(^{295}\)

I will first outline some of the terrain of the debate and the related issues in the Australian context. Analysis then turns to Griffith more specifically in relation to the same issues. A question remains, however, about whether or not multiculturalism can ever be anything other than a colonialist imposition on Indigenous Australia.

**Intersecting Discursive Formations: Indigenous and Multicultural**

Many of the issues arising from the study of Griffith have already been raised by others participating in the uneasy conversation (see for example Curthoys, 1999; Anderson, 2000; Povinelli, 2002; Stephenson, 2002; Cohen, 2003). Curthoys herself observes how the concept of cultural diversity has allowed these two discursive formations to be thought together, something that had not happened historically (Curthoys, 1999). Recognising the difficulties helps explain why Australian

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\(^{295}\) This is the difference between being interpellated, and what Hage (2006) calls ‘mis-interpellation’. In the latter there is subjugation without subjectification; one is essentially told to ‘fuck off’. Prior to the 1967 Referendum (see for example Hollinsworth, 1998 and Langton, 2003), and indeed whenever *Terra Nullius* continues to be deployed, we could say that Indigenous Australians are non-interpellated.
multiculturalism initially referred specifically to migrants and their place within Australian society and there was little attempt to include Indigenous Australians in discourses on cultural diversity (Vasta, 1996: 50; Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006: 109). Griffith has had a similar trajectory and the legacy of this in contemporary Griffith is that Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are both inside and outside of Griffith’s multicultural discourse, depending on the context.  

Under the rubric of cultural diversity, Indigenous Australians may become part of the multicultural mosaic. The danger with this is that they become just another ethnic/cultural group among many, their specificity effaced. Recent multicultural discourse, in particular representations of Australia as a nation of migrants, ‘work to subsume indigenous peoples into a narrative of successive migrations, thus glossing over the central fact of colonisation’ (Perera and Pugliese, 1998: 43). Something like this has indeed taken place in Griffith.  

This is one of the ways in which multiculturalism can be thought of as an idiosyncratic manifestation of, not a departure from, Australia’s colonial history (see for example Gunew, 2004: 43. Cf. Povinelli, 2002).

An obvious intersection of Indigenous and multicultural discourses arises because of the experiences of both Indigenous and non-British migrants in relation to Anglo-Celtic Australia (see for example Curthoys, 1999). Both groups have faced exclusion and marginalisation and have been subjected to racism in the Australian context and have this, at least, in common (see for example Castles and Vasta, 1996; Docker and Fischer, 2000).  

Again Griffith has its own manifestation of this. Indigenous Australians and non-British migrants also have histories that are interdependent (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995b: 5; Gunew, 2004: 46-47) as can be seen in relation to the transformation of Griffith over the last 100 years. It is important to recognise the complexities and complicated entanglements.

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296 See analysis below.
297 See especially Chapters Two and Three.
298 There are of course differences in these experiences. See for example Hodge and Mishra, 1990 and Curthoys, 1999.
299 Parallels can be drawn, for example, between attempts to ban the speaking of Italian in public (Chapter 4) and prohibitions on Wiradjuri languages (see below). Although we can use the idea of assimilation to recognise the similarities, the two cases are each of a slightly different order and the outcomes have been quite different.
While excluding Indigenous Australians from constructions of Australia as multicultural is clearly problematic, their inclusion needs to be done in ways that Indigenous Australians themselves have decided on; ways that are not neo-colonial. Critical then is the recognition that Indigenous dispossession is the foundation on which all post-1788 immigration to Australia has been built. All non-Indigenous Australians are substantially migrants, and all are beneficiaries of the dispossession of Australia’s Indigenous nations that began with the British invasion. In the end, we non-Indigenous Australians are all the inheritors of imperialism and have learnt well the discourse of race, the rules of power, and the politics of colonialism; we are the colonisers (Smith, 1999: 9). Whether we are all equally responsible is another matter.\(^{301}\)

This chapter is not an attempt to recount how Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people experience multiculturalism in Griffith. As a non-Indigenous researcher, to attempt to do so would be contentious, and potentially fraught, not to mention impossible, in a post-modern sense.\(^{302}\) As Jackie Huggins contends, ‘whites’ must not take advantage of ‘their privileged speaking positions to construct an external version of “us” which may pass for “our” reality’ (Huggins, 1995: 167; see also Smith, 1999: 1-2). Instead I consider how multicultural Griffith accounts for Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people who are part of the cultural world of Griffith and what some of the implications of this are for multicultural Griffith, for Aboriginal people who live in Griffith and for multiculturalism in Australia generally. As Clifford reminds us, however, all ethnographic writing is constituted in specific historical relations of dominance and dialogue (Clifford, 1988: 23).

I begin by considering when, where, and how, Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people become part of local discursive constructions of multicultural Griffith. This is a continuation and extension of the analysis in each of the different sites already considered in the preceding chapters. While at the very least, Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people who live in Griffith have to deal with cultural diversity in the course of their everyday lives, it is also a contention here that ‘an Australian

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\(^{301}\) Hage discusses the complexities of this question in some detail. See Hage, 2003: 79-103.

multiculture which does not include Aboriginal Australia in its foundations would be so flawed as not to deserve to survive’ (Hodge and O'Carroll, 2006: 109).

**Discursive Constructions, Representational Practices**

Governments in Australia have played a critical role in the discursive construction of Indigenous peoples (see for example Beckett, 1988b; Attwood, 1992; Read, 1994). And as the study of Griffith has shown, Griffith City Council has played, and continues to play, a powerful role in the construction of Griffith as multicultural and what this might look like. I begin here by foregrounding the role of GCC in relation to their Indigenous constituency. Griffith has a sizable Indigenous population. The proportion of the population of the Griffith LGA who identify as Indigenous is 3.6 percent of the total population, a figure which is higher than the national average of 2.4 percent (ABS, 2002).

The inclusion of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people as part of the cultural diversity of Griffith in official discursive constructions seems to be a fairly recent one.\(^{303}\) Aboriginal people were not discussed in either Al Grassby’s (1985) treatise on multiculturalism in Griffith nor in Totaro and Pangallo’s (1979) report for the then Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW. Phillips (1981), however, did include a section entitled ‘Aboriginals’, as well as one entitled ‘Multicultural’ in the report *Wade Shire Council Griffith: A Guide to Community Welfare Needs in the Griffith Area*.\(^{304}\) Although these two ‘communities’ were brought together in the one document, the issues for each remained separate. This is an appropriate recognition of the distinctive issues and needs of these different sections of the population, internal differences not withstanding. This separation also means, however, that both ‘the multicultural community’ and ‘Aboriginals’ remain somehow ‘other’ to a presumably Anglo-Celtic or, more appropriately in the case of Griffith, ‘European’ norm. This separation is still the case with GCC’s current *Social and Community Plan* but is much less distinct in the current *Cultural Plan*.\(^{305}\)

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\(^{304}\) The LGA Griffith City was formerly known as Wade Shire.

\(^{305}\) Both of these plans are discussed in more detail below.
Local events and activities that are instigated by or substantially supported by GCC, for example *Lifecycle* and *La Festa* respectively, are also critical in articulating the relationship between Aboriginal Griffith and multicultural Griffith and in interpellating Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people. Indeed it is often in the so-called cultural sphere that Aboriginal culture is articulated most overtly.

**Music, Dance and Storytelling: Incorporating Aboriginal Culture**

In 2004 in Griffith Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people appeared publicly as part of Griffith’s cultural diversity most often through participating in song/dance/storytelling. Occasionally, but infrequently, public recognition extended to ‘welcome to country’ speeches and, on one occasion, there was a smoking ceremony as part of a public event.\(^{306}\)

The multicultural festival *La Festa* (Chapter Five) is probably the most obvious example of this kind of incorporation of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people. Aboriginal involvement in the festival included the creation of a ‘snake’ for the lantern parade on the opening night, recognition of Wiradjuri people by the MC, an Aboriginal creation story, a dance performance, a formal ‘welcome’ by a Wiradjuri elder and a younger Wiradjuri woman, ‘storytelling’ and didgeridoo playing, and a performance by local Aboriginal rap band Another World.\(^{307}\) There were many Aboriginal people in the audience throughout the day. This may be a relatively recent inclusion of Aboriginal people and culture given that there is no mention of it in any of the programs for previous festivals held at the Griffith Library (for example Festival of Griffith Committee, 1998; Festival of Griffith Committee, 2000). We can see the historical trend identified by Curthoys (1999) in relation to conceptions of Australia as culturally diverse being played out here.

