Small piece of paper -- going out, flying around the world: A preliminary discussion on the reproduction of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps

Michael James Judd
*Edith Cowan University*

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"SMALL PIECE OF PAPER...GOING OUT, FLYING AROUND THE WORLD" : A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON THE REPRODUCTION OF ABORIGINAL CREATIVITY ON POSTAGE STAMPS.

By Michael James Judd

A thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours
Edith Cowan University
1998

Supervisor: Dr Pat Baines
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Abstract.

In this thesis the use of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps is examined from an anthropological perspective. Firstly the ways in which Australia Post reached decisions to use Aboriginal designs is considered and the protocols for their use examined. The theoretical ideas of Munn on the ownership of designs, and of Morphy and Keen pertaining to the "economy of knowledge" provides an approach for considering the topic. The archival work for the writing of this thesis was conducted in a short visit to the archives of Australia Post. The research showed the practices of Australia Post with regard to using Aboriginal designs reflects the attitudes of anthropologists and museums toward Aboriginal creativity in the respective time periods. The research has also shown that over time whilst Australia Post initially consulted non-Aboriginal experts and used non-Aboriginal designers Australia Post now consults with prominent Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations. Australia Post now uses Aboriginal artists to provide designs that are featured on postage stamps. However, Australia Post does not yet appear to appreciate that while designs may be produced by individual artists, the designs are owned on a community basis with a range of people having varying rights. These rights include the right to produce the design, the right to discuss the meaning of the design in its cultural context and the right to restrict the use and discussion of a design. All of these points are central to the notion of an "economy of knowledge" which is the overriding theme of this thesis.
Declaration.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any matter previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain previously published or written material by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Michael, J. Judd
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I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Pat Baines for her valuable advice and support during my time at Edith Cowan University, and particularly in the research for and the writing of this thesis. Dr. Baines took a chance by offering to supervise my Honours program, I only hope the achievement of completing this thesis has repaid the belief that she had in my ability. I would like to thank Emeritus Professor Basil Sansom for his help in the preparation of this thesis. He offered advice on a number of points and offered his thoughts on a number of drafts of this thesis.

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My gratitude is also extended to the following persons and organisations who generously allowed me to draw upon their expertise and resources during the preparation of this thesis:

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- Ian Crawford, the former curator of anthropology at the Museum of Western Australia.
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I feel it is also important to say thank you to Mrs Ros Crisp, Mrs Ros Creati and their families as well as Miss Michelle Miller who were special friends long before I returned to studying. In the time I have been studying, they have only every offered encouragement to ensure that I finished what I said I would do, much to the disappointment of others.

Finally, words hardly justify the appreciation I feel towards my parents Chris and Kerry Judd who accepted my desire to return to studying and did everything possible to ensure I succeeded. This thesis is as much the result of the hard work of my parents as it is the result of my own hard work. Thank you all.
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Chapter 1: Introduction.

The beginnings of this thesis grew from the many discussions I had with my supervisor, Dr Pat Baines, after I first expressed my interest in applying for enrolment in the Honours year at Edith Cowan University. I wanted to undertake a program of study that would allow for the writing of a thesis that focused on the broad topic of Aboriginal creativity while examining in depth the theme of the ownership of designs and the knowledge that these designs contain. I wanted to write a thesis that made an original, although modest contribution to the field of Aboriginal studies using an anthropological approach to my chosen theme. I started to search for a way to approach this in a fresh and innovative way. During this time I started to discover a range of articles that discussed the number of court cases that centred on the use of Aboriginal creativity without permission from the artists. I also became aware of Aboriginal designs being featured on postage stamps. I wondered whether Australia Post had sought the permission of artists and the artists' communities before the reproduction of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps. This led to the examination of a number of philatelic catalogues which outlined very general information about the various series of postage stamps that featured examples of Aboriginal creativity but not the detail that I sought. Therefore I started an examination of the range of anthropological literature available on Aboriginal creativity to see whether any anthropologists had studied the use of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps and any potential impact that this could have for Aboriginal people. As I had doubts as to whether I could approach this theme in an anthropological way, I wrote to a number of anthropologists who had written on the topic of Aboriginal creativity outlining my basic idea to gauge their opinion on my chosen theme. Generally the replies were positive.

At this point I had decided that this theme was worth following and I sort help from Elizabeth Gertsakis who is in charge of the archives section of the Australian Postal Corporation (which is better known as Australia Post). She
was very helpful. I had hoped that Australia Post would photocopy the relevant material and forward it to me but Elizabeth felt that I needed to study the material in full and that if Australia Post sent material then I could not be sure if any material was missing. This led me to include a short period, of several days, conducting research in the archives of Australia Post in Melbourne.

Before my research trip I had hoped to focus on one of two questions. The first question may be stated thus: If Aboriginal designs are a sign of Aboriginal ownership of the land, would this be lost when a design is reproduced on a postage stamp? The second question centred on what Aboriginal artists had told Australia Post about the meaning of the designs that Australia Post had used on postage stamps. The archival material contained answers to neither question. I was therefore unable to focus on either question in detail. I did, however, uncover a number of very interesting points relating to some different questions that I will discuss throughout this thesis.

In this study I provide a preliminary discussion of an anthropological nature on the use made of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps by Australia Post. I believe that this is no more than a preliminary discussion as, in my opinion, there are many issues that I have not focussed on in this thesis. The reasons for this are varied, and include the fact that I did not do any fieldwork with the Aboriginal artists who had had their designs reproduced on postage stamps. However, I do believe that the importance of this thesis is that it is the first time that the theme of the use of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps has been examined using an anthropological approach.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Approach.

The research that I have undertaken for the writing of this thesis has been influenced by the research and theoretical propositions which underpin the works of Nancy Munn (Walbiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society, 1973), Howard Morphy (Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge, 1991) and Ian Keen (Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion, 1994). While there is a difference between the theoretical approach of Nancy Munn and that of Howard Morphy and Ian Keen these three anthropologists together have provided the theoretical understandings which have informed this study.

In this section I will outline the work of Nancy Munn, Howard Morphy and Ian Keen. I do this by reflecting on the differences in their approaches and showing how each has influenced the research that I have conducted.

The research that Nancy Munn conducted among the Walbiri people of central Australia in the mid to late 1950's is the basis of her book Walbiri Iconography which was published in 1973. In her book Munn begins with an account of how the basic catalogue of graphic signs used by the Walbiri is manipulated to accompany the telling of stories. The same graphic signs are used by men and women, although the meaning placed on the graphic sign alters depending on who is using the graphic sign. For example when a design is "yawalyu", it is controlled by women. Yet designs that are "yawalyu" refer to the same Ancestral beings as men's designs known as "ilbindji". However, when placed into the category of "yawalyu" these designs do not have the same level of secrecy attached to them compared to when they belong to the "ilbindji" category. Designs when in the "ilbindji" category are strictly controlled by men (Munn, 1973, p.32 & 33). For the Walbiri the graphic signs that Munn discusses are often seen as surrogates for the Ancestral beings. Therefore it should not be surprising that all of the designs that are the property of the Walbiri people are "wiri". The term "wiri" in English means strong, powerful and
The proposition that Munn advances is that a graphic sign changing its category does not change its basic meaning. Munn stresses that the meaning of a design does not change but rather that its interpretation depends on the circumstances in which it is produced and viewed (Munn, 1973, p.34 to 48). According to Victor Turner "Munn provides a generative account of the sign system itself by explaining how its elements and combinatorial rules are employed to generate a potentially unlimited set of designs, each with its unique meaning" (Munn, 1973, p.viii & ix). In the opinion of Munn, it is the code that is the structure for regulating the framework of social order. This is because the Walbiri graphic signs belong to a well developed, sociocultural code operating with different media, and in different domains, to convert one level of sociocultural order into another. These codes contain an adjustable thread that gives the user the means of focusing on the different levels of abstraction (Munn, 1973, p.217 to 221). Munn has also enlarged Durkheim's theory of collective representations by giving it a grammatical (and generative) potential (Munn, 1973, p.211 & 212).

Walbiri Iconography was at least in part influenced by the work of Victor Turner, who is associated with the "social action" anthropology model that can be traced back to the Manchester school of anthropology presided over by Max Gluckman, although its roots can be traced yet further back to the work of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Besides Victor Turner, others who received their training at Manchester under Max Gluckman were Jeremy Boissevain and F.G Bailey (Barrett, 1996, p.99 to 105). The influence of Victor Turner on Nancy Munn derives from Turner's work on symbolic analysis and the notion of multivalence which is central to his findings in The Forest of Symbols: Studies in Ndembu Ritual, (1967). Turner's work on multivalence is done without conceding agency to the performers and producers. This is because Turner
saw the performers and producers as vehicles of and for their respective cultures. Turner also saw condensation, which refers to the possibility of interpreting one element (such as a graphic sign of the Walbiri) in many ways rests on the ambiguity of the signs and analogies among their interpretations (Turner, 1967, p. 28 & 29).

Munn refers to the multiple meanings and semantic complexity of Walbiri design elements in conjunction with their simplicity of form (Munn, 1973, p. 166). The influence that Nancy Munn has had upon my own research is due to her views on graphic signs (often referred to as designs) belonging to communities and that the same graphic sign may be interpreted in various ways within the community. Therefore the issue for my own research is whether a design reproduced on postage stamps is still able to be interpreted by the community from which it comes.

While the work of Nancy Munn has informed the questions I have asked about designs on postage stamps, the book Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge, (1991) by Howard Morphy has had a greater influence. Howard Morphy's book is based on his fieldwork among the Yolngu (Aboriginal peoples of North-East Arnhem Land) as part of his study for a Doctorate (of which Nancy Munn was one of the examiners) at the Australian National University. The influence of Howard Morphy upon my research comes from a number of key points which he makes in Ancestral Connections. These key points all relate to creativity and the economy of knowledge. The first of these key points is that creativity, in particular designs on bark paintings, is seen by Yolngu people as a sign of Yolngu ownership of land. Morphy traces how since the 1950's bark paintings have been used as a way of expressing Yolngu ownership of land to outside groups. Bark paintings have been used as evidence in court cases, presented to parliament.

1 I would like to thank Emeritus Professor Basil Sansom for his very helpful insights on the work of Victor Turner.
as a petition and given to Members of Parliament and to lawyers. This has been done with an aim of expressing in the strongest terms Yolngu ownership of the land and the importance that land has to the Yolngu spiritually, socially and economically (Morphy, 1991, p.17 to 20).

The second important point that Morphy makes is that various designs that are reproduced, for example on a bark painting, are the property of particular Yolngu peoples and that people have differing rights in these productions. The rights of people to these designs is based largely on their membership of a clan. The rights that people have may include the ownership of a design that is reproduced in a painting. For Yolngu, these designs are the property of the various clans and are owned by all members. Other rights that Yolngu people may have in designs can include the right to produce a particular design as a bark painting, the right to divulge the meanings of a design and the right to authorise or restrict the use of a design. These rights may be exercised in very different ways and a person who exercises their right to control the production of a design may never actually produce that design as a bark painting themselves. All of these rights may be impacted on by age, gender and status. Therefore it is not surprising that senior members have maximum rights while junior members have minimum rights (Morphy, 1991, p.57 to 63).

The third and most important point taken from Howard Morphy’s book *Ancestral Connections* is the notion of “inside” versus “outside” knowledge that conditions Yolngu creativity. The term “inside” is similar to secret in the sense that the full knowledge is known by few. These are usually the senior men of the clan. This is compared to “outside” which could also be translated as public. In this sense an “outside” painting exhibits designs that there is no restriction on who may see the meaning. The importance of “inside” and “outside” to an understanding of how Yolngu use paintings to communicate ownership of the land is that paintings do not remain fixed in either group. That is to say an
"inside" painting may become "outside" or vice versa. Paintings may contain elements from both groups. For example, a painting may be sold to a tourist and an "outside" story may accompany the painting but the same design may also have an "inside" story that is only revealed on the ceremony ground (Morphy, 1991, p.78 to 90).

In my opinion there is no difference in the importance of a design for the community whether it appears on a painting sold to a tourist, used in a ceremony or reproduced on a postage stamp. The difference comes from the other portions that complete the meaning of the design for Aboriginal people. These portions are story, song and dance. A design reproduced on a postage stamp has no other portions of the meaning available. A design sold to a tourist may be sold with an outside version of the accompanying story. Whereas the design used in a ceremony would enable all of the other portions of meaning to be demonstrated.

There is one more point that Morphy makes in his book that is of importance to my thesis. This is the notion that Yolngu designs (in particular those designs that are reproduced on bark paintings) are meaningful objects regardless of where they may be seen. For example, a painting that is given to a Prime Minister while visiting the Yolngu area serves as a means for Yolngu people to express to the leader of the Australian Government how the land is owned by them. This can be compared to a painting that is produced in ceremony which demonstrates among the clan how they own the land. This same painting may also demonstrate to other clans the producing clan's ownership of the land. It follows therefore that it still would have meaning for the Yolngu if reproduced on a postage stamp. The implication for my own research is that I believe that Aboriginal designs when reproduced on postage stamps must still have meaning for Aboriginal people.
Although it is clear that Howard Morphy was influenced by Nancy Munn, he is distinguished from Munn by seeing designs as part of an economy of knowledge. Perhaps of more importance is that Munn regarded meaning of designs as an aspect of "the system". Whereas the citation from one of Morphy's chief informants "One small dot, too many meanings" (Morphy, 1991, p.143) could not have been within Munn's conspectus. Therefore the emphasis of Munn on iconography can be described as grammatical, which in this case, refers to the interpretation of the standard forms and the rules for their reproduction, whereas Morphy views this as an economy of knowledge (Basil Sansom, personal communication October 2, 1998).

Howard Morphy and Ian Keen both refer to an economy of knowledge and this is not surprising as both did fieldwork among the Yolngu in the 1970's and were both writing up their theses at the same time which in the words of Howard Morphy, allowed for a "continual exchange of ideas" (Morphy, 1991, p.xvi). According to Ian Keen, the Yolngu did not isolate a domain and label it with a term synonymous with religion. Rather Keen understands religion in Yolngu communities to mean categories, beliefs, and practices which refer to or invoke "wangarr" (totemic ancestors) and related beings. Things connected with "wangarr" such as objects, designs, songs, dances and species are all seen as "madayin" (sacred) and the related practices are "rom" which means (right practice or the way). Thus it is should not be surprising that religion did and still does penetrate all aspects of Yolngu social life (Keen, 1994, p.2). While the Yolngu understand knowledge to come from their word "marnggi" (which is said to translate "to know" or "knowledgeable"). Thus in Yolngu communities a person becomes knowledgeable of something by experiencing it while to demonstrate that one was knowledgeable entailed saying something or acting in some way.

This leads to the first theme from Ian Keen's 1994 book Knowledge and
Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion which is concerned with the control of knowledge. The first aspect according to Keen is that there is a possibility of a person gaining experience of various kinds including the seeing and hearing of events and objects and an explanation of these events or objects. The second aspect is the constraints on a person’s disposition to demonstrate the results of their experience and to show that they are knowledgeable, by telling a story, performing a dance or (of relevance to my thesis) by the production of a painting. In the opinion of Keen such expressions are all context dependent (Keen, 1994, p.2).

The chapter of Ian Keen’s book which has had the most influence on the writing of this thesis is chapter seven. Within this chapter Keen raises a number of points which I will now outline. The first is that Yolngu men control access to knowledge not only through exclusion from, and admission to, esoteric aspects of performances in which secrecy involved the control of space, but also through secret interpretation of song and designs (Keen, 1994, p.226). In Keen’s opinion, Yolngu men performed and realised some of these (dances, songs, stories and designs) in public, emphasising perhaps the ignorance of those without access to knowledge of the secret significance and to the privilege of those with inside knowledge. The importance of this point to my own research is that although I have researched the use of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps, these designs are only one portion of the knowledge that is the property of Aboriginal people. Of course the other portions are the dance, song and story.