The inclusion of a ‘performance’ by Merv Firebrace at the 2004 Pioneer Park Action Day is also revealing, particularly in light of the critique of Pioneer Park (Chapter Three). Pioneer Park Action Day is held annually on Good Friday. In 2004 a stage

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\(^{306}\) Cf. Castles et al (1992: 6) and others claims that so-called migrant cultures were acceptable as long as they remained at the level of ‘trivial pursuits’, that is song, dance, food and folklore.

\(^{307}\) Kamilaroi man Merv Firebrace, who works closely with the local Aboriginal community and appears to have the support of Wiradjuri people, told the stories and played the didgeridoo.
was set up in the museum grounds and various performances were staged throughout the day. These included a whip-cracking display, performances by students of various ages from a local dance studio, musical performances by local artists and Merv Firebrace playing the didgeridoo, telling stories, and giving a dance demonstration for the children. Aboriginal culture was again included as dance and folklore. The performance’s potential was, however, undermined by the reactions of the seemingly ‘white’ audience. A noticeable number of people left the audience when Merv took to the stage and went to look at another event/activity. And when Merv began by acknowledging Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners, I overheard a man in front of me, who I recognised as a local police officer, say to his companion ‘it puts you off straight away, doesn’t it?’ The way in which this comment was made clearly demonstrated disdain for and a disparaging of the recognition of Indigenous custodianship. The fact that the performer overtly acknowledged Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners and accorded them the respect due to them because of their status was clearly not something that this white local liked being subjected to/reminded of. There is another interesting paradox when one considers how Pioneer Park accounts for Wiradjuri heritage and culture more generally. Alongside the problematic representations already analysed, an Aboriginal man appears on stage wearing a t-shirt featuring a Koori flag and plays the didgeridoo. Merv’s appearance contradicts what the PPM display would have us believe and illustrates the complexity and sheer messiness of the colonial project. It disrupts the non-Indigenous fantasy, and yet presumably the site managers have invited him to do so.

Aboriginal people also appeared as part of Griffith’s cultural diversity through their participation in the Lifecycle public art project (Chapter Four). The formal part of the ‘unveiling’ of the Lifecycle installation began with a ‘welcome’ by a Wiradjuri elder. Speeches were made by representatives of the various groups that were involved including an Aboriginal woman who spoke on behalf of the Wiradjuri contributors. After the speeches the audience moved outside for an Aboriginal ‘smoking ceremony’ and a Wiradjuri dance performance. Aboriginal participation in this project, both through the artworks and the ceremonial ‘unveiling’ was significant and indicative of a degree of respect from the organisers for Wiradjuri culture and heritage.
Each of these events can be considered to have taken place within the cultural sphere. In this way, Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are ‘contained’ and do not pose a serious threat. Somehow the contradictions and paradoxes can be managed and nothing need come of the recognition in ways that threatened ‘whites’ materially or in terms of their actual power. It is a ‘safe’ way of recognising Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal peoples and cultures as part of Griffith’s cultural diversity, and might be used to further claims that Griffith is cosmopolitan. Further, it may remain substantially at the discretion of the non-Indigenous organisers.

Despite the limitations when Wiradjuri people are interpellated as part of multicultural Griffith most readily in the cultural sphere, there is still subversive potential. This is especially the case when Wiradjuri elders are called upon by non-Indigenous people to deliver a ‘welcome to country’ speech. These ‘welcomes’ offer an overt recognition of Wiradjuri prior occupation and of Wiradjuri people’s ongoing interest in and relationship to the land. They work against the idea that Wiradjuri people are just another group among many. In this way we can see why the police officer audience member at Pioneer Park Action Day was ‘put off’ given the threat posed to non-Indigenous legitimacy. While it could equally be argued that this is just another form of the kind of containment noted above, albeit a more sophisticated form, these public declarations remain powerful acknowledgements of the unique status of Wiradjuri people.

Many Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith invest significant time and energy into the kinds of events and activities mentioned above and often appear to be pro-active. Local Aboriginal people are not simply passive participants, that is, that they do not necessarily participate only because non-Indigenous people have created a space for them. Local Aboriginal people also attended many of the above-mentioned events and so were participants in this way too.

Further, the efforts of Wiradjuri people themselves may have greater potential for undermining non-Indigenous hegemony and empowering Aboriginal people. One example of this is the attempt by Wiradjuri people to rejuvenate aspects of their culture and heritage through language. Wiradjuri is a language region but because of
colonisation few people now speak the language with any fluency (Macdonald, 2004: 22). Older Wiradjuri people may ‘have a few words’ but their parent’s and grandparent’s generations were forbidden from teaching the language to the children by reserve managers resulting in a deep sense of regret among some contemporary Wiradjuri people (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004).

Recent efforts by elders and their supporters to address this have resulted in a Wiradjuri language program now being taught at Griffith Public School, a local primary school at which Aboriginal students make up about a quarter of the student body (J. Kitchingman, personal communication, October 19, 2004). The language program is the result of an initiative led by Wiradjuri man Stan Grant and Dr John Rudder (J. Kitchingman, personal communication, October 19, 2004; Martinelli, 2004h). It has received positive media coverage on radio through ABC Riverina and the print media through the Area News. Another example is the Wiradjuri woman who put herself forward as a candidate in the 2004 local government elections. She was not, however, elected to council and Aboriginal people in Griffith still have no effective political representation.

It may be that some aspects of Aboriginal culture are easier for the non-Indigenous organisers of public declarations and celebrations of multicultural to include than others (cf. Povinelli, 2002). Claims about the acceptability of multiculturalism as long as it remains at the level of trivial pursuits—food, dance and folklore—have been shown to be less useful in thinking about non-Anglo Celtic migrants to Griffith, but do have resonance when one thinks about the relationship between Wiradjuri culture and multicultural Griffith (see Castles, Kalantzis et al., 1992a: 6). Recognition of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal peoples and cultures is essentially confined to the ‘cultural’ sphere in ways that potentially undermine the significance of prior occupancy. This kind of ‘misfit’ also begins to reveal some of the fault lines in the multicultural edifice.

Griffith City Council: A Revealing Portrait

Further insight into the limited and problematic inclusion of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people as part of multicultural Griffith can be gained through closer examination of the activities of Griffith City Council (GCC). GCC, who publicly declare strong support for multiculturalism and are often keen participants in activities and events that support the diverse cultural heritages of Griffith, seem to see little value in actively supporting local Aboriginal communities, even symbolically.

In 2004 they had failed to implement many things that were beginning to be standard practice in many LGAs around NSW, problematic as many of these are. This included erecting signs at the boundary of the LGA recognising the traditional owners of the land, employing an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, formally recognising NAIDOC week, and flying the Aboriginal flag when opportunities arose (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 2004). This meant that there was a striking correlation between the findings and recommendations that emerged from a 1981 study and GCC’s Social and Community Plan 2004-2007 (Phillips, 1981; Griffith City Council, 2004a) with many of the issues still resonating loudly.

We can get a sense of how Griffith City Council perceive and respond to their Aboriginal constituents by looking at one prominent public forum, the internet. None of the information on any of the numerous pages that describe Griffith, both past and present, refer to Wiradjuri people (Griffith City Council, 2006a). One may learn absolutely nothing about Wiradjuri people, who are only named once throughout the site. Indeed the only references to Aboriginal people are under the category ‘Community and Cultural’ and the sub-sections ‘Multicultural and Diversity’ and ‘Community Information Flyers’. On the former page we learn only of an ‘Aboriginal community’, who are ‘vibrant’, but remain tucked away on this

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309 Some of these practices could be dismissed as merely ‘symbolic’. The contention here is that the symbolic matters and can potentially operate as a lever to a more extensive recognition. It is important to recognise, however, that these are essentially non-Indigenous discursive spaces and the spectre of neo-colonialism remains.

310 This is an annual national week of celebration of the survival of Indigenous culture and the recognition of the contribution of Indigenous people to Australia. The acronym originally stood for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC, 2006).
page within a page, where they are lumped in with everyone else who doesn’t fit the Anglo-Celtic norm. This is an example of the potential of the incorporation Aboriginal people under rubrics of multiculturalism to efface their specificity and contribute to their marginalisation. The claim that ‘Council fosters strong and positive links with the local [Aboriginal] community’ (Griffith City Council, 2006b) is at worst a falsehood, and at best premature. There is no attempt whatsoever to recognise Wiradjuri history, culture or prior occupation on this website except on the two-page ‘Services Guide’ aimed at Indigenous people themselves.311

While subsuming Indigenous peoples/cultures/histories into non-Indigenous knowledge systems maybe assimilationist and Eurocentric to say the least,312 to leave Wiradjuri people out of this story is reminiscent of the pre-Mabo era and beyond, when terra nullius was yet to be challenged legally and Aboriginal people were thought of as part of ‘nature’ rather than ‘culture’. If GCC, for example, are writing Griffith’s history, even if it remains within their own cultural framework, then they should at least recognise Indigenous prior occupancy, particularly in light of their claims about fostering strong and positive links with local Aboriginal people. This lack of recognition and public support for Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people makes the attempt here seem disingenuous and tokenistic. The history GCC tell through various media including their website are very much ‘white blind-fold’ versions of history (Griffith City Council, ndb).313 As Larissa Behrendt points out, ‘one of the real consequences of overlooking Indigenous presence and experience is to exclude us from participating in civic life in a meaningful way’ (Behrendt, 2005: np).

GCC are, however, active in relation to producing reports and plans that highlight shortcomings in relation to local Aboriginal people and that make recommendations for improvements. The Social and Community Plan (Griffith City Council, 2004a), which is mandatory, has an access and equity focus. The plan was produced after extensive community consultation (A. Garzoli, personal communication, July 22, 311 This is one of a series of eight Service Guides which can be downloaded from the website. There is one for each of the following: Children; Young People; Aged People; CALD; Disability; Indigenous; Women; and Men (sic). See Griffith City Council, 2006c. 312 See Young, 2003. 313 See Chapter Two
Indigenous people are dealt with separately as are each of the other seven mandatory ‘target groups’ that the Department of Local Government regulations require local authorities to address (Department of Local Government, 1998). There are five main recommendations that are made in relation to ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People’. These include that council ‘demonstrate cultural awareness and respect’, ‘promote cultural awareness training for all service providers’, ‘form an Aboriginal Advisory Group’, establish an ‘Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position’ and ‘resume its participation in the employment assistance program’. This study reveals that council is still falling short on the first point, but has made some moves towards some of the others, most notably the establishment of an advisory body.

The Cultural Plan (Griffith City Council, 2005a), which has an arts and culture focus, is another forum in which GCC are happy to acknowledge an Aboriginal presence and to recognise some of the specificities of this ‘community’. Some of the suggestions to have emerged from the community consultation process and that are outlined in the plan include: a ‘Welcome to Country’ for all council and community events; flying the Aboriginal flag on days of significance to Aboriginal people, developing the ‘story’ of Wiradjuri people for tourism; and recognising and publicising NAIDOC/reconciliation activities. Although many of the suggestions require only symbolic gestures on behalf of the council and broader community, their adoption would be an important step towards a more equitable and ethical incorporation of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people into the broader cultural life of Griffith and may further the political and other aspirations of local Aboriginal people (see Behrendt, 2005: np). What happens, or doesn’t happen, at the level of the symbolic matters. It has implications for Aboriginal citizenship and legitimacy.

There are some areas in which council is pro-active in relation to Aboriginal people, but as is the broader tendency in Griffith, this occurs largely in the cultural sphere.

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314 It is unclear whether this particular suggestion came from a Wiradjuri or a non-Wiradjuri person. ‘Developing the Wiradjuri story for tourism’ is potentially fraught and contains echoes of the notion of deriving economic benefits from cultural diversity. Any such development needs to happen on Wiradjuri terms.

The most notable recent example is the *Lifecycle* public art project.\(^{316}\) The project is noteworthy because it had significant Aboriginal input and support and has ensured an ongoing Aboriginal presence outside the Griffith Regional Theatre in the form of the ‘Wiradjuri Poles’. Further, an Aboriginal Advisory Committee to GCC has now been established (Griffith City Council, 2004b). The Aboriginal Advisory Committee met for the first time in September 2004 and continues to meet regularly. This is an important step with the potential to create a dialogue between GCC and Aboriginal people and to further the aspirations of Aboriginal people. Given that both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor sit on this committee, one might also say that council responsibility in this area is being taken seriously and is seen as important. As Cowlishaw cautions, academics should not dismiss the state’s recognition of culture and heritage as merely a shallow cloaking of a deeper rejection of alterity (Cowlishaw, 2004: 243). Many of the other recommendations in the *Social and Community Plan* (Griffith City Council, 2004a), however, are yet to be acted on in any significant way.

**Local ‘Knowledge’: Other Discursive Constructions**

Alongside the discursive constructions of GCC is the everyday talk of local people, local media representations, and local histories, all of which interpellate Aboriginal people in specific and deliberate ways.

Historically Wiradjuri people in and around Griffith have been subjected to racism, discrimination, and a range of negative stereotypes (see for example Kabaila, 1998; and Grant, 1999). Although not all Wiradjuri people have first-hand experiences of overt racism (V. Simpson, personal communication, July 26, 2004), this continues to be a feature of life for Wiradjuri people collectively in Griffith (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004; Interviewee 2, 21 Oct 2004).

Some non-Indigenous attitudes and values are most aptly described as racist. Many work to justify and further Aboriginal dispossession, historical injustices and ongoing marginalisation. Some of the effects of the limited and problematical inclusion of Aboriginal peoples and cultures under the auspices of multiculturalism

\(^{316}\) See Chapter Six
outlined above, and council’s neglect, can be seen in non-Indigenous attitudes and understandings. These non-Indigenous discourses feed off and into each other. The attitudes outlined below pose a serious challenge to multicultural Griffith and its ability to be truly inclusive of Aboriginal people. Importantly, people from a range of non-Indigenous heritages participated in these constructions. Not all of Griffith’s non-Indigenous population are, however, equally empowered and while everyone may be capable of stereotyping and essentialising others, not everyone is as capable of using their racism to discriminate and subjugate others (Hage, 1998: 33).\textsuperscript{317} And as Hage (1998: 30) drawing on Bourdieu (1991: 220) reminds us, knowledge for most people who produce it has a practical purpose—it helps people do things.

They may be the most marginalised group in Griffith\textsuperscript{318} and attitudes towards Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people shown by significant numbers of non-Aboriginal people encountered in the course of this research are, commonly, far from sympathetic. Rose (1997) has described indifference and pitilessness as features of non-Indigenous responses to the treatment of Indigenous people in Australia and something similar can be seen in Griffith. Relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Griffith are characterised by antagonism, anxiety, and fear (cf. Cowlishaw, 1988; and Cowlishaw, 2004). Negative stereotypes are frequently deployed by non-Aboriginal people and there is a perception that Aboriginal people have not ‘contributed’. These attitudes constitute a denial of Aboriginal legitimacy and can be seen as an attempt by the dominant groups to undermine the status of Wiradjuri people and any claims they may have morally and politically in relation to multicultural Griffith.

‘I’ve got nothing against Aborigina\textit{ls} but...’

In Australia Aboriginal people have the most frequent experience of racism; it is a constant feature of their daily lives (Vasta and Castles, 1996; Hage, 1998: 78). This may well be true of Griffith as well. For many non-Indigenous people in Griffith, particularly the dominant groups, there is a deep-seated anxiety around Aboriginal

\textsuperscript{317} Cf. Hage, 2003: 118.
people that is often expressed as ‘racism’. There is also a distinct lack of empathy and often little historical understanding. Some time ago now Gillian Cowlishaw (1988) conducted a study of ‘race’ in rural Australia focussing on relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living in a town in western New South Wales. She noted hostility, antagonism and anxiety, describing racial tension as ‘endemic in western New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia’ (Cowlishaw, 1988: 2). While many in Griffith in a range of spheres talk about acceptance, harmony, cosmopolitanism and so on, it is in the attitudes of non-Indigenous locals towards Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people that such claims are most undermined. Throughout the course of this study, any assertions that might be described as racist were, almost without exception, deployed by the dominant groups about Indigenous people.