The second point that Keen makes concerns the notion of knowledge being classified as “inside” (secret) or “outside” (public). While this concept was also discussed by Howard Morphy, Keen, however, “outlines” that Yolngu ceremonies are “machines for interpretation”, each created as an artifact with an open content, capable of a multiplicity of interpretations, depending on the
knowledge, experience and dispositions of the interpreter, as well as on the context in which the interpretations are made (Keen, 1994, p. 230). As Howard Morphy points out any final division of Yolngu knowledge into "inside" and "outside" domains would be an oversimplification, for what was secret and what was public has changed over time (Morphy, 1991, p. 76 & 77).

The third point that Keen raises concerns the secret codes in designs. Yolngu designs encode meanings in the context of a revelatory system of knowledge in which knowledge of certain "levels" of meaning is restricted to a few individuals, and in which knowledge of the meanings of paintings varied according to an individual's status. However, the levels of "inside" and "outside" interpretation were relative rather than absolute. This leads to the fourth and final point that Keen raises and that is of importance to my research, which is concerned with the control of knowledge. In his book Keen agrees with Morphy that the ownership of knowledge is controlled by factors of age, gender, clan identity and kin relations. Therefore this impacts on who is allowed to produce or perform an item (painting, dance, song or story), who could hear or see the item, who told whom about it and what information was imparted (Keen, 1994, p. 244).

The overall importance of the work by Ian Keen is that it synchronises with the work of Howard Morphy and together these works allow for a theoretical perspective on the ownership of knowledge (which these anthropologists see as belonging to an economy of knowledge) that is central to any contemporary study on Aboriginal creativity.

Other anthropologists have raised a range of different points in their studies of Aboriginal creativity. In the following chapter (chapter 3) I will discuss some of these, to demonstrate how various anthropologists place importance on different aspects when studying Aboriginal creativity.
Chapter 3: Literature Review.

In this literature review I will examine two separate but equally important bodies of literature. The first body of literature is anthropological material that focusses on Aboriginal creativity. The second body of literature offers a perspective from several Aboriginal Australians on some of the issues that they believe impact on Aboriginal creativity, in particular the use of Aboriginal designs without the permission of the artist and the other people who have rights in the design. However, I will start this literature review by discussing the literature that examines postage stamps.

During my research I did not find any anthropological literature which examines the use of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps. However, I did find one book that examines Australian postage stamps from an historical perspective. This is Humphrey McQueen's book *Image, design and ideology in Australian postage stamps* which he authored after he presented a lecture of the same title as the 1987 Jillian Bradshaw Memorial Lecture at the Curtin University of Technology. In his lecture, McQueen, a Marxist historian, considered how women, unions and Aboriginal Australia had been represented on postage stamps. The focus of McQueen on Aboriginal Australia was that he examined the representation of Aboriginal Australia as a people rather than the examples of Aboriginal creativity that had been released up until 1987. The importance of McQueen's work for my own research is that I have drawn on some of McQueen's comments on representation.

Anthropological material on Aboriginal creativity.

The range of anthropological material available on Aboriginal creativity is enormous and it would be impossible to adequately review all of it. Therefore I have elected to discuss a number of themes that in my opinion are central to the study of Aboriginal creativity and which I have extracted from a range of sources.
The first theme that I have extracted from the anthropological material and which has influenced my research is that Aboriginal creativity according to Professor Ronald Berndt is basically utilitarian. By this, he meant that it is specifically planned to have some use, some direct or indirect purpose, or effect (Berndt, 1964, p. 7). In essence, Ronald Berndt is referring to the religious use of or purpose of Aboriginal creativity. The notion that Aboriginal creativity is religious has been examined by a number of anthropologists (see Berndt, Berndt & Stanton, 1982; A.P Elkin, 1964; Anderson and Dussart, 1988 and Edwards, 1996). Therefore in my opinion it is fair to say that a design does not lose its religious significance simply because it is reproduced on a postage stamp.

The perception that Aboriginal creativity is religious has also been examined in the essay "The Religious Sources of Australian Aboriginal Art" by Max Charlesworth. The core of the essay by Charlesworth is that Aboriginal creativity whether labelled traditional or contemporary is religious. According to Charlesworth, Aboriginal creativity is religious through and through due to its purpose being religious, its motifs being religious and its practice being religious. Charlesworth notes that although Aboriginal people do produce creativity for a non-Aboriginal market it is still religious due to the artist drawing upon "traditional motivations, symbols and images in a deeply creative way" (Charlesworth, 1991, p. 111). In order to give credence to his view Charlesworth compares Aboriginal creativity to the paintings from early Renaissance Europe. The argument of Charlesworth is that if the art from the early Renaissance Europe is religious and is accepted as such then the same applies to Aboriginal creativity (Charlesworth, 1991, p. 111). The importance of Aboriginal creativity having a religious purpose is that when it is reproduced on a postage stamp the ritual purpose and the religious meaning for Aboriginal people does not cease to exist.
The second theme that is further affirmed in my reading of the anthropological material is that Aboriginal designs are owned. The concept that Aboriginal designs are owned refers to the fact that designs are the property of Aboriginal clans and that members have rights to these designs. This point has been discussed by Michaels, (1994) who outlines that for the Walpiri artists the designs that an artist may use are predetermined, one earns rights to paint certain pre-existing designs, not to introduce new designs (Michaels, 1994, p.145). This point is also discussed by Anderson and Dussart who outline how Aboriginal people acquire rights in designs that include the right to paint a design and to discuss the meaning of a painting (Anderson and Dussart, 1988, p.94 & 95).

The third key theme from the anthropological material that has influenced my research is the fact that Aboriginal creativity is land based. This proposition has been discussed by a large number of anthropologists (see Berndt, Berndt & Stanton, 1982 and Sutton, 1988). However, this notion has also been discussed by art historians including Judith Ryan (see Ryan, 1993), as well as other Australians interested in Aboriginal studies including the study of Aboriginal creativity. This includes the lawyer, Father Frank Brennan who has discussed this theme in his essay “Sharing the Land: Land Rights and the Spirituality of Aboriginal Art”. The core idea of Brennan’s essay is that Aboriginal creativity, in particular paintings, show ownership of the land. More often than not when a purchaser of a piece of Aboriginal creativity asks what it means they are told by the artist or the art dealer that “This is my Country”. On the surface this appears simple enough, however, what a painting is doing for the artists is revealing their and their communities’ ownership of their land. Production of the painting on canvas has become a “new” way to care for country, discharging the primary spiritual obligations for the land, rendering its beauty and power tangible to those who are “tongueless and earless” (Brennan, 1991, p.119) towards this other world of meaning and significance. Therefore it is my opinion that Aboriginal designs that have been reproduced on postage
stamps still retain a connection to the land and may also be a "new" way to care for country.

The fourth and final theme that I have derived from the anthropological literate is that Aboriginal creativity belongs to a system of communication. The communication system does not only consist of designs but also song, story and dance. The idea that Aboriginal creativity belongs to a communication system has been investigated by a number of anthropologists (see Berndt, Berndt & Stanton, 1982 and Faulstich, 1993). Paul Faulstich in his essay "You Read 'im This country: Landscape, Self and Art in an Aboriginal community" discusses how paintings for the Walpiri make profound statements about the world and the place of humans within it. These paintings also allow for storing and recalling information about the land, its resources and sacred myths (Faulstich, 1993 p.155). The fact that paintings belong to a communication system allows members who have acquired the knowledge to read the various levels of meaning contained within a painting (Faulstich, 1993, p.156). I believe that the knowledge associated with a design does not simply cease to exist when the design is used in another way. Therefore if an Aboriginal design is reproduced on a postage stamp then it still communicates knowledge and meaning to the artist's community. I will now move on to review the literature that offers an Aboriginal perspective.

Aboriginal viewpoints on the use of designs.

In his essay "Modernity and Indigenous Culture", (1994), Tom Mosby (who is a Torres Strait Islander), states that the basis of Aboriginal paintings from the Western Desert lies in the range of signs and symbols which come from the Tjukurrpa (the Dreaming). The artists draw inspiration from these signs and symbols while painting. The use of these signs and symbols are controlled by an intricate system of family and cultural rules and infringements can result in severe penalties (Mosby, 1994, p.54). With regard to the research
that I have undertaken on Aboriginal designs that has been reproduced on postage stamps, the Australian Postal Corporation in the series from 1988 onwards has named the artists of designs as individuals. While this reflects who has painted the design in question, it fails to acknowledge the range of other Aboriginal Australians that could have a right to the design and the other portions of the knowledge linked to the design such as a dance, song and story.

The second proposition advanced by Mosby is that although the Western Desert painting movement has brought many benefits, it has also exposed the various cultures of the area to the illegal theft and appropriation of their signs and symbols. Historically non-Aboriginal artists have been influenced by Aboriginal designs. In his essay Mosby cites the example of Margaret Preston, an important artist in Australia's post-impressionist art movement, who often used Aboriginal designs in her work and pushed the view that Aboriginal designs should be the foundation of a national art movement. Although Preston claimed to have realised the importance of the spirituality in Aboriginal designs, she maintained that the association between Aboriginal designs and spirituality should be ignored by Western students of Aboriginal art. This disassociation of its spirituality can easily be seen as a trivialisation of Aboriginal culture. While Preston held these views in the 1920's and 1930's, they are still used today by non-Aboriginal people who steal or have misappropriated Aboriginal designs (Mosby, 1994, p.58). This point has impacted upon my research because Australia Post for the 1971 "Aboriginal Art" series of postage stamps misappropriated Aboriginal designs by having a non-Aboriginal designer produce the postage stamps.

A third important point made by Mosby relates to the theft and appropriation of designs by other Aboriginal people. Some Aboriginal urban artists, who claim to have lost their own cultural heritage have sometimes misappropriated
designs that belong to other communities. The act of appropriation could be interpreted as a reassertion of their Aboriginal heritage, or negatively, as another case of illegal reproduction, even though in the innocent belief that it is permissible (Mosby, 1994, p. 59). A case that involved such a set of circumstances was when Gordon Bennett, an Urban artist who lives in Brisbane, used the "Mimi" spirit figure and the custodians of the "Mimi" spirit dancers claimed that Bennett had offended the "Mimi" spirit dancers because Bennett used the design without the permission of the custodians of the design (Mosby, 1994, p. 59). After this incident Bennett said "You must understand my position of having no designs or images or stories on which to base my Aboriginality. In just three generations that heritage has been lost". Since that time Bennett has vowed never again to appropriate Aboriginal images (Mosby, 1994, p. 59).

The ownership of designs is taken up by Linda Ford (a member of the Rak Mak Mak Marranunggus-Marra Walgut language group, from the Darwin hinterland) in her article "An Indigenous Perspective on Intellectual Property" (Aboriginal Law Bulletin Vol 3 No. 90 March 1997). Ford outlines differences in the way intellectual property law is understood in Western societies and Aboriginal societies. The particular importance of this article to my research is that Ford notes that Western societies place emphasis on the individual as the "owner" of intellectual property, whereas Aboriginal societies place importance on the group "ownership" of intellectual property.

Linked to this notion is that Aboriginal people can have varying rights in intellectual property. Thus while one artist may produce a painting that is to be reproduced as a postage stamp, there could be a number of other people who also have the right to produce that design, to discuss the meaning of the design or to restrict the production of the design in question. However, the significance for the primary custodians (of the intellectual property owned by
Aboriginal people) is land, not how non-Aboriginal people view land. But rather individual sites and objects which includes the songs, paintings, ceremonies and stories that belong to the site or object. Thus it is not just the geographical land but all the flora, fauna and other natural elements of the land that was left to the primary custodians by the Ancestral beings during the Dreaming (Ford, 1997, p.13). The importance of this article is that it offers an Aboriginal perspective on what Intellectual Property Law means for Aboriginal people as the primary custodians of their land.

Wally Caruana (an Aboriginal Australian who is also the Curator of Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra) in his book Aboriginal Art (1993) outlines how Aboriginal creativity, in particular paintings, is an expression of knowledge, and hence a statement of authority. Through the use of ancestrally inherited designs, artists assert their identity, and their rights and responsibilities in each design that has been individually produced (Caruana, 1993, p.15). Ownership of designs is similar to western notions of copyright only in Aboriginal communities designs are owned by the collective rather than as with Western society where designs are owned by the individual (Caruana, 1993, p.15). With regard to Aboriginal designs that have been reproduced on postage stamps, Australia Post has consulted the individual artist as the copyright owner of the painting, which has resulted in Australia Post failing to recognise that other Aboriginal people may have rights in the design. This could include the right to discuss the full meaning of the design in question or to restrict its reproduction on a postage stamp.

A second issue that Aboriginal people believe is important in the study of Aboriginal creativity is the current copyright legislation which dates from 1968. In the article "The Carpet Case" (Aboriginal Law Bulletin Vol 3 No.72 February 1995) by Terri Janke (an Aboriginal Australian who is employed as a lawyer by the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association Inc.) discusses the
court case heard before Justice Von Doussa of Milpurruru & Others v Indofurn Pty Limited & Others (1994) 54 FCR 240 which is known as “The Carpet Case”. The importance of The Carpet Case is that it was the first time that a court in Australia had awarded damages to Aboriginal plaintiffs for the cultural harm that occurred due to a copyright infringement. Also, The Carpet Case is a prime example of how Aboriginal artists as individuals have used the current copyright legislation to protect their intellectual property. All the artists involved had had their designs turned into carpets at a Vietnamese factory without their permission (Janke, 1995, p.36). The most important issue that Janke raises in her article is with regard to Aboriginal concepts of ownership of designs. Under Aboriginal law, the right to create artwork depicting creation or Dreaming stories and to use preexisting designs resides with the traditional owners as the custodians of the images.

The traditional owners as a collective determine whether images may be used in artwork, by whom the artwork may be created, and the terms, if any, on which they may be reproduced (Janke, 1995, p.37). The extent to which an artwork can be reproduced will depend on its status as a public story available to all or a private one which may contain Ancestral beings and their power. Of course many pieces of artwork will and can contain elements of both public and private knowledge with only those initiated into the relevant ceremonies being able to recognise the private side of the artwork (Janke, 1995, p.37). What is important for Aboriginal people is that as when a published design that is misappropriated by a third person (who in this situation turns it into a carpet) it is the custodian who, under Aboriginal law, is held responsible (Janke, 1995, p.37).

While the above article by Terri Janke discusses how Aboriginal people have used the current copyright legislation to assert their rights other Aboriginal Australians believe there is a need for legislative reform. This approach is
taken up by Michael Mansell (who is an Aboriginal Australian from Tasmania and a lawyer) in his essay titled "Barricading Our Last Frontier - Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights". (1997). Mansell examines the lack of protection that current legislation offers to Aboriginal culture and intellectual property. Mansell discusses how the current copyright legislation fails to recognise the rights of communities to protect examples of creativity such as rock carvings and paintings from being used without proper permission.

Currently the copyright legislation fails to protect such examples of Aboriginal creativity. A photograph taken of a rock painting gives a property right to the owner of the photograph, but not the community which created the rock painting that has been photographed. Where Aboriginal creativity exists in the form of a rock painting it is not clear who the original artist was. Thus the rock art is not protected under the current copyright laws of Australia. In the current legislation the fact that in many cases these sites of rock paintings are still cared for by their Aboriginal custodians (such as in the case of many galleries of the "Wandjinas") is ignored. (Mansell, 1997, p.203 &204). Aboriginal artists on many occasions reproduce the designs from sites of rock paintings onto a canvas with permission from the custodians and only then is the painting is covered by the copyright laws. (Mansell, 1997, p.203 &204).

According to Mansell an artist taking refuge in the current copyright laws can create just as many problems for his/her community as are presently solved by legal provisions. Mansell gives the example of the "Wandjina" surfboard dispute in which an Aboriginal Australian gave permission for the "Wandjina" to be used on a surfboard. The Aboriginal group that has the "Wandjina" as part of its intellectual property was not able to claim property rights in order to prevent the commercialisation of the sacred painting, nor could they legally exercise control over one of their group who as an individual gave permission for the use of a design that in Aboriginal perceptions is
owned by the group as a collective (Mansell, 1997, P.205).

In relation to postage stamps, when the Australian Postal Corporation (henceforth Australia Post) released a series of postage stamps that featured examples of rock paintings and carvings, Australia Post consulted with Aboriginal organisations that were recognised as the custodians of the sites in question. I could, however, find no detail in the archives of Australia Post as to whether Australia Post then understood the notion of designs being owned by communities or whether it was a simply an attempt to protect themselves by being able to say that permission was sought and granted for the use of these examples of Aboriginal creativity. Also I could not find any detail as to how Australia Post knew which community to consult, although in the past Australia Post had discussed proposed releases with the Department for Aboriginal Affairs, it is reasonable to suggest that this government department could have supplied the information. Later in this thesis I will discuss as a case study a postage stamp that reproduces a rock painting site that features a “Wandjina”.

The final point that I have found important from the reading of a number of articles that offer an Aboriginal perspective deals with the meaning of paintings to Aboriginal people. It is my opinion that the best quote that expresses the meaning of paintings to Aboriginal people comes from Galarrwuy Yunupingu who said:

When we paint - whether it is on our bodies for ceremony or canvas for the market - we are not painting for fun or profit. We are painting as we have always done to demonstrate our continuing links with our country and the rights and responsibilities we have for it. Further, we paint to show the rest of the world that we own this country, and that the country owns us. Our painting is a political act (cited in: Mackinolty, 1994, p.11).
While the above quote outlines the importance of designs, in particular paintings, to Aboriginal people it has also influenced my research into Aboriginal designs that have been reproduced on postage stamps. Yunupingu words raise a question for my research, which is whether the meaning of a painting for Aboriginal people is not lost or altered when it is reproduced on a postage stamp.

In my opinion, the themes raised by the anthropologists and the Aboriginal writers overlap. However, there is a difference as the anthropologists are accounting for the importance of designs in Aboriginal communities, whereas the Aboriginal Australians discuss these themes while also outlining how the present laws need to be changed to better protect Aboriginal creativity from theft.
Chapter 4: Methodology and Ethical Dilemmas

This chapter has two related themes. These are (i) the methodology that I have employed in the writing of this thesis and (ii) the ethical dilemmas that I have encountered throughout my Honours years. I discuss methodology and then turn to the ethical dilemmas that I have faced throughout the year.

Methodology

Although this work is based on archival research and considers historical changes in the attitude towards Aboriginal designs, I have approached the material collected asking anthropological questions. In order to create the data base of material that I have used to write this thesis, I conducted research in the archives of the Australian Postal Corporation (henceforth in this chapter Australia Post). During my time at Australia Post I was able to read and then photocopy the archival files that were available on the various series of postage stamps that focussed on Aboriginal creativity. It is my belief that no material was withheld by Australia Post. When I arrived at Australia Post, I wanted to focus on what the various artists had told Australia Post about what the designs meant to them as artists. I wondered whether the knowledge associated with the design that their community owned had been disclosed to Australia Post.

I also had an interest in how the artist came to be able to produce the design in question as well as if people other than the artist who had rights in each design had been consulted by Australia Post. I was also interested as to whether the design was seen by the artist and their community as a sign of their ownership of the land. However, I was unable to find any information that would have allowed for the writing of a thesis that focussed on that topic. I also had an interest in the issue of copyright and the impact on the artist within that artist’s community if a design was reproduced without the artist’s permission. I therefore chose to focus on issues such as the ownership of knowledge and
the difference of a design being used on a postage stamp and a carpet.

To be able to gauge a range of opinions on the finally chosen topic I also contacted a number of organisations. These included the Museum of Victoria, the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre and Papunya Tula Artists. Unfortunately I only received a reply from the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre. As I have mentioned before in order to see whether the topic of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps had been researched before and whether the basic idea I had for this thesis was anthropologically based I contacted a number of anthropologists who had previously researched Aboriginal creativity. These included Professor Howard Morphy, Professor Nancy Munn and Professor Fred Myers. As I have already remarked I was able to read and take notes from the court transcript from the Carpet Case. The vast range of literature on Aboriginal creativity also helped in the writing of this thesis.

There are a number of series of postage stamps which feature Aboriginal designs produced between 1948 and 1997. In this thesis I have elected to examine five individual postage stamps from these series as case studies. The case studies were selected on the basis that firstly each painting was on a different material (rock, canvas and bark). Secondly there was a selection of anthropological literature on each painting or community available to support the data I found in the archives of Australia Post. Also a range of stamps and series was chosen in order to ensure that designs from different parts of Australia and from various time periods were included. Perhaps the most important point is that each stamp or series raises a different set of issues for discussion. For example the Kimberley rock painting which features an Ancestral being is not protected by Australian copyright law but is still cared for by Aboriginal people (Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre, personal communication 17 April, 1998). The Arnhem Land bark painting was part of the Carpet Case which was the first court case to award damages to
Aboriginal plaintiffs for the cultural harm that occurred when their designs were illegally reproduced. The question of why 1993 saw so many series of postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity released was another interesting question that I discovered during my time at the archives of Australia Post.

The data that I collected from the archives of Australia Post was also analysed in order to allow for the discussion on whether Australia Post has demonstrated an awareness of the implications of using Aboriginal paintings on postage stamps. The data was also analysed to see whether there had been changes in the practices by Australia Post on how paintings are selected for use on a postage stamp and the view of Australia Post on each series. A central part of this was to see if there was any level of involvement by Aboriginal Australians.

**Ethical Dilemmas.**

I first became truly aware of the ethics that are involved in the writing of a thesis such as this one, when I wrote to Justice Von Doussa, Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, for permission to read and take notes from the court transcript from *Milpurrurru and Others v Indofurn Pty Ltd and Others* (1994) 54 FCR 240. As I have already noted, this case is referred to as The Carpet Case. Upon reading the court transcript, I quickly became aware of the ethical considerations related to undertaking such a program of research. This was due to the fact that within the transcript a number of the witnesses gave evidence without realising that such evidence in the future may be read by a party unrelated to the court action. This is because generally speaking it is only parties to the action who may access the transcripts even though the presiding judge may, and in this case did, give access to the transcript. Thus by giving evidence Aboriginal people may not have considered the situation of a person reading their evidence that contained knowledge that is of a secret / sacred nature and that under Aboriginal Law the reader might not have been
During my research I have faced other ethical questions by gaining access to archival files from Australia Post. The ethical question relates to how one should use these sources. This is because they are historical and contain words and ideas that are now known to be upsetting to Aboriginal communities. A clear example arises from the "Aboriginal art" postage stamp series released in September 1971. Aboriginal people did not design the stamps and the images were appropriated in what is now considered a culturally insensitive manner. The owners of the actual paintings or the custodians of the designs were not asked whether it was appropriate to reproduce these designs on postage stamps. Of equal concern is the fact that some Aboriginal people now hold the opinion that government archives which contain information concerning Aboriginal people should not be open to the public. This has to do with the issue that Government archival files of a historical nature do not contain a voice from Aboriginal Australia, and often refer to Aboriginal Australians in words that are now known to be hurtful to Aboriginal Australians. Australia Post holds the view that it is material that belongs to Australia Post and that it should be made available to people conducting research.

During my research I sought evidence that Australia Post had an awareness of some of the protocols which relate to the ownership of knowledge within Aboriginal societies. The evidence appeared within the archival file for the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series (1971) that contained a sealed envelope which stated that the material within was of a secret-sacred nature and that it is not to be reproduced on postage stamps. There are also restrictions on the material being used on any display or other public venues, and that it was not to be viewed by women. What this seems to demonstrate is that, although Australia Post may not have had a full awareness of the inappropriateness of having a non-Aboriginal designer use Aboriginal designs without
permission from the owners of the example in question, they did understand that some material is very important in Aboriginal societies and that only certain members of the Aboriginal society in question may see and discuss such material. While I could have easily opened the envelope to view the material I made an ethical decision not to based on the fact that the envelope was marked as containing restricted material.

Within the field of Aboriginal Studies, in particular study that is anthropologically based, there are some general points on ethics of which students should have an awareness. The first of these points is that there is a gendered division of knowledge in Aboriginal societies. There is knowledge that is "Men's business" and knowledge that is "Women's business" (Bell, 1990, p.238). Linked to this point is that knowledge is owned and that the authority to speak on an issue could also be determined by the position a person has reached within in the religious life as well as membership in the appropriate clan group (Berndt and Berndt, 1996, p.296). With direct reference to Aboriginal designs that have been reproduced on postage stamps, the right to discuss fully what the design means within its Aboriginal context might be restricted by any combination of factors or determinants that I have mentioned.

The second point is that the knowledge sought by the student may be "inside" (secret/sacred with the right to speak available to senior members of the society) or "outside" (with few restrictions on whom within the society may speak on the topic). Perhaps the most important aspect of this point is that knowledge can and does move between these two discourses (Morphy, 1991, p.78 & 79). In relation to the research that I have undertaken, a design may have a "inside" version with its full meaning revealed on the ceremony ground but it could also have an "outside" version that may be reproduced on a postage stamp.
The third and final point is that all students in the field of Aboriginal Studies need to have an awareness of the range of taboos within various Aboriginal societies. These taboos may include certain sacred objects not being able to be seen by those uninitiated into the "Law" and the avoidance of using the names of deceased members of the community in question (Sansom, 1980, p. 114 & 115). In this thesis I have made a decision not to use the names of Aboriginal people whom I know are deceased.
Chapter 5: Changing Perceptions of Aboriginal creativity.

At this point I would like to outline my use of the term designs (also creativity) rather than Art (whether with or without a capital). I have done this in order to avoid the academic debate that often surrounds the importance that is placed on pieces of "Art" in western societies and how these pieces are then analysed by art historians rather than anthropologists. As I have adopted an anthropological approach in this thesis I have elected to avoid the above debate as it is not central to the direction of this thesis. However, in this chapter I will briefly outline the changes in the perception towards Aboriginal creativity by both anthropologists and art historians. I do this in order to provide the context within which discussions about putting Aboriginal designs on postage stamps must be read.

Philip Jones notes that over the past century the perception of what many still term "primitive art" has altered fundamentally (Jones, 1988, p.143). Nowhere has this shift in opinion been more apparent than in discussions on the various forms of creativity of Aboriginal Australians. In the early part of the twentieth century examples of creativity by peoples from Africa, North America, Oceania and Aboriginal Australia were seen in ethnology museums and in the "primitive art" sections of major art galleries (Jones, 1988, p.143). Today the various forms of creativity by people from Africa, North America and Oceania remain in ethnology museums and in the "primitive art" sections of major art galleries while examples of creativity by Aboriginal Australians, at least in Australian art galleries, hang along side the works of non-Aboriginal artists (Jones, 1988, p.143).

The exact starting point for a discussion on the changing perceptions of Aboriginal creativity would never be agreed to by all scholars who have an interest on the subject. I have elected to start my discussion with Sir Baldwin Spencer's field trip to Oenpelli. In 1912 Sir Baldwin Spencer ventured to
Oenpelli and commissioned Aboriginal people to produce twelve bark paintings. These paintings were purchased on behalf of the National Museum of Victoria (Caruana, 1993, p. 19). According to Mountford the importance of the trip to Oenpelli by Spencer is "that he (Spencer) was interested in the mythology that was behind the designs within the bark paintings rather than simply attempting to evaluate the bark paintings from an aesthetic position" (Mountford, 1964, p. 21). This is a shift in the sense that before Spencer's trip to Oenpelli examples of Aboriginal creativity were usually collected as curios that were understood as having little meaning to Aboriginal people. However, in the period of time when Spencer was attempting to inform the Australian public that Aboriginal Australians produced various forms of creativity, the picture was different in Europe. In 1919 at a Paris exhibition that included works by people from Africa and North America with none from Australia, the organisers characterised Aboriginal Australians as a people without art (Peltier, 1984, p. 109).

In the years after the Oenpelli trip of Spencer, a number of other anthropologists such as Walter Roth, Ursula McConnel, Donald Thomson, Norman Tindale and Ronald & Catherine Berndt started or continued to collect examples of the various forms of creativity produced by Aboriginal Australians. These collections in many instances became the property of the many public museums around Australia, including the National Museum of Victoria. The National Museum of Victoria held its first exhibition of Aboriginal creativity in 1929. This exhibition included the bark paintings that Spencer had collected at Oenpelli in 1912 (Caruana, 1993, p. 19).

The next important date in the study of the creativity of Aboriginal Australia was the year 1937 when the American ethnographer Daniel Davidson released his work *A Preliminary Consideration of Aboriginal Australian Art* which was published by the American Philosophical Society. As with Norman
Tindale's tribal map of Australia, prepared in the same period, Davidson's map of the distribution of art styles within distinct culture areas helped to focus scholarly and public attention on Aboriginal creativity as a field of study in its own right (Jones, 1988, p.158).

Thus it is not surprising that around this time a number of graduate students such as Olive Pink, Ursula McConnel, and Frederick McCarthy from the Anthropology Department at the University of Sydney began to study Aboriginal creativity. This was in the early period of the leadership of A.P. Elkin and he coordinated a great deal of the first professional research on Aboriginal creativity during the 1930's and 1940's. He was also responsible in his own right for several important studies on the subject. Among the most famous of Elkin's students were Ronald and Catherine Berndt who during many fieldwork trips to Arnhem Land collected over four hundred bark paintings and the stories connected to the paintings (Mountford, 1964, p.21). At this point in time Aboriginal creativity was studied as being linked to its cultural context.

In 1941 creativity by Aboriginal Australians started to receive official government sanction when as part of the "Art of Australia" exhibition that toured the United States of America and Canada eleven bark paintings by Aboriginal artists as well as three pen drawings by the Aboriginal artist Tommy Barnes (also known as McRae) were included in the exhibition (Tuckson, 1964, p.63). It should be pointed out that the general approach to Aboriginal creativity was that it belonged in the ethnographic museum rather than in an art gallery. Part of the reason for this rests with a number of anthropologists who stressed the religious and social functions of Aboriginal creativity (Jones, 1988, p.171). It was publications by the likes of Elkin (1950), McConnel (1935), Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1957) which contributed to the prevailing view that for Aboriginal creativity to be authentic, it was produced only with sincerity and serious intent and that art for art's sake was inapplicable as a description. As Ronald
Berndt wrote in 1973 "No Aboriginal art is introvert, planned solely as an exercise in individual expression or dissertation on the mental or emotional state of the particular artist." (Berndt and Phillips, 1973, p.36). The point that Ronald Berndt is trying to make is that Aboriginal people produce examples of creativity that have a purpose (to the community) and that there is a set of rules which dictate who may produce what, who can discuss the designs and who can allow or stop a design from being used. Therefore Aboriginal people do not produce "Art for art's sake".

The only notable voice that opined that Aboriginal people did create "art for art's sake" was that of C.P Mountford. The stance of Mountford can be seen partly as a reaction against the analytical trend in Australian professional anthropology of the period. It can also be explained by the fact that Mountford occupied an ambiguous position between the disciplines of art history and anthropology and was regarded as a gifted amateur in both fields never having taken studies at a graduate level within a university. However, Elkin in 1938 did appear to at least flirt with the idea that Aboriginal people do produce "art for art's sake" when he wrote the following passage:

"We can say that the Aborigines do possess an aesthetic sense....But it is not easy for us to decide what degree they distinguish beauty for its own sake from its religious or magical significance...I do not deny, however, that some objects may be beautiful (painted or engraved) just to make them pretty according to the particular tribal pattern; nor that the individual may, through fancy, inspiration, or the vision vouchsafed in a dream vary the accepted pattern" (cited in Sansom, 1995, p.259.)