Negative stereotypes were often deployed and derogatory language was commonly used in ways that seemed to assume that I, as a non-Indigenous person, would share the same understandings. In relation to multicultural Griffith, Indigenous people were deemed not to ‘fit in’. ‘I’ve got nothing against Aboriginals you know, but unfortunately there is just a brick wall there…there’s Aboriginals and there’s multiculturalism in Griffith’ (Interviewee 5, 7 Oct 2004). The implication was that the ‘brick wall’ had been put there by ‘Aboriginals’ themselves and we can see a clear limit here to the ability of multicultural discourse to include Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people.

Non-Indigenous people, when asked about local Aboriginal peoples, were often keen to link them to violence in Griffith. Several fight-scenes like the one below were reported to me, with Indigenous people always cast as the instigators:

I don’t think the Italians like the non-reflective, um, Indigenous people…but that’s because of the Indigenous people attacking them and they’ve retaliated …a few have been broken up and sent to hospital…remember when we were in the hospital that time? The I-ties got stuck into the Abos…Indigenous

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319 The notion of different races with a biological basis has long been discredited but it continues to be deployed in a range of ways with potentially dangerous consequences. See for example Cowlishaw (1988), Anderson (1991), Vasta and Castles (1996), Hollinsworth (1998) and Essed and Goldberg (2002). Some of the uses to which this idea has been put in relation to Indigenous people are also outlined by Jackson (1999).
people attacked old man **** at the club and they retaliated big time, oh yeah, it was a big bust up…but apart from that I think all in all we get on well…(older ‘Italian’ male participant, Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004).321

A spokesperson for a non-traditional Christian church claimed that ‘Aboriginals and other blacks’ were involved in ‘gang warfare’, something I did not observe. Another church leader from a similar church claimed that the only racial tension in Griffith was related to Indigenous people, who were ‘against everyone’. Indeed ‘most folk have difficulties with Aboriginals’. Leaders of the more traditional Christian churches, in particular the Catholic and Uniting Churches, had less negative attitudes and did not seem to be speaking from a place of prejudice. This reflects the broader concerns of these churches in relation to social justice.

At other times it was the association of Indigenous people with petty crime that drew comment. ‘There are a lot of people that are angry with the Aboriginals because of everything that’s been happening over the years’ said one participant before a particular incident of car-theft was detailed presumably as an example of ‘everything that’s been happening’ and to demonstrate how ‘bad’ the situation is (middle-aged female ‘Italian’ participant, Group Discussion, 16 Oct 2004). It was unclear how the victims in this situation knew that the perpetrators were ‘Aboriginal’, but these kinds of claims are not unusual, regardless of whether there is any evidence to support the claims or not. On another occasion a participant recounted for me how they had been burgled at home. Although they had not been at home when the burglary had occurred, and despite there being no witnesses, the victim ‘knew’ it was the ‘Aboriginal fellow down the road’. These kinds of stories may be repeated many times over, as was the case in this instance. Because of this they can play very powerful role in maintaining the current power structure in Griffith. It is possible that the failure of local employers to embrace Griffith’s CDEP Scheme322 aimed at

320 These included populist notions of Aboriginal people as lazy, insolent, criminal, intellectually inferior and excessive alcohol drinkers. See Hall, 1997: 257-264.
321 Such scenes may be read quite differently by Wiradjuri people. See Macdonald (1986).
322 The acronym stands for the Commonwealth Development and Employment Program, also known as ‘work for the dole’. A company called Birrang Enterprise Development Company was administering the scheme in Griffith. See The Area News, 2004g
offering employment to local Aboriginal people may be linked to these discourses (The Area News, 2004).

Responses from more recent migrants to Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith varied, but were, on the whole, ambivalent (cf. Read, 1997). Those who were interviewed proclaimed little knowledge of Wiradjuri history and culture except those national issues that had received significant media coverage like the ‘stolen generations’ (see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997) and land rights (see Macdonald, 2004). There are of course local manifestations of these national stories, including child removal (see for example Kelly, 1988: 155-156). Several recent migrants had had positive personal experiences and did not deploy the negative stereotypes of the dominant groups, who spoke openly and at length about ‘the Abos’. An Indian interviewee did, however, note that there were inter-group tensions between Indians and Indigenous locals claiming that ‘even our skin colour doesn’t help’ (Interviewee 10, 6 Oct 2004). It may be that more recent migrants have yet to fully take on the racism of the dominant groups (cf. Hage, 2003: 118).

Occasionally those from the dominant groups did exhibit a more positive and empathetic reaction to Indigenous people. One ‘Anglo-Celtic’ participant, after attempting to dispel some of the negative stereotypes for me, informed me that ‘most people don’t think like this’. For this person better resources and greater self-determination were needed and ‘we all need to go forward together’ (Interviewee 3, 6 Oct 2004). An ‘Italian’ interviewee observed that ‘they don’t seem as a race to have contributed as much to Griffith…maybe they’ve never felt they had anything to contribute… maybe they’re not comfortable, they’ve been rubbed for so long you know’ (Interviewee 6, 11 Oct 2004). She thought there had been a decreasing acceptance of Aboriginal people over the decades since she had been a child.

The negative and sometimes racist attitudes of many non-Indigenous people do not, of course, go unnoticed by Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people. As an Aboriginal interviewee asserted,

At the end of the day I think the attitude is that Aboriginal people are more of a threat because of their history. I think Aboriginal people stay at the bottom
of the [unclear] basically due to that ignorance…migrants are not a huge threat…[but] Aboriginal people are because of the land rights stuff, the stolen generation and other issues like that. There’s a huge history…migrants are probably a bit more accepted because they’re not as great a threat and seem to come across as hardworking people (Interviewee 2, 21 Oct 2004)

This thirty-something, non-Wiradjuri, Aboriginal man makes an important point about the real threat Indigeneity potentially poses. Griffith, the ‘multicultural oasis’ that could be ‘an example for the rest of Australia’, could begin to unravel so easily if Aboriginal people were given substantive recognition. This is also a reference to the popular stereotype that Aboriginal people do not work/are lazy and we can see one of the practical uses to which negative stereotypes can be put, in this case, to reducing the threat of challenge to ones legitimacy and hegemony.

Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people can be seen to have little control over the attitudes and stereotypes deployed by non-Aboriginal people. A Wiradjuri elder noted, with resignation, ‘you’ve got to learn to be tolerant towards people that don’t like the Aboriginal people’ (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004).

While acknowledging the existence of inter-group tensions, including between Aboriginal people and Pacific Islanders, the ‘similarities’ in terms of lifestyle, values, and religion between Aboriginal people, Fijians and other Islanders had also meant that good relationships had developed too. Another potential positive outcome of multiculturalism for Wiradjuri and other local Aboriginal people, according to an Aboriginal informant, was that they may be inspired by the ‘success’ of other marginalised groups to believe that they too can overcome and transcend white racism and ‘succeed’ (Interviewee 2, 21 Oct 2004).

324 Cf. Curthoys and Moore, 1995
Media Representations

Surprisingly, given the attitudes of many non-Indigenous people and indeed Council, local media representations of Aboriginal people were largely positive in 2004. This is even more interesting because the media generally in Australia and New South Wales are often associated with deploying negative stereotypes and, at times, racial vilification of a range of minority groups including Indigenous Australians (see for example Langton, 1993; Jakubowicz, Goodall et al., 1994; Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, 2003). Positive media representations are an important way of challenging negative stereotypes, though their subversive potential may be limited (cf. Hall, 1997c).

Positive representations included media coverage of the launch of the Wiradjuri language program (Area News and ABC Riverina), photographs of participants at various events (Go Magazine), coverage of the launch of Lifecycle (Go Magazine, Area News), coverage of the Bangarra Dance Theatre performance Spirit (Go Magazine, and reporting on a range other achievements by local Aboriginal people including in the areas of art, war service, the priesthood, NAIDOC Week, cultural maintenance/rejuvenation, music, business development, leadership and sport. There was also empathy expressed for funding cuts and other government changes that may have impacted negatively on local Aboriginal people (for example Martinelli, 2004i). Occasionally ‘political’ comment from Aboriginal community representatives might be included as was the case with Sorry Day in 2004 about which ATSIC Regional Chairman Robert Carroll was interviewed (The Area News, 2004k)

At times, however, it appeared that some sectors of the media had not completely done away with the kinds of perceptions about Aboriginal people articulated by non-Aboriginal participants.325 On Monday the 31st July 2004 the Area News reported on the calling off of one of the Rugby League games in the Group 20 (MIA) competition on the previous day (Uhr, 2004).326 The team identified as being at fault

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325 I am referring specifically here to television coverage by WIN News, newspaper coverage by The Area News and radio coverage by ABC Riverina. This analysis draws specifically on reportage from: the Area News on May 31, June 4, and July 19, 23, 26 and 28; WIN News on July 19, 23 and 30; and ABC Riverina on June 2 and July 19.

326 This is a regional (Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area) competition. Teams include two from Griffith, the Narrandera team implicated in this incident, and teams from West Wyalong, Darlington Point/Coleambally, Leeton, and Yanco, among others.
were Narrandera, who were accused of verbally abusing the referee of the game, which was played in Griffith against one of the Griffith teams.\textsuperscript{327} About six weeks later a player from the same team punched a referee after a game. The coverage of these events differed across the different media—radio, television and newspaper and is revealing.

The story was covered on both occasions by the ABC Riverina’s Morning Show host who interviewed a range of people involved. When she interviewed the coach of Narrandera, who acted as spokesperson for the club and players, there was some provocation from the announcer to get the coach to say what ‘this is really about then’, that is presumably, to make an accusation of racism in relation to the game that was called off part of the way through. He didn’t take the bait. The ABC Riverina announcer also seemed keen in her coverage of the incidents to implicate the whole team rather than individual/s involved and repeatedly talked about ‘the Narrandera Lizards’ collectively. The same announcer also prompted the Group 20 referee she interviewed in relation to the punching incident to talk about feelings of fear and threat of retribution from Narrandera.\textsuperscript{328}

WIN News, by contrast, did not try to implicate the whole team and drew a comparison with players in the National Rugby League competition whose behaviour often makes media headlines. This coverage, nonetheless, had the potential to re-enforce and extend local discourses that link Aboriginal people to crime and violence even though there was no mention in any of the media coverage of the cultural or ethnic identities of any of the players. It was clear, at times, that the reader was required to ‘read between the lines’ to comprehend the nuances of the discourse. Local people are aware that the Narrandera team is largely made up of Aboriginal players so it was not necessary for commentators to state this. The discourse engaged in by journalists was augmented by talk of ‘fear’ and ‘worry’ by officials from other teams in the competition. Paradoxically, sport was highlighted by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants as having a key role to play in bringing people together in Griffith.

\textsuperscript{327} Cf. Cowlishaw, 2004: 140-167; and 193.
\textsuperscript{328} ABC Riverina June 2, 2004 and July 19, 2004
The *Area News* too appeared to report the Group 20 incidents fairly. This is important in the context of the somewhat ‘racist’ discourses about Aboriginal people that many non-Aboriginal people engage in. On the whole, even when local people ascribed particular incidents of violence in Griffith generally to Aboriginal people, the *Area News* tended not to report such incidents in ways that suggested that any particular cultural or ethnic group were involved.

Negative and sometimes racist stereotypes about and attitudes towards Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith function in part to legitimate and further entrench non-Indigenous privilege and power, which has, at least, had a question mark placed over it in the post-Mabo era. As Hage, drawing on Bourdieu, observes, ‘knowledge for most people who produce it has a practical purpose. It helps people do things’ (Hage, 1998: 30).

**White Blindfold Histories**

A critical dimension of postcolonialism, and indeed reconciliation in Australia has been the writing and telling of revisionist histories. One of the figures involved has been historian Henry Reynolds (see for example Reynolds, 1981; Reynolds, 1987; Reynolds, 1998). This is not just a national debate/issue, but one that permeates at all levels, including the local. Looking at history writing in Griffith is instructive. I begin with a journal entry I made while ‘in the field’.

The most racist and derogatory comments are saved for the local Indigenous population. Sam is particularly outraged at having been recently abused by a group of young Koori kids, who told him to ‘fuck-off you white cunt’. The discussion around this is somewhat predictable, with the usual negative stereotypes being deployed and some extreme

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329 The Mabo judgement in the High Court of Australia established the case for native title in Australia and overturned the legal fiction of *Terra Nullius*, that Australia was essentially unoccupied when the British arrived in 1788. Mabo is the surname of Murray Islander Eddie Mabo who instigated to court case in relation to his own land. See for example Attwood (1996) and Hollinsworth (1998: 208-223).

330 On reconciliation see for example the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1993 and 2000.

331 The kinds of histories that Reynolds and other revisionist historians have written has been criticised by right-wing nationalists and others in Australia and this has led to what are commonly referred to as the ‘history wars’. See for example the analysis by Macintyre and Clark (2003) and Hodge and O’Carroll’s (2006: 120-122) useful summation of events. Cf. Cowlshaw, 2004: 203, who notes that new versions of the past are clothed in terms and concepts constructed outside the realm of Indigenous people they are assumed to benefit.
language from Mario. There is not one voice of dissent, not even a ‘one of my closest friends is Aboriginal…’ or ‘I’m not racist, but…’ These guys just let it rip. I play dumb, my only intervention being to push Sam a bit on why he thinks Aboriginal people might dislike white people so much. ‘They learn it from their parents’ several of them tell me. ‘Yes, but why do their parents feel that way?’ I ask them. Sam shakes his head earnestly saying ‘I really don’t know Ngaire’ (Journal, 11 April 2004. The conversation took place at a dinner party I was at. All names have been changed.)

As Joseph Pugliese has argued, there can be ignorance of Australia’s violent colonial history, but there cannot be ‘innocence’ (Pugliese, 2002: 9). The education of non-Aboriginal people may be the key in addressing the issues that this passage of text raises, if one believes Sam’s claim to not know why Aboriginal people might be angry with and express hatred for whites to be genuine. One place to start might be to tell stories about Griffith that are inclusive of a range of perspectives and take care to recognise Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people, their heritages and their cultures. The following examples highlight how contemporary Griffith is dealing with its Indigenous past. On the whole, I argue, what we see in Griffith is the persistence and perpetuation of colonialism (see McCubben, 2001), and no-one is innocent. In addition to the public histories that the groups and organisations highlighted below construct, each individual can and should take responsibility for her/his own learning. Boori Pryor asks us to ’start with the basics. Look at the Aboriginal history from your area and then you can go on and flow out into…the rest of Australia’ (Pryor, 1998: 5).

The Griffith City Council website is an excellent example of how describing Griffith to outsiders, including recounting its history can marginalise or exclude Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people. There are numerous other examples including the Griffith Genealogical and Historical Society’s three volume collection Griffith and District Pioneers, Pioneer Park Museum (discussed in Chapter Three) and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service’s (NPWS) interpretative material related to Cocoparra National Park. Given that the NPWS ‘is responsible for the protection and preservation of all Aboriginal objects and places in NSW’ (Department of

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332 I had not been ‘in the field’ long when I participated in this exchange. My surprise at both the vehemence and unanimity of the sentiments expressed is evident. After hearing other conversations in which non-Aboriginal people said derogatory things about Aboriginal people in quite open ways I ceased to be quite so surprised.
Environment and Conservation, 2004) this is particularly problematical. Part of this is a responsibility to raise awareness and educate the general public about Aboriginal heritage. At Cocoparra, however, the ‘welcome’ sign not only neglects to mention Wiradjuri heritage and culture, it claims that ‘prior to dedication the National Park was mainly used for grazing with some cropping occurring on the flats’. The travel guide for Cocoparra on the NPWS website has the history of the park beginning with explorer John Oxley (NPWS, ndb). And yet in relation to two of the walks this guide highlights ‘Aboriginal sites’ are mentioned. Only the Visitor Guide makes any mention of Wiradjuri people (see NPWS, nda). Inclusive and appropriate on-site interpretation is particularly important if the NPWS wants to communicate the significance of Wiradjuri culture and heritage to local people.