But generally Elkin and his students such as Ronald Berndt found it easier to accept the religious purpose of Aboriginal creativity, than to accept the notion of "art for art's sake" applying to Aboriginal Australia.
The emergence of Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsberg school of painting in the late 1930's and which peaked in the 1950's saw a brief flurry of public interest in the luminous watercolours of the Central Desert landscape. According to Michael O’Ferrall "the public adulation given to Albert Namatjira and the presentation of citizenship to him, it is not clear whether the adulation was entirely due to the his paintings being seen as “art”, or to a myopic western ethnocentrism that favoured anything that seemed similar" (O’Ferrall, 1989, p.7). What is often seen as the problematic nature of the work by Namatjira, is that at the time of its production, it was perceived as lacking Aboriginality. Thus neither anthropologists nor art historians of the period paid serious attention to the Hermannsberg school, and by the late 1960’s it had faded into a category of “passe popular kitsch” 2 (O’Ferrall, 1989,p.7). In a reverse to this situation, twenty years later, the work of Namatjira has undergone a reappraisal in the art world and in the auction houses 3 (O’Ferrall, 1989,p.7).

While many may not agree with the date that I have selected, I believe that the products of Aboriginal creativity started to be accepted as objects of “art” rather than artifacts that belonged in the ethnographic section of a museum in 1958. While it is true that in 1956 the Commonwealth made bequests of bark paintings from Arnhem Land to each state art gallery, these bark paintings still were not seen as being pieces of "art" (Tuckson, 1964,p.63). It was actually left to two figures of the Sydney art world to promote Aboriginal creativity as “art” rather than as ethnographic artifacts. These figures were Mr. Tony Tuckson, the then curator of paintings at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Mr. Stuart Scougall, a leading orthopedic surgeon in Sydney and a collector of

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2 However, Albert Namatjira was recognised by the Postmaster General’s Department as one of the great Australian artists with his portrait being part of the Famous Australian series released in the November of 1968 (ASC 239).

3 The final part of the reappraisal occurred when Australia Post released two Albert Namatjira paintings on postage stamps (ASC 1122 and ASC 1123) as part of its program to feature Australian art on releases for Australia Day. In this thesis I have used Stamps of Australia edited by Peter Steele in order to provide the Australian Stamp Catalogue (henceforth ASC) numbers for all postage stamps discussed in this thesis.
contemporary Australian art (Jones, 1988, p. 175). In 1958 (and again in 1959) Tuckson and Scougall mounted expeditions to Arnhem Land with the prime aim of collecting examples of Aboriginal creativity. On the 1959 trip they were accompanied by Dorothy Bennett, who later became a major figure in the Aboriginal art-marketing business, and a collector of Aboriginal works. She was also to help in the collecting of bark paintings for the 1982 Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series released by the then Australian Postal Commission.

The Tuckson and Scougall expeditions were the first to see the acquisition of examples of Aboriginal creativity as being art rather than anthropological data (Caruana, 1993, p. 20). It is my opinion that much of the changing perceptions towards Aboriginal creativity has been a struggle between museums and art galleries. This is because anthropologists since Spencer have been interested in the sociocultural relevance of the various examples of creativity such as bark paintings. Whereas others (such as art historians) approach Aboriginal creativity from the viewpoint of the aesthetic evaluation of art, considerations of craftsmanship and technique and emotional impact. There is of course, another issue: Anthropologists seek representative examples of Aboriginal creativity while an art gallery curator seeks a masterpiece. In my opinion the key difference between the two fields of study is that anthropologists want to know what does the design mean and to whom.

In 1961 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies was established. Coupled with the Aboriginal Affairs Department establishing the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1973, the 1970's saw Aboriginal creativity becoming influenced more by the activities of government than by those of museums and individuals. This included government funded art-advisers being employed in a number of Aboriginal art centres (O’Ferrall, 1989, p. 5). In the period since the 1970's in which Aboriginal creativity has been seen as "art" rather than ethn-
graphic artifacts, there have been changes in the understanding of the ownership of knowledge and designs within Aboriginal society. Much of this has occurred due to the fieldwork undertaken by such anthropologists as Howard Morphy, Peter Sutton and Christopher Anderson. However, I also believe that anthropologists still study examples of Aboriginal creativity from the perspective of what does this mean and to whom, that is within its cultural context. Whereas art historians now study Aboriginal creativity as pieces of "art". This includes points such as the artist is an individual and the notion that artists produce what he/she feels like producing.

Therefore while it is clearly appreciated that examples of Aboriginal creativity are now seen as pieces of "art" that can hang beside the works of non-Aboriginal artists rather than as artifacts that belong in museums, the debate concerning on Aboriginal creativity now has a new focus. This concerns the debate on what are examples of authentic Aboriginal creativity. This is best explained by Djon Mundine, an internationally renowned Aboriginal curator, who has said "The problem of contemporary innovations versus classical Aboriginal art has vexed art historians since at least the turn of the century. This has happened in two ways - the refusal to see classical Aboriginal art (bark paintings and sculpture and "dot" paintings) in a contemporary sense, and the refusal until the last ten years to see non-classical, so called "urban art" as true Aboriginal work." (cited in Danzker, 1984, p.61). In this chapter I have briefly outlined the changing perceptions towards Aboriginal creativity.
Chapter 6: An overview of Aboriginal designs on postage stamps.

In this chapter I will provide a summary of the history of Aboriginal designs on Australian postage stamps by outlining each of the significant series of postage stamps releases. However, before I do this I would like to provide a visual chronology. This will reproduce the various series of postage stamps that feature examples of Aboriginal creativity and the key postage stamps which contain an Aboriginal theme within them or representations of Aboriginal Australian as a people. I note here that permission was obtained from Australia Post to reproduce images of postage stamps.

**Visual chronology of postage stamps reproducing Aboriginal creativity discussed in this thesis.**

**Aboriginal Rock Carving.** Released 16 of February, 1948 (ASC 60).

**Aboriginal Art.** Released 29 of September, 1971 (ASC 297 to ASC 300).

**Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance.** Released 17 November, 1982 (ASC 623 to ASC 626).
Australian Bicentennial Collection - The First Australians. Released 7 November, 1984 (ASC 708 to ASC 714).

Art of the Desert - Aboriginal Painting. Released 1 of August, 1988 (ASC 918 to ASC 921).

Dreamings. Released 4 of February, 1993 (ASC 1124 to ASC 1127).

Aboriginal Australia. Released 1 of July, 1993 (ASC 1147 to ASC 1150).

The Dreaming. Released 21 of August, 1997 (ASC 1365 to ASC 1368).

Some of the miscellaneous postage stamps that contain a design inspired in part by Aboriginal creativity or postage stamps that feature Aboriginal Australians.

Sturt Centenary. Released 2 of June, 1930 (ASC 10).

Seventy - Fifth Anniversary of Broken Hill. Released 10 of September, 1958 (ASC 123).


World Heritage Sites. Released 4 of March, 1993 (ASC 1128 to ASC 1131).

World Heritage Areas. Released 14 of March, 1996 (ASC 1278 to ASC 1281).
Later on in the thesis I shall examine a number of these postage stamp series in more detail. However, it is first necessary to sketch the Commonwealth government's role in the release of postage stamps.

Although the Commonwealth came into existence in 1901, and the Post Office (known as the Postmaster General’s Department) was immediately organised on a federal basis, the first Commonwealth postage stamps were not issued until 1913. In the period 1901 to 1913 the existing stamps that had been produced by the former Colonies (which became States upon Federation) were in effect de-facto Commonwealth postage stamps. In fact stamps produced by the Colonies remained valid for postage until the thirteenth of February 1966 the day before Australia switched to decimal currency (McQueen, 1987, p.6).

The long delay in the Commonwealth issuing its first postage stamps is explained by Humphrey McQueen as being due partly to the inefficiency within the Postmaster General’s Department and partly to the political wrangling of the basic design to be adopted (McQueen, 1987, p.6 & 7). At that period a considerable anti-Royalist sentiment existed within Australia and Republicans, who were extremely vocal in Federal politics, strenuously opposed the incorporation of the head of the British Sovereign (first Edward VII and then George V) on Australian stamps. This group managed to carry the day with the result that the first postage stamps were of the kangaroo in the map design, released on the sixteenth of January, 1913. When the Fisher Government was defeated in 1913, one of the first acts of the Cook Government was to order the issue of a series of stamps bearing the portrait of King George the Fifth and in 1914 the first three stamps appeared. The Post Office proceeded

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4 There also a number of other postage stamps that contain an Aboriginal theme this includes ASC 619 which was released to celebrate the Australian National Gallery being opened. It featured one of the many Aboriginal bark paintings which is part of the collection. It is also important to note that I have not included all the post stamps which in part feature designs inspired by Aboriginal creativity or postage stamps that feature Aboriginal Australians due to the constraints of space.
to keep these two definitive designs on issue for twenty three years in the case of the George the Fifth design and for thirty four years in the case of the Kangaroo in the map design (McQueen, 1987, p.6). Although the "Kangaroo and the King" were initially the only designs released as postage stamps, the Postmaster General's Department did eventually start to issue postage stamps that commemorated important events. This first occurred in 1927 with the designing of a postage stamp to commemorate the official opening of Commonwealth Parliament in Canberra. During my research in the archives of the Australian Postal Corporation I could find no evidence that Aboriginal designs were considered for reproduction on postage stamps before the release in 1948.

With regard to Aboriginal Australians, it was their artifacts that were first seen on postage stamps. In the June of 1930, the Postmaster General's Department released a postage stamp to commemorate the centenary of Captain Charles Sturt's exploration of the Murray River. The design of the postage stamp was uncomplicated. In the middle it showed a portrait of Sturt. At the top "Australia Postage" was printed and at the bottom the shape of a boomerang was produced and within it "Sturt Explorer Centenary" was printed, while underneath the commemorative period of "1830 to 1930" appeared. The significance of this postage stamp (ASC 10) with regard to Aboriginal Australians was that on either side of the portrait of Sturt, Aboriginal spears, shields and boomerangs were used as decorative devices (McQueen, 1987, p.19). In my opinion, these Aboriginal tools were being shown as curios, having been collected by "the great white explorer", rather than as objects produced by a

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5 See the visual chronology at the start of this chapter for a reproduction of this postage stamp (ASC 10).
6 A Postage stamp that was released in 1958 to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of Broken Hill (ASC 123) reproduced in one quarter of the stamp Aboriginal rock cravings from the Broken Hill area. Also in 1993 (ASC 1128 to ASC 1131) and 1996 (ASC 1278 to ASC 1281) postage stamps that featured "World Heritage areas" from around Australia reproduced a photograph of the site with an Aboriginal inspired design featuring as a decorative device; however, I have been unable to discover who produced these designs and whether Aboriginal people were consulted.
people with culture.

It was not until 1934 that the first Aboriginal person was seen on a stamp. The occasion was the centenary of Victoria 7. On this postage stamp (ASC 20) a member of the Yarra "tribe" is seen looking across the Yarra River at the buildings that have been built in the hundred years of settlement. According to Humphrey McQueen this member of the Yarra "tribe" is a classic example of the notion of the "noble savage" because "he is seen armed and upright in his nobility but is condemned to die in his state of savagery by the river that separates him from civilisation" 8 (McQueen, 1987, p.19). The concept of the "noble savage" was developed during the eighteenth century by French philosophers including Rousseau (Broome, 1994, p.26 & 27). In the field of anthropology the unilinear cultural evolutionist Louis Henry Morgan is often associated with the concept of "the savage" (Barrett, 1996, p.50 & 51). The idea of Louis Henry Morgan is that all cultures develop in the same way from simple and "savage" societies to complex and advanced "civilised" societies (Banies, 1998, p.1). This modelling of different cultures is both ethnocentric and Eurocentric, as the various Aboriginal Australian societies were assumed to be among the oldest in the world they were seen as being both simple and undeveloped (Banies, 1998, p.1).

The examples of the postage stamps featuring Aboriginal artifacts and then an Aboriginal person both predated the first use of actual Aboriginal designs on Australian postage stamps. In 1948 the Postmaster General's Department released a postage stamp that featured an Aboriginal rock carving of a crocodile (ASC 60). The planning for the release of this stamp began in the July of 1947. The basis of this postage stamp came from a design submitted to a

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7 Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of postage stamp (ASC 20).
8 This type of representation of Aboriginal Australia is also seen in the Arrival of First Fleet series released on Australia Day, 1988 ASC numbers 873 to ASC 877.
competition by Mr. Gert Sellheim (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-75-1)\(^9\)

Within the archival files held by the Australian Postal Corporation there is no mention as to whether Mr. Sellheim copied the design from an actual example of "rock art" or if Mr. Sellheim was himself an Aboriginal Australian.

The Postmaster General's Department viewed the release of this stamp with excitement due to it being a "definite departure" from anything that had previously been used on an Australian postage stamp. In order to promote this new direction Mr Chippindall (the Acting Director-General of the Postmaster General's Department) forwarded "two corner blocks and two imprint blocks of four stamps, together with a pull from the original die" to Buckingham Palace (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-75-1). The stamps were accepted into the royal collection. However, of interest from the perspective of my research, is the fact that while the 1948 postage stamp is seen as being the first postage stamp to feature Aboriginal creativity (on this occasion a carving) it was in fact released as an addition to the zoological series. This made the image natural and primitive rather than culturally complex. McQueen comments that the postage stamp had repeated the ways of the past by viewing Aboriginal creativity as being "produced by a non-human subject which for convenience sake relegated Aboriginal people to the non-human realm of nature, to be alternatively protected or hunted like other endangered species" (McQueen, 1987, p.19).

While the 1948 postage stamp marked a new beginning in the history Australian of postage stamps, the next series that focussed on Aboriginal creativity was not to be released until 1971. During this twenty three year period subjects associated with Aboriginal Australia were seen on postage stamps, however, the images never told the full story and never from an Aboriginal viewpoint. A clear example comes from 1961 when Australia Post released a

\(^9\) The files within the archives of the Australian Postal Corporation does not contain dates therefore I have elected to use the complete file code in my intext references throughout this thesis.
postage stamp highlighting the Northern Territory Cattle Industry. The stamp featured an Aboriginal stockman aboard a horse at full gallop rounding up cattle. While it is easier to view this image as positive due to it showing the Aboriginal stockman as skilled, hardworking and a positive member of the Australian community, rather than the stereotypes often associated with Aboriginal people as lazy or drunks, it does not tell the full story (McQueen, 1987, p.20). The cattle industry in the Northern Territory was notorious for its exploitation of Aboriginal workers. In fact the release of the above stamp occurred only five years before the walk-off by some two hundred of the Gurindji from the Wave Hill Station over the pay and living conditions of the pastoral industry (Read, 1995, p.291).

The walk off by the Gurindji followed a judgement of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1965 that said that Aboriginal stockmen, with some exceptions, must be paid the same wage as non-Aboriginal workers employed in similar work by the end of 1968. The Gurindji were angered by the three year period that the pastoralists were granted before being required to pay the full wages without any evidence being given by any Aboriginal stockmen (Broome, 1994, p.140). The walk-off by the Gurindji is often seen as the point when Aboriginal Australians started pushing for land rights (Read, 1995, p.292).

Therefore it is clear from the above example that in the period 1948 to 1971 other Aboriginal subjects rather than Aboriginal creativity per se were featured on postage stamps. It is the release of the 1971 "Aboriginal Art" series that marks the true beginning of Aboriginal creativity being featured on postage stamps. In the period from 1971 until 1997 at least thirty postage stamps

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10 Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of this postage stamp (ASC 151).

11 In the Horses series of postage stamps released in the May of 1986 (ASC 773) the Stockman is now a non-Aboriginal worker and this reflects the change in the work force of the pastoral industry with the introduction of equal wages for Aboriginal workers.
released by the Postmasters General's Department (which is now known as Australia Post by most Australians) have featured Aboriginal creativity in various forms. The 1971 series had four postage stamps as part of the series (ASC 297 to 300)\(^{12}\). However, the final designs for the postage stamps were designed by a non-Aboriginal person and Australia Post sought advice from non-Aboriginal experts. The focus of the series also saw designs produced that associated Aboriginal creativity with Northern Australia, in particular with Arnhem Land. This also occurred in the next main series released to be by the Australian Postal Commission (which was formerly known as the Postmaster General's Department)\(^{13}\) in 1982 entitled "Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance"\(^{14}\) four postage stamps (ASC 623 to 626) featured work that displayed Mimi spirits dancing and playing music (Margeit, 1997, p.95). For the 1982 series, Australia Post consulted prominent Aboriginal Australians. However, non-Aboriginal experts were still consulted. All of the paintings produced in the 1982 series came from Arnhem Land. It is my belief that for the series of 1971 and 1982 Australia Post followed the advice of non-Aboriginal experts who suggested that "authentic" Aboriginal creativity is only produced in northern Australia.

After the 1982 series there was a series released in 1984 that focussed on "rock art" from around Australia (ASC 708 to 714)\(^{15}\). This series was the first to feature Aboriginal creativity from southern Australia. Among the sites of "rock art" included in this series was Bunjil's Cave which is located in the Black Ranges outside Stawell in Western Victoria. Bunjil is an Ancestral being

\(^{12}\) Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of this series of postage stamps (ASC 297 to ASC 300).

\(^{13}\) The Postmaster General's Department changed its name to the Australian Postal Commission in 1975. With this name change the working name of Australia Post was adopted and from now on in this thesis I will use this term when it is appropriate as it is the term used by most Australians.

\(^{14}\) Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of this series of postage stamps (ASC 623 to ASC 626).

\(^{15}\) Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of the complete series of postage stamps (ASC 708 to ASC 714).

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who features in Aboriginal stories throughout South-Eastern Australia. He is seen as a supreme God-like figure; benevolent, old and wise; and the maker of the earth, trees, animals and man. The link between the "Rock Art" site near Stawell and Bunjil is based upon the work of the anthropologist A.W Howitt who wrote about the site in his book *Native Tribes of South-East Australia* which was published in 1904 (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1697-1). While the site of Bunjil's cave near Stawell is not cared for by the local Aboriginal people via rituals, it is still seen as being of importance in their history. Australia Post did contact the local Aboriginal people to consult whether it would be appropriate for Bunjil to be reproduced on a postage stamp (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1697-1). However, in the archives files of Australia Post there is no record of what the local Aboriginal Australians told Australia Post about the importance of this site of "rock art" and whether they thought it was appropriate for Bunjil to be reproduced on the postage stamp.

In 1988 as the "Dreamings" exhibition toured across America receiving wide acclaim a series of postage stamps (ASC 918 to 921) was released in Australia that reproduced at least one painting that was part of the exhibition. The designs of this series were originally planned to showcase contemporary Aboriginal creativity, in particular work from Aboriginal people living in urban parts of Australia. This was due to Australia Post recognising that in the past they had focussed on artists from northern Australia. In the initial stages Australia Post worked with the Aboriginal Australian curator, Wally Caruana from the National Gallery of Australia. Among the artists that were to be considered were Sally Morgan, Byron and Shane Pickett and Trevor Nickolls. These artists are all considered to be urban Aboriginal artists.

It is my belief that if Australia Post had released this series by featuring the creativity of the above artists then their work would have been recognised as being authentic at a time when most of the work by urban residing Aboriginal
artists was not seen as authentic Aboriginal artists. However, at some point, the focus of the series shifted to works from the Western Desert and the series evolved into the "Art of the Desert" series. In the finish all of the works were from the art collection of the Flinders University of South Australia and Associate Professor Vincent Megaw was consulted on which designs would be suitable for reproduction on a postage stamp (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-2244-1).

After the "Art of the Desert" series Australia Post waited until 1993 to again feature examples of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps. This reinforced the view held by many Australians that the only authentic examples of Aboriginal creativity are produced in the northern parts of Australia. What is interesting in comparing the 1971 “Aboriginal Art” series to the 1988 “Art of the desert” series is the change in the non-Aboriginal experts that Australia Post has consulted. For the 1971 series Australia Post consulted with an anthropologist while in 1988 it was with an art historian.

As the United Nations had named 1993 International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples, Australia Post celebrated the year by releasing three series of postage stamps that featured the works of Aboriginal artists. Among the artists that had their work featured on postage stamps were Fiona Foley, Ginger Riley and Albert Namatjira. With regard to Albert Namatjira (ASC 1122 and ASC 1123) what was often seen as problematic in the work by Namatjira in the 1950’s due to its perceived lack of Aboriginality had ceased to be so in 1993 (O’Ferrall, 1989,p.7). During the various series that were released in 1993 a number of “firsts” occurred including the release of a first postage stamp to feature the works of Aboriginal women (Australia Post Archive Files

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16 Refer to the visual chronology for reproduction of this series of postage stamps (ASC 918 to ASC 921).
17 Refer to the visual chronology to the various series of postage stamps that were released in 1993 that reproduced examples of Aboriginal creativity. These are ASC 1122 & ASC 1123, ASC 1124 to ASC 1127 and ASC 1147 to ASC 1150.
Perhaps the importance of the 1993 series is that rather than consult with anthropologists or art historians, Australia Post worked with the owners of art galleries (such as the owners of the Roslyn Oxley gallery which represents Robert Campbell), artists were invited to submit examples of their creativity that they felt would be suitable to reproduce on a postage stamp.

The final series of stamps that feature Aboriginal creativity was released in 1997 and is titled "The Dreaming". This series featured the artwork from the Aboriginal owned and controlled animation company Aboriginal Nations. Aboriginal Nations is an animation company that produces short cartoons that are aimed at telling all Australian children stories from the Dreaming. The fact that these stories are produced for children does not lessen the importance of the story for Aboriginal people. Rather, in many cases, I would suggest that Aboriginal people have allowed their stories to be used as a way of educating non-Aboriginal children about Aboriginal culture. The artwork in this series reproduced cartoon cells that had been used in the animations of Dumbi the Owl (ASC 1365), the Two Wily-Willies (ASC 1366), How the Brolga became a Bird (ASC 1367) and Tuggan Tuggan (Silky Oak) (ASC 1368).

Each of these stories comes from a different part of Australia. In my opinion the importance of "The Dreaming" series released in 1997 is that it showed that there is diversity in the range of creation stories that are still told by Aboriginal Australians. I do not believe that the fact that these postage stamps feature Aboriginal stories reproduced as cartoons lessen the importance of the story for Aboriginal Australians. The fact that the designs are cartoons rather than a dot painting simply shows the diversity of Aboriginal creativity.

The final issue that I wish to discuss very briefly in this chapter is the range

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18 Refer to the visual chronology for a reproduction of this series of postage stamps (ASC 1365 to ASC 1368)
of other subjects that have been featured on postage stamps. I have decided to twenty five year time period, 1971 to 1996 for this discussion as it represents the period of time when the bulk of the series of postage stamps that feature Aboriginal creativity have been released. However, this period has also seen a record number of postage stamps released (over one thousand, I actually counted 1052 different designs). If this is compared to the first twenty five year period, in which the Commonwealth of Australia issued postage stamps (1913 to 1938), the Postmaster General's Department released only 36 different designs. This is a ratio of approximately 29 to 1 and can be explained by the fact that collecting postage stamps is a now a hobby, and sales to collectors of postage stamps now account for a reasonable portion of the total sales of postage stamps issued by Australia Post. Therefore Australia Post needs to satisfy the demand for variety from collectors by releasing a large range of themes on postage stamps. The following pie chart shows the range of themes that have been featured on postage stamps in the period of 1971 to 1993 and although it is this period that most series that feature Aboriginal creativity has been released these only account for 2.7% of all the postage stamps that have been released in this timeframe. This pie chart is to be read by starting with Aboriginal creativity and moving in a clock wise motion. As I do not have a colour printer I have elected to colour in Aboriginal creativity with a gold ink for easy identification.
As the pie chart shows the other themes that have been featured in the period of 1971 to 1996 include animals, sporting events and transport. Perhaps the most interesting point that the pie chart reveals is that Aboriginal creativity has, as a percentage, featured more often than the works of the great white Australian artists Sir Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Brett Whiteley, the well-known Western Australian artist Guy Grey-Smith, and many others. This can be partly explained by the examples of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps being seen as a way of promoting the "Aboriginal Art Industry". However, the fact that The Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples saw ten postage stamps released in a very short period of time, does help to explain why the percentage is higher for Aboriginal artists than non-Aboriginal artists.
Chapter 7: Case studies from 1971 to 1982.

Due to the range of case studies that I wish to present in this thesis I have elected to divide the range of case studies I examine into two chapters. In this chapter I will examine two case studies from the period of 1971 to 1982 by discussing the various issues that I uncovered during my research at the Australia Post archives. I will examine the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance series of 1982. However, I will commence my examination by discussing the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series released in 1971.

Aboriginal Art series of 1971.

The planning for the 1971 "Aboriginal Art" series started on the eighteenth of September, 1968 when the Stamp Advisory Committee (henceforth SAC) met. The SAC is a committee of Australians who have the task to vet any series of postage stamps before the series is sent to the General Manager for final approval. At this meeting Mr. Westbrook suggested that a series of four subjects on Aboriginal creativity be produced. Mr. Westbrook suggested a bark painting, a cave painting, a Melville Island (one of the Tiwi islands) grave post and a body decoration be used as these choices would provide the series with two flat subjects and two three-dimensional objects. The rest of the SAC agreed with the comments of Mr. Westbrook and they requested that reference photographs be obtained from the National Museum of Victoria and the Australian Museum located in Sydney (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). The fact that the Postmaster General's Department sought information from a museum rather than an art gallery reflects the position of Aboriginal creativity within Australian society at that point of time. In this period around 1968 to 1971 Aboriginal creativity was still often seen as belonging to the ethnographic section of a museum rather than hanging in an art gallery (Johnson, 1996, p.3). If examples of Aboriginal creativity were seen outside museums then it was in a number of small galleries that traded in the area of "primitive art", then often labelled as craft work (O’Ferrall, 1989, p.5).
When the SAC next met on the twentieth of November, 1968 a number of colour slides and book illustrations typifying various aspects of Aboriginal creativity were shown to the committee. At this meeting the SAC made the recommendation that Mr. Tony Tuckson, the Deputy Director of the Art Gallery New South Wales and an artist of some note in his own right, be offered the commission to design the series. However, as Mr Tuckson was not able to accept the commission, the SAC then offered the commission to Mr. John Mason who accepted it and started to work on designs based on the reference material from the National Museum of Victoria (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). Mr Mason had designed postage stamps for Australia Post in the past. Both the designers named above were non-Aboriginal designers. In the period between this meeting that was held on the twentieth of November, 1968 until a meeting of the SAC on the nineteenth of February, 1969 Mr Mason worked on a number of designs that were presented to the SAC on the nineteenth of February, 1969. Mr Mason’s designs included two based on bark paintings, two on grave posts, three on cave paintings and one on a body painting (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1).

Despite the fact that Mr. Tuckson was an authority on the interaction between Aboriginal creativity and the western art world, I find it very interesting that amongst my delving I could not specify why Tuckson rejected the offer to work on the series of postage stamps. Tuckson led an expedition to Northern Australia in 1958 with the aim of collecting examples of Aboriginal creativity as pieces of art rather than as pieces of anthropological data (Jones, 1988, p. 175). I believe that Tuckson’s rejection could be explained in a number of ways. The most plausible being that as he knew that it was culturally inappropriate to have a non-Aboriginal artist to use Aboriginal designs, he rejected the commission, while suggesting that Aboriginal artists could be employed directly to produce the design for the series of postage stamps. Thus it is history that Mr Mason went on to design the series of postage stamps.
without any direct input from Aboriginal Australians.

In this same period the Minister-in-Charge Of Aboriginal Affairs received a letter from Mr. James Janz, a philatelist, who suggested that there should be a release of postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity. In the opinion of Mr Janz the benefits of such a series included good publicity for the new approach to Aboriginal Affairs in Australia (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). The new approach that Mr Janz referred to was of course the outcome of the 1967 referendum that changed the Australian constitution to allow the Commonwealth parliament to legislate for Aboriginal Australians. The referendum had been held some eighteen months before Mr Janz sent his letter to the Minister.

Another advantage that Mr Janz identified was that the release of a series of postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity, would give some good publicity to what Mr Janz saw as the "Aboriginal Art Industry" (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). The point that featuring examples of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps could offer good publicity to the "Aboriginal Art Industry" was mentioned in nearly every series after the 1971 "Aboriginal Art" series. There was a widely held view that Aboriginal creativity featured on postage stamps could help the artists and their communities even though they were not themselves to be employed by Australia Post to design the postage stamps.

There was also a letter from a Mr Bowen of Bellevue Hill in New South Wales who in the October of 1969 suggested that a series of postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity could be released but that a special surcharge be added in order to raise money that could be used to build houses for elderly Aboriginal Australians. A very similar proposal had previously been suggested by a Mrs Maas of Cromer in New South Wales in the June of 1969. These suggestions was rejected outright due to the difficulties that collecting
such a surcharge would involve. With regard to the letters that Mr Janz and Mr Bowen were sent from Australia Post, they received very different replies.

Mr Janz was sent a letter of thanks. He was also informed that the Postmaster General’s Department had already started to plan a series of postage stamps that would feature Aboriginal creativity (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). Mr Janz was asked to keep all correspondence confidential until a public announcement had been made. This can be compared with the letter that Mr Bowen received that stated although there was some merit to his suggestion, that it was impossible for the Postmaster General’s Department to release all the series of postage stamps that people suggested.

While the above letters from Mr Janz and Mr Bowen made interesting reading and shows the interest that ordinary Australians felt about the Aboriginal creativity, perhaps the most important find in the archival files (that are now the property of Australia Post) is the correspondence between Mr W.C Wentworth, the Minister - in - Charge of Aboriginal Affairs and The Hon. A.S Hulme, the Postmaster General from the file for March, 1969. In this month Mr Wentworth wrote to the Postmaster General outlining the importance that the Commonwealth placed on the second Friday of July that was recognised as National Aborigines Day. Mr Wentworth outlined how since 1957 when Sir Paul Hasluck first promoted the day it had become an opportunity to bring to the notice of Australians the position of Aboriginal Australians within the wider society (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). He also outlined how the Commonwealth was more involved than ever before in Aboriginal Affairs and that Australia Post could play a part in promoting the day by having a special postmark used to mark the day.

The Postmaster General responded by remarking that the demand for such postmarks was large and that requests had to be made at least one year in
advance. However, the Postmaster General did inform the Minister of the work being done on the series of stamps that were at the time being designed by Mr Mason (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). Thus while various people were making suggestions that a series of postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity should be released, the first set of designs had been sent to a person who the Postmaster General's Department recognised as an authority on Aboriginal creativity (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1).

In order to ensure that none of the designs would offend Aboriginal Australians they were sent to Mr F.D McCarthy, the then Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, for his opinion. Mr McCarthy advised that the design of the body painting should not be used as it featured a design that is painted prior to a ceremony that is then witnessed only by initiated men (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1).