The land in and around Griffith is inscribed with Wiradjuri culture and heritage in ways that are often not visible to or formally recognised by non-Wiradjuri people (see Kabaila, 1998). Among these are several contemporary significant Wiradjuri sites in the Griffith area. These include the site of the former Warangesda Mission, and several former ‘town camp’ sites like Frogs Hollow Marsh and the still-occupied Three Ways site, which was initially an Aboriginal reserve and is now looked after by the Local Aboriginal Land Council (Kabaila, 1998). The 2004 State of the Environment report noted that further study in this area was needed (Griffith City Council, 2004g). Murrumbidgee Irrigation has done some work in this area by using an Aboriginal consultant in the preparation of the plan of management for Barren Box Swamp. There is an interesting intersection here with Soldier Settler history in New South Wales (though I have not uncovered this in its Griffith specificity) given that many Aboriginal reserves were lost to soldier settlers between 1916 and 1927 (Goodall, 1996b: 198).

It is against such a backdrop that we can understand the sentiments expressed by an older Wiradjuri woman who observed that ‘there are a lot of Kooris that don’t like having foreigners come here, you know…people that come from other countries that come here are treated better than us, they get better benefits than us and they’re

\[333\] See Chapter Three
treated much better within the community itself than Aboriginal people— we still feel we’re outcasts, you know’ (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004). In fact, she went on, ‘I’ve always believed that Aboriginal people in this country are the outcasts. We’ve always got to fight; we’ve always got to prove ourselves’ (Interviewee 1, 6 Oct 2004).

For their part, since the invasion of their lands, Wiradjuri people have been subjected to attempts to subdue them through extermination, concentration, separation and indoctrination, which have been described as a series of ‘cycles’ of violence and marginalisation (Read, 1994). They have been subjected to various government policies of dispersal and assimilation, manifest in a range of ways including through child removal and being continuously moved from one place to another (Read, 1996). They have also adapted and can be seen to have been active participants in agriculture in and around Griffith as both seasonal workers and on occasion farmers (Kelly, 1988: 156; Kabaila, 1998: 134; Grant, 1999: 5; Macdonald, 2004: 23).

These are critical dimensions of local history, but are rarely if ever referred to publicly in Griffith.

Interactions between Wiradjuri people across their ‘nation’ and those who invaded their land began in around 1813 (Read, 1994: xiii). There was fierce resistance across the Wiradjuri region to the invasion, often resulting in great loss of life on behalf of Wiradjuri people (Gammage, 1983). By 1883 a different kind of war, described by Read as the ‘hundred years war’, had begun with the establishment in NSW of the Aborigines Protection Board, ‘whose activities, despite the name, were very largely devoted to the destruction of Aboriginal society’ (1994: xiii). Peter Read’s research shows that the achievements of Wiradjuri people despite non-Indigenous attempts to ‘subdue’ them ‘have been won…almost entirely through their

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334 Behrendt (2005) notes that there is a greater willingness to include Aboriginal people in to the ‘nature’ and ‘environment’ aspects of planning and land management than there is in relation to the planning of urban spaces. Cf. Head, 2000.
own efforts’ (1994: xv). This has included some gains in the area of land rights through the Wiradjuri Regional Aboriginal Land Council (Macdonald, 2004).

Multiculturalism: A ‘House Built on Sand’?
Multiculturalism has provided non-Indigenous people with a framework within which Wiradjuri people can be interpellated in non-threatening ways. Silences emerge around issues which potentially undermine white authority, legitimacy and tenure. Thus one encounters histories that ignore dispossession, frontier violence, forced evictions, child removal policies, and cultural loss, as well as accommodation, adaptation, survival and renewal.

Multiculturalism is implicated in the ongoing marginalisation of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith. The broader discursive constructions that non-Indigenous people engage in about Indigenous people are integral to this process and provide a rationale for the exclusion and ongoing marginalisation of Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people in Griffith to the extent that this is still the case. Multicultural Griffith does not offer Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people real recognition, empowerment, and respect.

There is no reason why multiculturalism can’t be re-conceptualised in ways that recognise Indigenous prior occupancy and take the implications of this seriously. This could be articulated in terms of reconciliation. Alternatively, as Curthoys suggests, ‘in place of a conception of multicultural that includes the indigenous…it is the multicultural that needs to be incorporated into a wider framework’ (Curthoys, 1999: 287).

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336 Such regions, which were created under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, were then broken down into smaller units of which the Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council is one (V. Simpson, personal communication, July 26, 2004. See also Macdonald, 2004).
Australian multiculturalism remains deeply flawed, incomplete and lacking legitimacy without a reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006). Ultimately, however, one critical question remains. Can multiculturalism ever be anything other than a (neo)colonialist imposition?

338 The kind of ignorance evident at the national level, such as the Federal Government’s claim that multiculturalism has benefited Indigenous people (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999:7), suggests that local initiatives are needed more than ever.

338 See also Castles et al., 1992a: 199.
Conclusion: The Cultural World(s) of Griffith

They bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and to make something new of the cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them. They are not and will never be unified culturally in the old sense, because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures (Hall, 1993:362).

Griffith also bears the traces of the myriad of peoples that have made and continue to make it their home and is a product of their interlocking histories and cultures. These people come from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Some of these groups can claim a history in the Griffith area of more than a hundred years. The history of other groups may only stretch back decades. Wiradjuri people might argue that they have always been there. These diverse peoples inhabit a shared physical space but are also drawn together discursively, as part of multicultural Griffith.339

Bob Birrell and Virginia Rapson (2002: 11) have claimed that Sydney and Melbourne, and to a lesser degree Perth, constitute Australia’s multicultural heartland and that the rest of Australia is distinctive for its relative absence of ethnic diversity. This, they argued, had contributed to a profound fissure between the city and the bush. According to these authors Sydney and Melbourne contain the generators and transmitters of the multicultural and cosmopolitan ideals, ideals which these authors attribute to ‘intelligentsia circles’.340 They claim that rearguard resistance to these images is largely based in regional Australia (Birrell and Rapson, 2002: 21).341

339 I don’t mean to say that these discursive constructions go unquestioned, or that there are not voices of dissent and I have tried to capture something of this in each of the chapters. On the whole, however, there is a broad general public consensus around ‘multiculturalism’.

340 If there is a link between the ‘intelligentsia’ and one’s level of educational attainment, it is worth noting that a 2004 parliamentary report on educational levels across NSW showed that Riverina electorates, including Murrumbidgee, were among the lowest in relation to the levels of tertiary education among residents (Piccoli, 2004). This also problematises Birrell and Rapson’s claims.

341 These authors obviously did not anticipate the so-called Cronulla Riots in Sydney in December 2005.
Griffith not only complicates the urban-rural dichotomy constructed by Birrell and Rapson, it seriously challenges their claims about rural resistance. Rather, close examination of Griffith suggests not only an embracing of so-called multicultural and cosmopolitan ideals, but a collective identity constructed in part around cultural diversity and a situation of changing power relations as a result of those interpellated as Italian.

Griffith also complicates Graeme Turner’s observation that Australia as a whole ‘is now a community overwhelmingly defined by the necessity of exclusion, and increasingly marked by the revival of a nostalgic, even sentimental, refutation of the pluralism that informed the ethics of multiculturalism’ (Turner, 2003: 413). While this does increasingly seem to be the case at the national level in Australia, the same cannot be said for Griffith. The people of Griffith have constructed a positive and pervasive multiculturalism that informs everyday life in Griffith beyond what seems to have been anticipated by both the official discourses and scholarly critiques.

While Griffith is consistent with the national up to a point, multiculturalism in the Griffith context has also had its own specificities and has been configured according to the local particularities. Although local discourses are clearly informed by official discourses, as each site of analysis shows, they do not merely replicate these. Rather, the way multiculturalism is understood and configured in Griffith demonstrates an embracing of cultural diversity and broad general support for multiculturalism. It has become part of how many of the people of Griffith see themselves and how they would like others to see them. They see great value in both cultural diversity and multiculturalism.

Further, the local political will to foster an inclusive, positive, progressive kind of multiculturalism, and to be recognised for this nationally, is strong (Griffith City Council, 2004d). The ‘pride in our cultural diversity’ and support for multiculturalism proclaimed at the local level (see Griffith City Council, 1997; Griffith City Council, ndk) is much greater than it is at the federal level of government and stands in contrast to the less than supportive attitude of the current Howard government (see for example Stratton, 1998; Markus, 2001). The notion of the white nation fantasy of multicultural tolerance (Hage, 1998) does not allow an
appreciation of this important outcome. But multicultural Griffith cannot be proud of how it deals with its Indigenous past and present and this other ‘white nation fantasy’ is still being maintained locally.

There are, then, limitations to the extent to which analyses that make larger claims about what multiculturalism in Australia is or isn’t can capture local configurations and the specificity of the local remains an important consideration when trying to understand something of the ways in which multiculturalism in Australia works. An important aspect of capturing something of this specificity has been the recourse to both the textual and the ethnographic.

The scholarly critique I have drawn on most heavily is Hage’s *White Nation*. Analyses like those from Hage are invaluable in furthering our knowledge and understanding but as the study of Griffith has shown are ultimately unable to fully account for the numerous positive connections made by ordinary people in the course of their everyday lives. The case of Griffith has highlighted both the value and the limitations of Hage’s ‘white nation’ thesis.

Cultural enrichment was one of the key themes of Australian multiculturalism identified by Hage (1998: 117) and this theme does inform conceptions of multiculturalism in Griffith. But in multicultural Griffith the opposition between enriched and enriching cultures is much less clear and indeed people from a range of backgrounds can and do adopt both of these different subject positions at various times. Multiculturalism in Griffith also goes beyond Hage’s notion of tolerance and this too raises questions about what Hage’s thesis obscures about multiculturalism in Australia. In the case of Griffith it is ultimately unable to account for the kind of multiculturalism that permeates life in Griffith and which is widely embraced as part of the town’s collective identity. It also fails to adequately account for the dominant groups’ recognition of the precariousness of their positions of power.

We can also see in Griffith the limitations of the local multicultural vision, informed as it is by the national vision. One of the ways multicultural Griffith is constructed within the local discourse is as a series of ‘different’ groups—a kind of ‘mosaic multiculturalism’ that draws on essentialised notions of identity. Each group is
interpellated differently and then positioned hierarchically. Critical to the positioning of each group is the discourse of contribution which in its local configuration is understood as a historical process associated with (non-Indigenous) notions of progress and development. If a particular group can be constructed as having been significant contributors, something which is related to both the length of time for which a group are publicly understood to have had a presence in the area, and their supposed achievements in relation to notions of progress and development, then this confers legitimacy.342

This legitimacy is closely linked to hegemony in Griffith (cf. Hodge and Mishra, 1990: ix-xix). Once a group of (culturally/ethnically inscribed) people are interpellated as having a high degree of legitimacy, they are then understood, and understand themselves, as having the right to speak. Such a construction also presumes knowledge in certain privileged areas, for example in relation to the management of Pioneer Park Museum. It can also exclude, as was the case with Anglo-Celts in relation to the experience of multiculturalism deemed necessary for membership of the Community Relations Commission Regional Advisory Council. The question of legitimacy, as it is constructed in the discourse, therefore becomes a crucial one in relation to how different groups within Griffith are positioned in everyday life. Being interpellated as (the most) legitimate functions as both an explanation of how different groups in Griffith are positioned as well as a rationale for maintaining this. Hegemony works to protect one’s power, and to justify its existence.

One of the most interesting things for multiculturalism, and indeed the biggest challenge to Hage’s thesis, is ‘Italian’ hegemony. Although in Hage’s formulation people in Griffith with an Italian heritage could be dismissed as simply having become ‘white’ (1998: 88-89) by having accumulated enough national capital/governmental belonging (1998: 54-55) there is much more than this going on in Griffith.343 What such a reading elides are the very real differences they have

342 The notable exception to the locally ascribed significance of the length of time a so-called group has had a presence in the area are Wiradjuri people. See Chapter Seven.
343 Cf. Andreoni (2003) who considers how the colour olive has been associated with ‘Australian Italians’ as both a derogatory label and a self-prescribed ethnicity marker. At another level Italians
made in challenging Anglo-Celtic dominance. It fails to recognise power and agency, and the significance of this in the context of White Australia with all that this implies and has implied historically. Indeed in many instances local Italian people/culture/heritage eclipses its Anglo-Celtic counterpart/s. The centrality of Anglo-Celts as ‘governors’ (Hage, 1998) has been partially, but significantly, displaced by ‘Italians’. This is particularly evident in the not uncommon assertions that ‘Griffith is an Italian town’ and ‘Griffith has been made on the Italian’s back’. These assertions have also achieved a much wider currency, and national media representations continue to recognise the significance of local Italian culture and heritage. Griffith can be seen to be a space structured, not insubstantially, around (an) ‘Italian’ cultural heritage (cf. Hage, 1998: 18).

In spite of all this, the discourse of ‘Anglo decline’ (Hage, 1998) was quite muted in Griffith, particularly given the cultural diversity of the town and the very real challenges to Anglo-Celtic dominance and control. A process of collective invention, and indeed survival, seem to be at the heart of multicultural Griffith (see Clifford, 1988; Clifford, 1997) that in some ways transcends the paranoid nationalism evident in Australia more generally (see Hage, 2003). This highlights the possibility that even when multiculturalism seems to be somewhat dysfunctional at the national level, it may still operate somewhat effectively at the local level.

Ien Ang sees an historical continuity in Australian attitudes and has noted that the anxieties and prejudices of White Australia have not fully disappeared (2003: 51). In multicultural Griffith we can see both continuity and change. The latter is particularly evident when one considers how people from Italy/Italian backgrounds are interpellated and the resultant hegemonic position. This suggests some real gains have been made under multiculturalism and these should not be underestimated. The case of Griffith shows that multiculturalism does indeed need to be revised, but not discredited and removed (Hodge and O’Carroll, 2006).

can be seen as ‘white’, particularly with regards to Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people, and Indian and Pacific Island residents.

344 See Chapter One.

345 There are numerous examples. Among these are ABC TV’s Dynasties series, which featured the De Bortoli family, the ABC Radio series From Olives to Eucalypts, and the recent ABC Radio National (2006) Street Stories feature entitled ‘Bella Banna’.

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The most serious limitation is the way Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are interpellated (or not) by local multicultural discourse and the conditions under which this takes place. Without a genuine reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians, multiculturalism does indeed remain a ‘house built on sand’. And unless Indigenous Australians are generally supportive of and substantially involved in the establishment and trajectory of the kind of multiculturalism we live in Australia, it can be said to be a neo-colonialist imposition. The study of Griffith demonstrates the ways in which multiculturalism can be used to include Aboriginal people, without seriously undermining non-Indigenous Australia.

In Chapter One the role of the state in relation to multicultural and related policy was considered. Having closely examined multiculturalism in Griffith, a number of implications for government policy have emerged. In many ways the Federal and State Governments set the ‘tone’ or ‘mood’ around the kinds of social issues discussed in relation to multicultural Griffith. They have an important role to play not only in setting a broad policy agenda, but in the corporate plans produced by the numerous government departments which guide them in their actions, in the kind of language they use in public documents, and in the stance they take in the media in relation to current events and issues. Government needs to lead the way, and to sell their vision to their constituents.

A ‘best practice’ approach should be adopted, based on compassion, respect and genuine power-sharing. This would see government striving for continual improvement. Importantly government, at all levels, needs to listen to the voices of those on whom their policies impact through greater community engagement. They need to resource communities adequately and to increase funding for support services. The response, therefore, needs to occur at the practical and the symbolic level. Multicultural Griffith demonstrates both the possibilities and the current limitations.