The evidence that Australia Post took the advice of Mr McCarthy seriously was apparent from when I first opened the file that Australia Post has on the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series. Within the file is a sealed envelope that states that the material (the first designs that Mr Mason did and which contained designs that Mr McCarthy believed to be secret / sacred) within is of a secret-sacred nature and that it is not to be reproduced on postage stamps. There are also restrictions on the material being used in any display or at other public venues, and that it is not to be viewed by women. What this demonstrates in my opinion that although the Postmaster General's Department may not have had a full awareness about the inappropriateness of having a non-Aboriginal designer use Aboriginal creativity without permission from the owners of the example in question, Australia Post did understand that some knowledge is very important in Aboriginal societies and that only certain members of the Aboriginal society in question may see and discuss such knowledge.
Mr McCarthy suggested to the SAC that as an alternative, the body painting design be based upon a photograph of the final mourning ceremony of the Warramunga "tribe"\(^{19}\) as it is witnessed by both men and women. This advice was accepted by the SAC and the photograph that was the basis of the design is part of the Sir Baldwin Spencer photograph collection held by the National Museum of Victoria (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). However, it then took until the fifteenth of April, 1970 for the revised and final designs by Mr Mason to be approved by the SAC which then forwarded them to the Minister in charge for final approval. This approval was granted on the seventeenth of June, 1970.

The final designs featured a bark painting of a long necked tortoise from Western Arnhem Land which was in the personal collection of Mr. West, the then curator of anthropology at the National Museum of Victoria, a grave post typical of those used in the Pukamani mourning ceremony of the Tiwi Islands (the example used was part of a collection on display at the Melbourne Cultural Centre), a rock painting from the Oenpelli area of Western Arnhem Land which was featured in a United Nations book on Aboriginal art and the design featuring the body decoration came from a photograph taken by Sir Baldwin Spencer (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). In the opinion of Mr McCarthy the designs chosen were appropriate to be displayed in public and on a postage stamp and he thought that the series would help to promote Aboriginal creativity to a new audience. The series was released to the Australian public on the twenty-ninth of September, 1971.

While it is clear that the "Aboriginal Art" series of postage stamps marked a new era with Aboriginal creativity appearing on postage stamps. There are two key issues that arise from its production. The first of these is the fact that the postage stamps were designed by a non-Aboriginal Australian. The

\(^{19}\) Refer to the visual chronology for a reproduction of this postage stamp (ASC 298).
designer Mr. John Mason used reference material from the National Museum of Victoria. He consulted with the curator of anthropology at the National Museum of Victoria, Mr. Allan West (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). In fact the design that draws on the bark painting that features a long necked tortoise from Western Arnhem Land was in the personal collection of Mr. West and while this is mentioned in the archival file from the series there is no mention of the identity of the artist who produced the bark painting. I would find it very hard to accept that Mr West would not have kept some record of who had produced the bark painting.

It is my belief that the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series released in 1971 fostered the view that Aboriginal creativity at that point of time belonged to the ethnographic section of a museum rather than hanging along side works of creativity by non-Aboriginal artists (Johnson, 1996, p.3). Perhaps more than anything else, this example shows that although the Postmaster General's Department used expert consultants such as Mr McCarthy, at this point of time in Australia, Aboriginal creativity, was still seen more as an ethnographic artifact that belongs in a museum rather than a piece of "art" with the artist being given due recognition and the work hung in an Art Gallery (Johnson, 1996, p.3). This example is really no different than the case of David Malangi whose painting "The Hunter" was used without his permission on the One Dollar note (1966). In that case, the designer Mr. Gordon Andrews incorporated a line interpretation of Malangi's drawing into his design that also featured motifs from rock paintings and carvings that had been "discovered" by Mr C.P Mountford during one of his many anthropological expeditions into Arnhem Land during the 1940's and 1950's (Johnson, 1996, p.3). According to Mr Andrews his intention in copying the bark painting by Malangi was to promote "authentic" Aboriginal creativity which he was said to have had always admired and respected. In an interview conducted by Mr. Brett Chapman (a student in Sociology 388 at Macquaire University in 1990 for a assignment on
the ten dollar copyright case), Andrews said to Chapman "...at the time, there was little propaganda for Aboriginal art and many people were doing their own interpretations and imitations of their art, so I wanted to do an "authentic" work and give the Aborigines a bit of a boost...." (Johnson, 1996, p. 13). The problem with the attitude expressed by Andrews and of the Postmaster General's Department in having non-Aboriginal people draw either directly or by using examples as inspiration, is that it is deeply offensive to Aboriginal Australians in particular those Aboriginal Australians who have rights in such designs for their rights disregarded (Mosby, 1994, p. 58). The reasons that people such as Mr Andrews used to justify their actions are still the reasons used by people who breach the copyright laws and misappropriate Aboriginal designs today (Johnson, 1996, p. 14).

Of course, there are many other examples of non-Aboriginal artists using examples of Aboriginal creativity in their work. A historical example can be seen in work of Margaret Preston (who I have already mentioned on page 15 of this thesis) who used Aboriginal designs and pushed the view that Aboriginal designs should be the foundation a national art movement. As I noted, Preston claimed to have realised the importance of the spirituality in Aboriginal designs, and maintained that the association between Aboriginal designs and spirituality should be ignored by Western students of Aboriginal art. Such dissociation can easily be seen as a trivialisation of Aboriginal culture. While Preston held these views in the 1920's and 1930's they are still used today by non-Aboriginal people who steal or have misappropriated Aboriginal designs (Mosby, 1994, p. 58).

The second issue that arises from the "Aboriginal Art" series released in 1971 is that there was no consultation with Aboriginal people but rather with anthropologists who at that period of time were seen by many (if not by most non-Aboriginal Australians) as having the right to speak for Aboriginal Austra-
lians. If a student of anthropology were to read one of the many texts published on Aboriginal Australia during the late 1960's and early 1970's, I have no doubt that they would fail to find an Aboriginal perspective in the texts. Therefore while it is disappointing to discover that Aboriginal people were not consulted during any stage of the production of the 1971 “Aboriginal Art” postage stamp series, it only suggests that the views held by other sections of the Commonwealth and various State government departments were also held by Australia Post.

However, letters to the Postmaster General's department suggest that some people within Australia society were seeking Aboriginal participation. Of particular interest is one letter from Miss Dove of Coogee in New South Wales who saw the opportunity of releasing postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity as a way of Australia Post employing Aboriginal Australians as designers. This very suggestion had been made a fortnight earlier by Mrs. Madeleine Clear of Tiwi Designs (a company in the Tiwi Island that produces examples of Tiwi creativity for sale) who suggested that Australia Post could employ several young people from the Tiwi Islands as graphic designers and then release their work as a series of postage stamps.

This idea was rejected by Australia Post on the grounds that the “Aboriginal Art” postage stamp series had just been released and there were no plans in the short term to release another series of postage stamps that featured Aboriginal creativity (Australia Post Archive File 281-5-124-1). I believe that this was in part caused by the embarrassment that Australia Post felt when the media revealed that the designs were not directly produced by Aboriginal artists but rather they had provided the inspiration for the non-Aboriginal designer.
Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance 1982.

The planning for the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series that was released in 1982 started two years before in 1980 when the private company Aboriginal Arts and Crafts of Sydney was commissioned to purchase bark paintings from Arnhem Land that could be used on postage stamps. Aboriginal Arts and Crafts was originally established with a grant from the Commonwealth government so that they could work with Aboriginal people to preserve and develop Aboriginal culture through the sale and promotion of Aboriginal creativity. The only condition that Australia Post attached to the commissioning of the bark paintings was that they had to include the theme of music and dance, as well as being suitable for reproduction on a postage stamp (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1).

This point is important (although I am sure it was not important to Australia Post) as it tends to support the view that Aboriginal creativity belongs to a system where designs, songs, dance and story all play a role in telling the full meaning for Aboriginal people. In order to ensure that the above conditions were met, Aboriginal Arts and Crafts sent Mr. Peter Cook and Ms. Dorothy Bennett as advisors to the various communities so that the process could be explained to any artist wishing to produce a painting. In all, Australia Post purchased eleven bark paintings of which four were reproduced as postage stamps (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1).

There are of course a number of issues that make the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series released in 1982 important and worthy of discussion. The first of these is the fact that it was the first time that Aboriginal artists had been commissioned to produce examples of their creativity that would then be used on postage stamps (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). In previous releases of postage stamps that featured Aboriginal creativity, non-Aboriginal Australians had simply drawn upon existing exam-
pies as their inspiration. Thus previously there was no actual involvement of Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series of 1982 was also the first series in the production of which Aboriginal Australians were consulted as to their thoughts on the series in question. In preparing the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series of 1971, the postmaster General's Department consulted anthropologists as to whether certain examples of Aboriginal creativity should be seen on a postage stamp. Whereas in 1982 the postage stamps were sent to various prominent Aboriginal Australian and Aboriginal organisations, nearly all of these people and organisations questioned whether it was appropriate for these bark paintings to be seen on a postage stamp (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). Australia Post responded by saying that it was explained to the artists that their designs would possibly be seen on a postage stamp. Therefore Australia Post took the stance that it was the artists that had to make a judgement as to what they featured in their bark paintings and in turn responsibility for any breaches of Aboriginal law that would occur by the artist using sacred designs in their bark paintings (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1).

This stance from Australia Post I believe is supported by the anthropological work of Howard Morphy, in particular by a reading of his book *Ancestral Connections* which, although was published in the 1990's, is largely based upon the fieldwork he undertook in the early 1970's. Although it should be noted that Howard Morphy conducted his field work among the Yolngu people of Northeast Arnhem Land, his work can, I believe, be applied to the Gunwinggu language group of Western Arnhem Land. I have already discussed Howard Morphy's work on page 6 of this thesis.

While it could be debated as to the actual motives of Australia Post in con-
sulting with Aboriginal Australians and various Aboriginal organisations prior to the release of the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series, it is clear from the material that I read in the archives of Australia Post that there were two factors that influenced Australia Post (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). The first of these is the embarrassment that had occurred after the release of the "Aboriginal Art" postage stamps series in September of 1971 when it became apparent that a non-Aboriginal Australian had been employed as the designer of the series. Australian Post clearly wanted to avoid a similar episode with the release of the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1).

The second factor that stood out upon my reading of the material in the archives of Australia Post was that there was new awareness of the "politics" that is often associated with Aboriginal Australians and Aboriginal organisations. It is not my intention to use the term politics in a negative way but rather to refer to the fact that in order not to embarrass anyone Australia Post ensured that it consulted with a larger than usual number of people and organisations. Thus Australia Post consulted such people as Mr Charles Perkins, the then Chairman of the Aboriginal Development Commission, and with the National Aboriginal Conference which had been established in 1978 with the sole aim of providing "a forum in which Aboriginal views may be expressed at a State and National level". It also contacted the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. All of the above I mentioned were impressed with the postage stamps and congratulated Australia Post in promoting Aboriginal creativity (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). It is of course of anthropological interest that the Aboriginal Australians members of the above organisations did not tell Australia Post that the communities who owned the designs should be the group to give approval.
Therefore the question remains what was actually featured in the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series. The four bark paintings that were featured on the postage stamps were produced by members of the Gunwinggu language group of Western Arnhem Land. While they shared the common theme of music and dance as was requested by Australia Post the bark paintings also featured Mimi spirits. A number of anthropologists have written on the “Mimi” spirits including R.M Berndt who discusses the importance of “Mimi” Spirits in the book *Australian Aboriginal Art* (1964). The “Mimi” spirits comprise one of the main themes of the mythology of the Gunwinggu and close by language groups (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). The importance of the “Mimi” spirits to the Gunwinggu people was recorded on the back of one of the bark paintings that was purchased by Australia Post:

“In the caves of the rocky sandstone Arnhem Land plateau live the “Mimi” spirits. The “Mimi” are usually benign, shy Spirits unlike other dangerous Spirit beings (such) as the vampire-like “Waid Bigara” or the ghosts, “Namandi”. They flee at the approach of intruders in their rocky domain... blowing on the rocks which open and allow them to go inside. Clever men ("Marrgidjbu") sometimes befriend the "Mimi" and are taught their songs and dances and shown their secret places. The Mimi are like people... using the same kinship terms and speaking the same language as the local Aboriginal group. They are, however, terribly thin...having necks so slender that a stiff breeze would be fatal. For this reason they emerge only on windless days and nights to hunt. Many stories are told of the “Mimi” as people sit around their campfires at night. The exploits of the “Mimi” are often used as a means of talking about scandalous behaviour without
pointing directly at miscreants within the group."

(Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1)

While it is clear that the above account was recorded by an art adviser (most likely either Mr. Peter Cook or Ms. Dorothy Bennett) rather than by a member of the Gunwinggu language group, it does reflect the importance that the Mimi spirits has in the mythology for the Gunwinggu people (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). However, it also does show that in the early 1980's Aboriginal views on what a particular painting means was still told by the art adviser rather than the artist.

Of a more important note, is that within the material that was in the Australia Post archives was the fact that the artists had learnt to paint from their fathers and grandfathers and painted the same paintings that had been produced by their fathers and grandfathers. The above point that artists paint the same bark paintings as their fathers and grandfathers is supported once again by the anthropological work of Howard Morphy. Of particular relevance to my thesis is the work that Howard Morphy did concerning the rights to paint. Morphy makes the point that bark paintings are the property of the various Yolngu peoples and that people have differing rights to painting.

The rights of people to paintings is based largely on their membership in a clan, rights passing from father to son. The rights that people have may include the ownership of a painting. In Yolngu societies paintings are the property of the clan and are owned by all its members. Other rights that Yolngu people may have in paintings can include the right to produce a particular painting, the right to divulge the meanings of a painting, and the right to either authorise or restrict the use of a painting. These rights may be exercised in very different ways and a person who exercises their right to control the production of a painting may never actually produce that painting themselves. All of these rights may be impacted on by age, gender and status.
Therefore it is not surprising that senior members of each clan have maximum rights while junior members have minimum rights (Morphy, 1991, p.57 to 63).

As the time moved closer to the release of the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series the Chief General Manager of Australia Post sought answers to a number of questions. The first issue that he raised concerned the sameness of the designs. This was answered by the fact that the artists all belonged to the one language group. Therefore the artists all held similar rights in the designs that under Aboriginal law they were able to produce. This supports the notion of most anthropologists that the notion that Aboriginal do not produce "art for art's sake". That is to say, individual agency to create whatever the artist felt like producing does not exist. The artists in Aboriginal societies are bound by a set of laws which impact on which designs they may produce, however, the quote from A.P Elkin on page 31 of this thesis does suggest that artists do sometimes produce "art for art's sake".

Also of note is the registration of the fact that the artists had reproduced the designs that to them were their most important (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). There was also mention of the sameness of the colours that had been used. It was explained to the Chief General Manager of Australia Post that Aboriginal artists (and, in particular those from Arnhem Land) preferred to work with paints made from ochre obtained from the earth. This explained the limited range of colours available to the artists who produced the bark paintings used on the postage stamps in the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance series (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1).

A point that was raised by the Chief General Manager was whether Australia Post should avoid favouring the works from one area or "tribe". In answer to this question, Ms. Ruth McNicol, the then Curator for Primitive Art, at the Australian National Gallery at Canberra advised that the only Aboriginal artists
that worked in the figurative style come from Arnhem Land. It was also pointed out that artists at a number of communities were told about the commissions and that artists from Oenpelli and Maningrida were the only ones to produce bark paintings that fitted the requirements of Australia Post (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). The point that the Chief General Manager was making was, however, a valid one.

The fact that this set of postage stamps and that those produced as part of the 1971 “Aboriginal Art” series all featured examples of Aboriginal creativity from Northern Australia I believe impacted on the view held within Australia Post that there was a need for a change in direction. This change in direction would condition the production of any future series of postage stamps that was in the future to feature examples of Aboriginal paintings. Australia Post wanted to move away from Northern Australia and what they labelled “traditional” artists and more towards the work of those artists which Australia Post and others label “urban” artists (Australia Post Archive File 281-22-1366-1). What is of importance is that while it is true that Aboriginal artists were commissioned to provide bark paintings for reproduction on postage stamps, these same artists did not receive any recognition on the actual postage stamps. One could argue that Australia Post had once again treated these artists as they had been previously treated. That is as no-name artists who were considered long dead and that it is the design they are remembered for rather than their name (Johnson, 1996,p.3).