346 We could continue to follow Hage on this and reveal a fantasy of Italian supremacy but that is not the point.
The study also points to avenues for further research. This might include other in-depth place-bound studies to compare and contrast with what has been revealed about multicultural Griffith. Such comparisons would help reveal the uniqueness or otherwise of the Griffith situation. Certainly there are other regional centres in Australia, such as Shepparton, Robinvale and Kalgoorlie which were briefly studied by the DOTARS (2005) to name but a few, which could generate useful data. Further research in Griffith over time, particularly in a changed political climate, would also further our understandings of multiculturalism in Australia. Participants in the present studied speculated about what the future might bring and some of these predictions could fruitfully be tested.

There is also surely something to be gained by the kinds of studies of the role and potential of local government recently undertaken by the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion on behalf of DIMA (GCC, 2005c). Research looking at successful local and/or community based initiatives to further the multicultural agenda would also further knowledge in this area and potentially lead to a more in-depth understanding of what works for culturally diverse communities.

By looking closely at the situation in Griffith I have attempted to capture something of the complexities of multiculturalism that are often disguised or elided by broader assessment of multiculturalism at the national level. Not surprisingly there is a high degree of ambivalence evident in this assessment. The people of Griffith can be seen to be both living ‘together-in-difference’ and ‘living apart together’ (Ang, 2001a).

Importantly, multiculturalism in Griffith has been imbibed by many individuals, community groups and organisations and, to some extent, within local government. The embracing of multiculturalism has been forged out of a belief that it is both valuable, desirable, and something that both the broader community and the local government authority should foster. This is quite a contrast with metropolitan media reports that frequently refer to Australian multiculturalism using words like flawed, failure and irrelevant. Everyday multiculturalism in Griffith goes beyond current conservative understandings and multiculturalism in Griffith remains not only
relevant, it also provides a framework for people to make sense of their community of Griffith. It highlights how multiculturalism, with all the potential limitations and challenges this implies, might ‘work’. The success of multiculturalism in Griffith is not insignificant. Read against the backdrop of White Australia, assimilation, Hansonism, ongoing racism, events like the ‘Cronulla riots’, and the conservative political climate, it is in fact quite an achievement. This reveals some of the potential of multiculturalism.

Two headlines appeared on the front page of *The Area News* in March 2004. One, ‘New Citizens Join the Town’ (Martinelli, 2004f), was about the recent Harmony Day event which had included a citizenship ceremony. The other, ‘Deb Ball Faces Lack of Belles’ (The Area News, 2004j), was about the impending cancellation of the annual Debutante Ball, run by the Freemasons, due to lack of interest. These two articles are indicative of the kind of ‘changing of the guard’ that multicultural Griffith has, and continues to, experience.

On one hand the community can be seen to embrace Harmony Day, which in 2004 included a Samoan kava ceremony to mark the event and in which the mayor participated. Fifteen people chose this day to become Australian citizens. The event was held in the Memorial Gardens, that sacred space of war commemoration. The low chain fence that surrounds the cenotaph was used to drape banners that talked about community, harmony and coming together. This relatively new Griffith tradition was supported by groups like the Griffith Adult Learning Association and the Griffith Multicultural Community Council (Martinelli, 2004f).

On the other hand, an older tradition can be seen to be on the verge of disappearing. Due to a ‘lack of interest’, the NSW Grand Masonic Debutante Ball was going to be cancelled for 2004 unless more than the five young women who had already expressed interest came forward. Lamenting the lack of interest in the event, one of the organisers observed that this would have been the forty-seventh such event, the longest running in the state and ‘one that still holds close to the original

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347 The demise of this event may also be related to other factors like the desires and expectations of a new generation of women, but it also serves as a useful indicator of how multicultural Griffith has changed.
traditions…there are lots of people who have made their debuts, followed by their daughters and even their grand-daughters’ (The Area News, 2004j). In an attempt to encourage young women to come forward he observed ‘I’d like to think those traditions will continue’ (The Area News, 2004j). Somehow it seems unlikely, and this is the reality of multicultural Griffith.

The old jostles with the new for space and new cultural worlds are created. As Hesse argues more generally, marginalised, resistant, alternative, incorporative, cultural forms recast, challenge and/or stretch the meaning of representations, while engraving their own significations on the social and cultural landscape (Hesse, 2000: 17).

I have tried to capture something of the cultural worlds of Griffith and multiculturalism. Such ethnography necessarily decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It not only describes processes of innovation and structuration, it is itself part of these processes (Clifford, 1986b: 2). Culture is composed of contested codes and representations, and, as Clifford has effectively argued, ethnography is caught up in the invention, not the representation, of cultures (Clifford, 1986b: 2). This ‘invention’ of multicultural Griffith, however, tells us something about how a topical and important issue, multiculturalism, is manifest and played out in Australia and Griffith.
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Appendix One

Griffith LGA

Table 4.48.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Indicators</th>
<th>2001 Census</th>
<th>% of population</th>
<th>1996 Census</th>
<th>Change 1996-2001</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>23,696</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>21,616</td>
<td>2,082</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian born</td>
<td>10,331</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>17,320</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born</td>
<td>3,989</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>3,515</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace not stated</td>
<td>1,378</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born - English speaking countries</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born - non-English speaking countries</td>
<td>3,228</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>2,973</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language other than English spoken at home</td>
<td>4,790</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>4,678</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born arrived since 1990</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas born arrived since 1996 from NESC</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.48.2

 Overseas Born: Birthplace by Gender, 2001 and 1996 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>% of OSB</th>
<th>1996 Census</th>
<th>Change 1996-2001</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>1,626</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>-170</td>
<td>-9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>117.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>110.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>120.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>-25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other birthplaces</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas born</td>
<td>2,071</td>
<td>1,918</td>
<td>3,988</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3,515</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Griffith LGA

#### (continued)

#### Table 4.48.3

**Religious Affiliation by Gender, 2001 and 1996 Census**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>5,536</td>
<td>5,579</td>
<td>11,115</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>10,439</td>
<td>676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>2,343</td>
<td>4,538</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>4,320</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>1,874</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>1,999</td>
<td>-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian &amp; Reformed</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, nfd</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total persons**

| 11,923 | 11,775 | 23,698 | 100.0 |

| 21,616 | 2,062 | 9.6 |

#### Table 4.48.4

**Ancestry by Birthplace of Parents: Selected Ancestry Groups, 2001 Census**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Both parents born</th>
<th>Australian Born</th>
<th>Overseas born</th>
<th>Not stated birthplace</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Australia</td>
<td>Father Aust. O/S</td>
<td>Mother Aust. O/S</td>
<td>Both parents born O/S</td>
<td>Parent(s) birthplace not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>6,660</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4,693</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1,784</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Aboriginal</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW (CRC), nda.

Appendix Two

List of Personal Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. Erika Griffith</td>
<td>Multicultural Community Council Resource &amp; Information Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Rolles</td>
<td>Tourism Manager, Griffith City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Raccanello</td>
<td>Italian Museum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Norris</td>
<td>Curator, Pioneer Park Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Collins</td>
<td>Manager, Pioneer Park Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Garzoli</td>
<td>Cultural Services Manager, Griffith City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Taylor</td>
<td>Chair, La Festa Organising Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Zappacosta</td>
<td>Deputy Mayor; Community Relations Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Advisory Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Neville</td>
<td>Former Mayor of Griffith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Michael</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev M. Trounce</td>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Jarvis</td>
<td>Baptist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev P. Gobbo</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor A. Jeffreys</td>
<td>7th Day Adventists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor D. Grant</td>
<td>Grace Christian Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/C K. Trayner</td>
<td>Griffith Local Area Command (NSW Police)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Tehan</td>
<td>Rural Australians for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Schubert</td>
<td>Researcher, Fijian-Australians</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Kitchingman</td>
<td>Assistant Principal, Griffith Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. Prasad</td>
<td>Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW</td>
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</table>

*Interviews were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face. Some were recorded electronically, others were recorded by hand. Interviews ranged in length from ½ hour - 1 ½ hours. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a small number of participants. All other interviewees remain anonymous.*