In this chapter I have presented two case studies from the period of 1971 to 1982. These were the first two major releases of postage stamps to feature Aboriginal creativity. I will now move on to chapter eight in which I present case studies from the period of 1984 to 1993.
Chapter 8: Case studies from 1984 to 1993.

The focus of the case studies in this chapter is from the period of 1984 to 1993. However, at the end of this chapter I will also offer an analytical overview of the points raised in the case studies presented in this chapter and the previous chapter of case studies.

First Australians "rock art" series.

The next series of postage stamps to be examined in this thesis were released in 1984. This series was titled "Australian Bicentennial Series One - The First Australians". This series featured the Bicentennial symbol and seven examples of Aboriginal creativity of the sort that is often referred to as "rock art". Among the sites of "rock art" that were featured in the series was the site of Bunjil's Cave. I have already briefly discussed the importance of this "rock art" site in the chapter that provided an overview of Aboriginal creativity being featured on postage stamps (see page 40 of this thesis). In this chapter I pay particular attention to a postage stamp that is important as it features a "rock art" site that is still cared for by its Aboriginal custodians.

The postage stamp that I will focus on features a Wandjina Spirit and Snake Babies painting taken from a site that is located in the vicinity of Gibb River which is within the Kimberley area of Western Australia (ASC 712). According to Wally Caruana (the Curator of Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Australia) the term "Wandjina" is a generic term for a group of Ancestral beings who come out of the sky and the sea (Caruana, 1993, p.157). While many Australians think of all of the vast area of the Kimberley as being "Wandjina Country", the "Wandjina" is in reality specific to the Worrora, Ngarnyin and Woonambool peoples. Although the term "Wandjina" is a generic term, it should be made clear that individual "Wandjinas" have names and myths that are specific to the particular sites where they are seen (Ryan and Akerman, 1993, p.11).
In the early to mid 1960's Mr. Ian Crawford, the then Curator of Anthropology and Archaeology at the Western Australian Museum, conducted several research trips to the Kimberley in order to record the various "rock art" sites that featured "Wandjinas" and to record Aboriginal Australian accounts of the sites. The Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples all stated that they did not create the various sites of "rock art" that feature "Wandjinas", but rather as Ian Crawford explains in his book *The Art of the Wandjina*, that the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples inherited the Wandjina paintings from the Ancestral beings that first made them. These Ancestral beings were the "Wandjinas" themselves whose activities were often recounted in story and song. A feature of these stories and songs is that when each of these "Wandjinas" eventually died, leaving his image on the rock where it was either painted by his associates or by himself (Crawford 1968, p.31). Although the "rock art" images are said to represent the bodies of the dead "Wandjinas", the spirits are said to live on in much the same way as Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples believe that the spirits of human beings continue to exist after death. Therefore while the postage stamp reproduces the image of the "Wandjina" his spirit still exists.

The spirits of the "Wandjinas" are said to have considerable power and thus it is not surprising that the custodians of the various sites of "rock art" are careful to observe a certain amount of protocol when they approach the site. Ian Crawford explains this is because the custodians want to ensure that the spirits are not upset and take revenge on the custodians for any breaches of Aboriginal law, frivolous behaviour (or in some areas) by touching the painting (Crawford, 1968, p.32). Should the "Wandjinas" be offended, the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples believe that revenge will be manifest in an excess of rain to flood the land and drown the people or by passage of a cyclone which devastates the country. These powers of the "Wandjinas" are a feature of stories and songs that are part of the mythology of the Worrorra.
Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples. Further, the monsoon rains that fall annually in the Kimberley between late December and March are believed to be the work of the “Wandjinjas” (Crawford, 1968, p.33).

During research trips conducted in the early and mid 1960’s Crawford witnessed examples of the protocol that is observed at the sites of “Wandjina” “rock art” that feature as well as the ritual of the sites being retouched (Crawford, 1968, p.37). In the case of “Wandjina” sites, the ritual is in fact the retouching of the sites. In 1966 Crawford witnessed a site being retouched by one of the Aboriginal members of his research party. After the site was retouched the party member addressed the “Wandjina” figures by saying:

I made you very good now - I don’t how I did it. Very good!... You must be very glad, because I made your eyes like new. That eye, you know, like this my eye... I made them new for you people. My eye has life, and your eye has life too, because I made it new... Don’t try to bring rain, my wife might drown with the rain. The rain might drown her... (Crawford, 1968, p.27).

I have not mentioned the name of the party member who Crawford witnessed retouching the “Wandjina” due to an ethical decision I have made not to write the names of Aboriginal Australians who are now deceased when to do so would cause offence to the language groups concerned. Also I believe that one does not need to know the party member’s name to appreciate that what the above citation does is to confirm that there is a high level of protocol observed at these sites by the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples. It refers to the fact that the “Wandjina” spirits are credited with great powers which can be used to punish people that do not follow the protocol as the “Wandjina” left to them during the creation period (Crawford, 1968, p.37). These powers do not cease to exist simply because a “Wandjina” is reproduced onto a postage stamp.
What then is the importance of the “rock art” site featured in this series of postage stamps? To start with it was a “rock art” site that was in the 1960’s was cared for by the custodians. When Ian Crawford visited the site in the early to mid 1960’s, he asked the Aboriginal Australian members of his research trip the importance of this site. They told Crawford that the site is called “Mandangari” which means that it belongs to the “Manda”, which is a totem from the area around Gibb River. Another informant explained to Crawford the meaning of “Manda” was as follows:

A long time ago, there was a snake, a rock python, and she had the gum from the Kurrajong tree which is called “Manda”. She had a lot of gum made into a big ball and she used to carry that thing around with her. When she used to kill a young kangaroo or a rock wallaby, she used to wrap that thing in the slimy gum and swallow it down. It was easy to swallow when she put that stuff on. Then people became of that tribe “Mandangari” - they belong to “Manda” which is the gum of the Kurrajong and the smile of the snake (Crawford, 1968,p.108 and 109).

Of course the spiritual importance of the site was not of a major concern or interest to Australia Post. It was the simple fact that they had access to a photograph of the site in question and that it enable the series to show as wide as possible the variety of “rock art” sites that exist in Australia.

In my opinion while it is interesting that there is a body of anthropological literature that focuses on the “Wandjinjas” and their importance to Aboriginal Australians, in particular the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambool peoples, it does raise several issues that are of particular interest here. The first of these was whether the “Wandjina” and Snake Babies liked being on the postage stamp. As the “Wandjina” is associated with rain and cyclones I made enquiries to the Perth Bureau of Meteorology as to whether there had been any rain
or cyclones in the Gibb River area when the postage stamp was released. As
there had not been I believe that may be explained that the "Wandjina" and
the Snake Babies appreciated being featured on the postage stamp, although
I must point out that this is only my own opinion and one I cannot support with
any evidence.

What I can prove is that Australia Post certainly knew who the custodians of
the site were and they gained their permission to reproduce the "Wandjina" on
a postage stamp by consulting with the Kamli Land Committee. Within the
archives of Australia Post I did not, however, discover any correspondence
that outlined what the custodians thought about the site of "rock art" being pro-
duced on a postage stamp. Unfortunately not everybody who reproduces the
"Wandjina" does seek permission from the custodians of the site in question.
In the past there have been caricatures of the "Wandjina" that have appeared
on products such as on t-shirts, tea towels, coffee mugs and even on a surf-
board. The problem with "rock art" sites is that under the current copyright
laws no protection is offered (Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre,
personal communication April 17,1998). Thus, with the example of the surf-
board, all the custodians could do was to write to the surfboard maker outlin-
ing the importance of the "Wandjina" to their spiritual beliefs and ask that they
be respected. In this case the surfboard maker ceased to use the design even
though, under the present copyright law, he was not obliged to stop using the
design (Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre,personal communica-
tion April 17,1998). When I was preparing for the writing of this thesis, I wrote
to Ian Crawford and he replied by note that in the 1980's an attempt had been
made to protect "rock art" sites via a proposed amendment to the copyright
legislation. However, the amendment did not pass into law (Ian Crawford, per-
sonal communication, March 12,1998).

Of course not all cases of misappropriation involve non-Aboriginal artists.
On occasions, Aboriginal artists often referred to as urban artists who are said to have lost their own cultural heritage have sometimes misappropriated designs that belong to other communities. Such acts could be viewed as a reassertion of their Aboriginal heritage, or negatively, as another case of illegal reproduction, even though in the innocent belief that it is permissible (Mosby, 1994, p.59). On page 16 of this thesis I have outlined the case of Gordon Bennett using a “Mimi” Spirit.

Another issue that I felt was of interest is whether a postage stamp would be used in a native title claim. In the opinion of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, it was very unlikely that a reproduction of an important “rock art” site on a postage stamp would be used a part of a native title claim (Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, personal communication, April 17, 1996). Rather the Aboriginal language group claiming native title would take the members of the National Native Title Tribunal to the actual site where the custodians would explain the importance of the site and how it that proves that they are the traditional owners of the surrounding sites. In the past examples of Aboriginal creativity have been used in land claims under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act of 1976 and the Native Title Act of 1993 by Aboriginal claimants to prove their ownership of the land.

**Postage stamps from 1993**

In order to round off my case studies I wish to discuss the importance of the year 1993 in an examination of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps and the case of a bark painting being reproduced as both a postage stamp and a carpet. To this point in my thesis, the case studies have focused on either individual postage stamps or on a particular series. However, for this case study, I will examine the importance of a particular year. This was the year the United Nations declared to be the International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples and in this year Australia Post released three series of postage
stamps that featured various examples of Aboriginal creativity.

The earliest material that Australia Post has on the 1993 series is dated from the middle of June, 1991 and is from Waringari Aboriginal Art in Kununurra in northern Western Australia. In this letter the exhibitions coordinator, Mr. Tony Ellwood, outlines that 1993 could be an appropriate time for a series of postage stamps that features Aboriginal creativity due to it having been recognised as the International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). Mr Ellwood suggests that the communities of Turkey Creek, Kalumburu, Kununurra and Port Keats (again Northern communities) produce paintings on canvas using ochre that would easily be able to be reproduced as postage stamps. I believe that the rationale behind Mr Ellwood writing to Australia Post was that he could see the benefits of being able to say that the work of one of the artists that paints for Waringari Aboriginal Art had been reproduced on a postage stamp. That is to say it would have been of benefit to the community.

The point, that featuring examples of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps could offer good publicity to the "Aboriginal Art Industry" was mentioned in the 1971 "Aboriginal Art" series and it appears to be one reason that Australia Post released postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity. There was a widely held view that Aboriginal creativity featured on postage stamps could only help the artists and their communities. In actual fact this occurred as one of the artists that did paint for Waringari Aboriginal Art was featured in one of three series of postage stamps released by Australia Post in 1993 (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). I do not intend to write about this artist due to the fact that he passed away early on in the year and the community are still in a mourning period and have only allowed the artist’s name to be used on rare occasion since his death.
In preparation for 1993, Australia Post wanted to adopt a new approach. The idea of having a competition and inviting Aboriginal artists to submit entries that would then be shown as an exhibition that would feature the diversity of Aboriginal art was suggested a number of times (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). However, due to the late start in the planning process, Australia Post dropped the idea of a competition and shifted to simply inviting a number of artists to submit designs that they felt would be suitable for reproduction as postage stamps. Among the artists invited to submit designs were Gayle Madigan, Gordon Bennett, Robert Campbell and Karen Casey who all at some time have been referred to as "urban" Aboriginal artists. In general these artists were invited via contact with the art galleries that sold their work. Australia Post wanted to showcase the diversity of Aboriginal creativity in 1993.

In essence, the postage stamps released in 1993 were chosen in the same way as other series of postage stamps are chosen. That is to say that a number of designs were put to the SAC who then choose designs that were then sent to the General Manager of Australia Post for the final approval (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). Many of the "urban" Aboriginal artists missed the opportunity to have their work featured on a postage stamps because it was felt that reproduced as a postage stamp would not do the original work justice. However, in many cases Australia Post purchased the original paintings for the "Art Collection of Australia Post" (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1).

I have been given permission by Australia Post to reproduce several examples of designs that were not chosen. I must apology for the quality of the examples, this is due to only being able to photocopy (in black and white) the working designs while I was conducting my research at Australia Post. These examples are working designs and were never released as postage stamps.
The theme that the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples provided a good occasion to release postage stamps featuring Aboriginal creativity is mentioned many times in the archive files of Australia Post. However, in my opinion, there are a number of other issues that arise from a reading of the archive files that are worthy of analysis. The first of these issues is the non-representation of examples of creativity from the Torres Strait Islanders of Australia in any of series during the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In the opinion of Australia Post this was not a major concern as not all the various language groups of Aboriginal Australia had had examples of their creativity featured on postage stamps (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). Australia Post did, however, believe that it could develop into a major concern and that it might become necessary to defend the actions of Australia Post. In actual fact the matter became a live issue when Mr. Barry Watson, the Supervisor of the State Mail Centre in Brisbane and himself a Torres Strait Islander, wrote to Mr. David Maiden, the Manager of the Philatelic Group of Australia Post, suggesting that it would be an appropriate occasion in the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples to feature an example of creativity from the Torres Strait Islands. In the opinion of Mr Watson it would
“show the world the importance that Australia has for their second group of indigenous peoples” (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1).

In response to the letter by Mr Watson, Australia Post wrote back noting that although he had made a very worthwhile suggestion, the designs for all of the series to be released in 1993 the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples had already been chosen. Australia Post also prepared a brief report outlining how Australia Post could ensure that any criticism about not including an example of creativity from the Torres Strait Islands could be kept to a minimum (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1). Among the possible courses of action was to say it is too late to add to the programme now, but we will do an issue focusing on Torres Strait Islanders in the future - possibly 1995. Australia Post also noted that there was the advantage that a future release could be properly planned and researched (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1).

Another option was to include a prestamped envelope to coincide with the contemporary Aboriginal Art postage stamps. In the opinion of Australia Post this could have appeared like an afterthought and tokenism. Although it is clear that Australia Post thought about the issue of including an example featuring creativity from the Torres Strait Islands, it never happened. In my readings of the archive files, it appeared that Australia Post never received any formal or informal letters complaining that there was not an example of creativity from the Torres Strait Islands (Australia Post Archive Files H911159-1).

The second issue that stood out after my reading of the archive files at Australia Post was that 1993, the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, was seen as an opportunity to promote the process of reconciliation. Australia Post received a letter from Mr. Kevin Keeffe, the then Senior Adviser of the Aboriginal Reconciliation Unit, who felt that one way of promoting the
International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples could be via the release of a series of postage stamps that had reconciliation as its central theme (Australia Post Archive Files H912002-1). It was stated by Mr Keeffe that the Keating Labour Government had made the process of reconciliation a high priority of the government policy and that in parliament it had received a high level of cross party support. The ideas expressed by Mr Keeffe were welcomed by Australia Post but due to the fact that the postage stamp issue programme for 1993 had already been finalised, it was not possible to include the reconciliation theme in the International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples (Australia Post Archive Files H912002-1).

What is also of importance concerning the postage stamps released in 1993 is that in the archives of Australia Post there is no mention of the artists views of what it means to them as Aboriginal Australians to have their designs featured on postage stamps. As with the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance series of postage stamps released in 1982, Australia Post sought the opinion of prominent Aboriginal Australians. The then Chairperson of ATSIC Lois O’Donoghue was asked of her thoughts on the designs (Australia Post Archive Files H912012-1). Therefore it is my belief that it is the issues that surround 1993 rather that the actual designs on the postage stamps that are important. For this reason in this chapter I have focused on the issues that surround 1993 as International Year for the World’s Indigenous Peoples rather than the individual series of postage stamps.

The bark painting as a carpet and postage stamp

The final case study that I wish to present in my thesis involves the issue of copyright and is centred around the bark painting by George Milpurrurrru titled The Goose Egg Hunt (1983). This bark painting by George Milpurrurrru 21

21 George Milpurrurrru is highly regarded as an artist. He was commissioned by the Reserve Bank of Australia in 1987 to provide the background design for the commemorative ten dollar note released in 1988.
hangs on the walls of the National Gallery. It was illegally reproduced as a carpet and it was featured by Australia Post as a postage stamp 22 in 1993. The central issue highlighted by this case study (besides the issue of copyright) is why it is inappropriate for this design to be seen on a carpet but nonetheless acceptable for the design to be reproduced on a postage stamp.

I begin by providing a brief outline of the copyright laws that protects an artist's work. In Australia, the law protecting pieces of creativity is the copyright Act of 1968. This law recognises and defines the intellectual property or copyright which exists in an artistic work and secures the right to own and control certain uses of that property for the lifetime of the artist plus fifty years. The main function of copyright for artists is to enable them to control reproduction of their work. In all but a few cases, copyright in an artistic work will automatically be owned by the artist unless assigned by the artist to another person. Copyright is a "civil right" under the law and if unauthorised copies are made, the artist has the right to sue for infringement of copyright (Johnson, 1996, p.10). Of course these are the laws as passed by a government. Aboriginal societies have their own copyright laws. As Vivien Johnson explains in the book Copyrites: Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies:

Aboriginal societies have also developed complex laws designed to protect the intellectual or cultural property of their individual members. Through these laws, individuals are differentiated in their awareness of elements of the local culture and in the way they make use of these elements - depending on such things as their sex, their moiety or skin group, and their initiatory status. Aboriginal people earn or inherit rights to paint certain preexisting designs. Title to such designs under tribal law is such that they cannot be transferred, as property, to the

22 Refer to the visual chronology for a reproduction of this postage stamp (ASC 1126)
ownership of another. The theft of objects bearing someone else's designs carries a severe penalty under Aboriginal law. As custodians of their designs, Aboriginal artists have a legal responsibility to protect them and to pass them on undamaged to future generations. Should the design be changed or stolen, this reflects on the custodian - resulting in loss of self-esteem and personal pain and anguish. Putting a design on a tea towel (carpet or postage stamp) could have detrimental effects on both the cultural relevance of the design to other Aboriginal people and the wider communities' perception of Aboriginal art as worthy of being reproduced properly and with the dignity befitting what it means to the artist and their society (Johnson, 1996, p. 10).

All Aboriginal artists are asking is that the public appreciate the importance of their designs to them and that people ask before the designs are reproduced on any products. If people do reproduce Aboriginal designs illegally, then Aboriginal artists have recourse under the Copyright Act of 1968.

In the Carpet Case three artists from different Aboriginal communities, and the Public Trustee for the Northern Territory on behalf of five deceased Aboriginal artists, sued a Vietnam-based carpet manufacturer and its three (Australian) directors for copyright infringement. The artists sought several remedies under the Copyright Act: a declaration that copyright had been infringed; surrender of the unsold infringing carpets; an order restraining further copyright infringement; and additional damages in acknowledgment of the cultural consequences suffered by the artists and their communities (Janke, 1995, p. 37).

Justice Von Doussa found that the copyright of the artists had been
infringed when their designs, reproduced without permission on carpets which the company made in Vietnam (a country without copyright laws), were imported for sale into Australia. His Honour awarded $188,000 in damages. The offending carpets at issue depicted various Aboriginal designs which had been lifted (and in some cases directly copied) from portfolios of the National Gallery of Australia and the Australian Information Service. The National Gallery of Australia portfolio was designed to present the best Aboriginal works in its collection. The originals had been exhibited nationally and internationally, all with the prior approval of the artists and their communities (Janke, 1995, p.37). Indofurn, on the other hand, reproduced the artwork on their carpets without securing the artists' prior permission. Indeed, the evidence was that one of the company's directors had sought information regarding possible copyright breaches if they manufactured the carpets without permission. Once informed that the possibility was real, he carried on regardless, apparently hoping that copyright would be granted in the future (Blakeney, 1995, p.4).

Justice Von Doussa held that in the Carpet Case infringements had been "plainly deliberate and calculated" and awarded additional damages as a result (Janke, 1995, p.38). Justice Von Doussa took particular notice of the consequences that copyright infringement can have for Aboriginal artists in their respective communities. He also noted how, if unauthorised reproduction of a story or designs occurs, it is the responsibility under Aboriginal law of the traditional owners to take action to preserve the dreaming, and to punish those considered responsible for the breach. Notions of responsibility under Aboriginal law differ from those of the English common law. If permission has been given by the traditional owners to a particular artist to create a picture of the dreaming, and that artwork is later inappropriately used or reproduced by a third party, the artist is held responsible for the breach. This still applies even if the artist had no control over or knowledge of what occurred. Punishment may include preclusion from the right to participate in ceremonies, remo-
val of the right to reproduce paintings of that or any other story of the clan, or being outcast from the community (Janke, 1995, p.38).

Justice Von Doussa also took notice of the distinction between the educative purpose of increasing greater awareness of Aboriginal culture through display of paintings in galleries (which the artists and their communities had agreed to) and the reproduction of the artwork on carpets (where permission was not granted). In the bark painting by George Milpurrurru when produced as a postage stamp was, in the opinion of the artist, "a good thing that is a small piece that flies away, around the world" (Auscript, 1993, folder three, p.237). From this His Honour noted that the latter was "...totally opposed to the cultural use of the imagery employed in this example of his bark painting unless his permission was sought." (Auscript, 1993, folder three, p.237). This is due the fact that the bark painting by George Milpurrurru is considered to be his most important painting and its importance to Milpurrurru is that its full meaning can only be shared during a ceremony.

While in the witness box, Milpurrurru was asked where his painting was and he answered, while pointing towards the carpet "there, him there now" (Auscript, 1993, folder three, p.231). The importance of this comment is that for Milpurrurru the meaning of a design does not cease to exist simply because it is reproduced in a way not intended by the artist. Although produced illegally, the carpet contained a design that still had meaning to Milpurrurru. The same applied when the design is reproduced on a postage stamp. The meaning for the artist and the community is not lost. Perhaps what is most important is that in the case of the postage stamp Australia Post sought and received permission for Milpurrurru's design to be reproduced on a postage stamp (Australia Post Archive File H912002-1). This did not occur when the painting by Milpurrurru was turned into a carpet.
The true importance of the judgement from the Carpet Case is that it will be a valuable precedent for future copyright infringement cases involving Aboriginal creativity. Particularly where the infringer is found to have deliberately disregarded the rights of the copyright owner (whereas Australia Post had sought permission from the copyright owner of the design). Under Aboriginal laws, the extent to which an artwork can be reproduced will depend on its status as a public story available to all or a private story which may contain Ancestral beings and their power. Of course, may pieces of artwork will and can contain elements of both public and private knowledge with only those initiated into the relevant ceremonies being able to recognise the private side of the artwork (Janke, 1995, p.37).

Justice Von Doussa considered that the calculated decision to proceed with manufacture and export after a time when the company and its chief director became aware that there was the possibility of offending the artists and the Aboriginal community, along with infringing copyright, was reprehensible conduct which entitled, his Honour, to award additional damages against them. The Respondents' persistent argument that the works lacked the degree of originality required by the Copyright Act, and so were not entitled to its protection, was a grave strategic error which also contributed to the size of the damages award made against them (Janke, 1995, p.38). In the opinion of the Chair of the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association, Bronwyn Bancroft “This judgement is a landmark in the protection of indigenous cultures in Australia. For too long people have seen it as (open season) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultures ... The message in this case is that indigenous artists in Australia are willing to participate in the cultural and commercial life of the nation on terms that maintain the integrity of their art and culture and which provide fair commercial returns.” (Janke, 1995, p.38).
Analytical overview.

My starting point in this overview is to discuss the input of Aboriginal Australians in the various series of postage stamps. Over the twenty six years from 1971 to 1997, the input of Aboriginal Australians has increased. If one compares the postage stamps series of 1971 and 1982 there is a clear difference. In 1971 there is no direct Aboriginal input and the views of Aboriginal Australians are heard via an anthropologist. This can be compared to 1982 when Australia Post sought the opinion of a number of Aboriginal Australians and Aboriginal organisations. This also happened in 1993 when the then Chairperson of ATSIC Lois O'Donoghue was asked for her thoughts on the designs.

The most important point that should be emphasised is that, regardless of whose voice is heard, it is never the voice of an actual artist or the artist’s community. The closest voice to an artist, one gets to is in words of the many art-advisers that are employed around Australia to promote the creativity of Aboriginal communities in which they work. Certainly it was the voice of an art-adviser that first raised the importance of 1993 to Australia Post. This was Mr. Tony Ellwood who suggested that the communities he represented produced paintings on canvas using ochre that would easily be able to be reproduced as postage stamps. As I have already noted the rationale behind Mr Ellwood writing to Australia Post was that he could see the benefits of being able to say that one of the artists, who paints for Waringari Aboriginal Art, had been reproduced on a postage stamp.

The second area of analysis is whether Australia Post had an awareness of the implications that might have arisen from using examples of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps. It was clear that the Postmaster General’s Department knew in 1971 that within Aboriginal societies certain objects, designs and the associated knowledge was secret-sacred. The evidence of this appeared when I first opened the file that Australia Post has on the
"Aboriginal Art" postage stamp series. Within the file is a sealed envelope that states that the material within is of a secret-sacred nature and that it is not to be reproduced on postage stamps. There are also restrictions on the material being used in any display or at public venues. It is noted that the material is not to be viewed by women. Although Australia Post may not have had a full awareness about the inappropriateness of having a non-Aboriginal designer use Aboriginal creativity without permission from the owners of the design in question, they did understand that some material is very important in Aboriginal societies and that only certain members of the Aboriginal society in question may see and discuss such material.

In later series (from the 1982 Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance until the Dreaming series of 1997) it was left to the discretion of the artists commissioned to produce designs that were considered to be appropriate for reproduction as postage stamps. This is supported by Terri Janke who has written that the right to create artwork depicting creation or Dreaming stories and to use preexisting designs resides with the traditional owners as the custodians of the images. The traditional owners as a collective determine whether images may be used in artwork, by whom the artwork may be created, and the terms, if any, on which they may be reproduced (Janke, 1995, p.37). This is the stance that Australia Post adopted.

The third area of analytical review of my findings relates to whether any of the artists offered comments on their thoughts about having their work reproduced as a postage stamp. Within the archives of Australia Post there was no mention of what the artists thought of having their paintings reproduced on a postage stamp. The only comment that I have managed to uncover on what it may mean for an Aboriginal artists to have their work reproduced on a postage stamp comes from the evidence that George Milpurrurrru gave during the Carpet Case. While giving evidence he was asked whether it was alright for his
painting to be reproduced as a postage stamp. He replied "a good thing that it is a small piece of paper that flies away, around the world" (Auscript, 1993, folder three, p.237).

A fourth area of analysis is that the theoretical perspectives of Howard Morphy and to a lesser degree those of Ian Keen have supported my findings from the archives of Australia Post. This was particularly clear in the case study of the 1982 Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance postage stamp series. The work of Howard Morphy on the rights to paint and the ownership of designs supported what I discovered in the file for that series of postage stamps. The points that Morphy makes and those that Ian Keen makes in his book Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion support my view that a design that is reproduced on a postage stamp still belongs to a recognised Aboriginal "economy of knowledge". By this I mean that the knowledge that is associated with a design is not lost for Aboriginal people simply because Australia Post reproduces the design on a postage stamp.

The final area of analysis is whether Australia Post over time changed the method of how designs for postage stamps are selected. The actual method of using the Stamp Advisory Committee (henceforth SAC) did not change. That is to say suggestions for series are made and then the SAC goes about collecting a number of designs which is then vetted and reduced to around four designs which are sent to the General-Manager for final approval. The only change of importance was that the SAC and Australia Post following the release of the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance series 1982 realised that they had only released postage stamps that featured the work of artists from Arnhem Land. This led to Australia Post releasing postage stamps in the future that showed the diversity of creativity among Aboriginal Australians from various regions. Thus in 1988 a series featuring designs from the Western Desert was released. Then in 1993 the various series that were released
included examples of creativity by Aboriginal women and by those artists often referred to as “urban” artists.

In 1997 it was Aboriginal artists working in the area of animation who had their works featured on postage stamps. Perhaps more important is the fact that Australia Post see the importance of this series as a new direction in working with Aboriginal communities. The animation company (Aboriginal Nations) that produced the animation cells that were then reproduced on postage stamps, had sourced the stories from various Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal Nations gained the permission from elders for the stories (which often are creation stories from the Dreaming) to be told and produced in an animated format (Australia Post Philatelic Group, 1997, p.38). The cultural protocol developed and implemented by Aboriginal Nations, in consultation with Aboriginal communities across Australia, is being used as the basis to establish an international industry standard that deals with indigenous people and culture around the world (Australia Post Philatelic Group, 1997, p.38). This no doubt will be adopted by other Australian companies and government departments such as Australia Post when reproducing examples of Aboriginal creativity in the future. When communities are consulted it recognises that knowledge within Aboriginal communities is owned by a collective rather than an individual.
Chapter 9: Conclusion.

In this thesis entitled "Small Piece Of Paper... Going Out, Flying Around The World: A Preliminary Discussion On The Reproduction Of Aboriginal Creativity On Postage Stamps" I have provided the promised discussion by dividing my thesis into nine chapters, which includes this chapter, of review.

I began this thesis with an introductory chapter in which I outlined how I became interested in my chosen topic. In chapter two I discussed the works of the anthropologists who have provided the theoretical approach to my research. I reviewed Walbiri Iconography which is the work of Nancy Munn. I then moved onto the work of Howard Morphy and Ian Keen who both see Aboriginal creativity as belonging to an "economy of knowledge".

I followed my theoretical approach with a literature review (chapter 3). In this review I examined two bodies of literature. The first body was of an anthropological nature while the second body of literature offered a perspective from Aboriginal Australia. In essence, both bodies of literature had some overlapping focus. In chapter four I discussed two very different but important points. The first of these points focussed on the ethical dilemmas that have risen during the research for and the writing of this thesis. The second point I outlined in chapter four was the methodology that I employed throughout my Honours year.

In chapter five I traced the history of the changing perceptions of Aboriginal creativity. I did this to provide the context within which discussions about putting Aboriginal designs on postage stamps must be read. Then, in chapter six, I provided an overview of the history of Aboriginal creativity being reproduced on postage stamps. Chapters five and six set the scene for the two chapters of case studies (chapters 7 and 8).

In chapter seven I examined two case studies from the period of 1971 to
1982. These were the “Aboriginal Art” series of postage stamps from 1971 and the Aboriginal Culture: Music and Dance series from 1982. The case studies considered in chapter eight come from the period 1984 to 1993. The 1984 case study was on the First Australians “rock art” series of postage stamps. I elected to focus on the postage stamp that reproduced a Wandjina. I then focussed on the importance of the year 1993 in a preliminary discussion of the use made of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps. Then for the third case study I contrasted the use of a design taken from a bark painting by George Milpurrurrnu on a postage stamp with its reproduction as a carpet.

To reinforce analytical comments made throughout preceding chapters, I provided a brief analytical overview of the most important points that I discovered during my research. While this thesis remains a preliminary discussion on the use made of Aboriginal creativity on postage stamps. I do believe that I have succeeded in my aim and have provided an original although modest contribution to the field of Aboriginal studies.
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