



THE INDIGENOUS DEPARTMENT SCREEN AUSTRALIA & NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TELEVISION PRESENTS

# SERVANT OR SLAVE

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SCREEN AUSTRALIA THE INDIGENOUS DEPARTMENT AND NO COINCIDENCE MEDIA  
PRESENT, IN ASSOCIATION WITH SCREEN NEW SOUTH WALES AND NATIONAL  
INDIGENOUS TELEVISION, SERVANT OR SLAVE

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## A STUDY GUIDE BY EMILY DAWSON



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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*Servant (noun): A person employed by another, especially to perform domestic duties.*

*Slave (noun): A person who is forced to work for another against their will.*

## CONTENT HYPERLINKS

### 1 Synopsis

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### 2 Contributors

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### 3 The Australian Curriculum

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### 4 History

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- a Relationship between Australia's Economy and Aboriginal Labour
- b Aboriginal Rights and Freedoms in Australia

### 5 Civics and Citizenship

---

- a Laws and citizens
- b Problem-solving and decision-making

### 6 Health and Physical Education: Personal, social and community health

---

- a Expectations
- b Removal from Country and the weakening of Culture
- c Breaking the Cycle of Trauma

### 7 Languages / Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages: Understanding – Role of Languages Building

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### 8 National Professional Standards for Teachers

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### 9 The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

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### 10 Further resources

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## Synopsis

*Servant or Slave* is an emotional insight into both the history and legacy of the domestic servitude enforced upon Aboriginal people in Australia. Crucially confronting, the hidden reality of slavery existing throughout Australia's history is told through the stories of five women. Many thousands of girls were stolen as young children from their parents and placed in institutions to be trained as servants, with the 'aim of assimilation' into 'mainstream' Australian society.

Rita Wright, Violet West, and sisters Adelaide, Valerie (Linow) and Rita Wenberg share their firsthand accounts of officially sanctioned enslavement. Their stories reveal what was the true intent of the Australian government policy of 'protection' prevalent throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Rita, Violet and the Wenberg sisters endured estrangement from their families, immense hardship, rape, torture and were coerced into remaining silent, or even punished, for reporting mistreatment to the local police or institutional authorities. The women continue to live with the trauma of surviving these atrocities caused by the hand of the State. With the government exercising complete control over their wages, many Aboriginal girls and boys were effectively condemned to a treadmill of abuse, from which there was little hope of escape.

Doctor Fiona Skyring, Doctor Ros Kidd and Professor Larissa Behrendt provide expert testimonies supported by archival footage. Together, they provide evidence that from the early 1920s, Aboriginal wages were misappropriated by the government in order to cover their own liabilities. Sadly, these even

*You cannot separate [such suffering] from the belays that sits at the heart of so many of the socioeconomic issues and the policy issues that we see today*

STAN GRANT, JOURNALIST

included the cost of removing people to missions and reserves, as well as the forcible removal of children. *Servant or Slave* therefore reveals that through the misappropriation or theft of their wages, Aboriginal people unwittingly funded their own disenfranchisement.

These heartbreaking experiences shed light on a barely acknowledged part of modern Australia's history whose consequences are still felt today. All Australian Indigenous families have been affected by the systematic dispossession and injustices inflicted at the hands of government policy. As journalist Stan Grant, stated in his address to the staff of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2016, "You cannot separate [such suffering] from the belays that sits at the heart of so many of the socioeconomic issues and the policy issues that we see today" (Grant 2016). It is up to schools to ensure that these stories continue to be told, discussed and learned from in order to move towards healing the wounds of our recent history. Through acknowledgement, those still affected by the intergenerational harm caused by Australian government policy can be empowered. Equally, *all* students will be empowered by truly understanding the legacy Australia inherited as a nation from past injustices in order to move forward and promote change.





## Contributors

» **VALERIE LINOW** is a Bundjalung woman. Valerie was taken to Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home at the age of 2 with her sisters Patricia and Rita. Her father came to visit her but the police took him away. She only remembers him from a distance and this is her only memory of him. She stayed at Bomaderry until she was 9 years old and then she was sent to the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. Upon arrival she met her other sisters Rita and Adelaide for the first time. They had little to do with each other as the Matrons separated them. Valerie was sent to work for a former police officer who later owned the bakery in town at the age of 15. She was forced to milk cows and look after the baby. She remembers having no idea how to look after a baby. The police officer raped Valerie for watering down the milk. Fortunately, she was visited by a policeman to whom she told what had happened, and he returned her to Cootamundra Girls. She eventually ran away to Redfern and was then taken to Parramatta Girls Home where she attempted to commit suicide at the age of 18.

» **RITA WENBERG** was stolen when she was three-years-old, just as all of her eight siblings were also. Two of their siblings, Dorothy and John, died of neglect while Wards of the State. "Being so young as I was I thought, 'Oh well, this is natural to be abused, you know and thrown in a box room and whipped and things like that,'" Rita recalls of her experience. Despite their repeated pleas for the return of their children, Rita's parents were formerly advised that the removal of their children was justified due to parental neglect.

» **ADELAIDE WENBERG** was also born in Grafton and taken to Cootamundra Girls Home at the age of four. She recalls that, "There was no love up there, none whatsoever" and that "They never told us why we were taken. Never". Her first Matron was Mrs. Colthard followed by Mrs. Hiscock. Adelaide



*There was no love up there, none whatsoever. They never told us why we were taken. Never.*

ADELAIDE WENBERG

was whipped in a bathtub at the age of 13 years old and sustained injury and then the loss of her kidney aged 19. She served for one month at the Pickering Homestead where she was abused and almost killed. Whilst there she ran away and was caught by a policeman known as 'Constable' (His name is known yet withheld as the crimes were not reported by the Matron of the Home, and to date no criminal charges have been laid, nor has a complaint been lodged with the Victims of Crime tribunal. The Constable is now deceased.) The 'Constable' exposed himself to her and tried to pay Adelaide 2 pounds to participate in sexual activity. She was lucky to escape. She moved to Rose Bay with the Watt family at the age of 15 where she was responsible for looking after Elizabeth Watt who was wheelchair bound. She met a man, Mr Remington, at the age of 24 and fell pregnant with their only son, Robert Wenberg. Their relationship didn't last. She stayed with Elizabeth for 50 years in Rose Bay and was one of three people nominated in Elizabeth's Will when she passed away. Adelaide now lives in Wollongong, NSW, on her own.

» **VIOLET WEST**, originally from Dubbo NSW, moved to Peak Hill with her parents and siblings. Whilst visiting the police station with her parents, she remained outside with her siblings playing on the lawn. At the young age of five, the welfare board took her and her sister. Violet's older brothers ran in to inform the parents resulting in her mother screaming and wailing. Shortly after being stolen, her mother fell ill and her father continued to work in Gilgandra mine to assist with supporting his wife and sons, but without her daughters, her mother died, Violet says it was due to a broken heart. Having to be independent from such a young age, Violet was defiant and stubborn, picking fights with other girls at Cootamundra and challenging the staff. She recalls bringing the strife upon herself due to being mischievous, resulting in having to scrub the bricks and



cleaning whilst the others got to enjoy outdoor activities. She remembers being forced to learn to cook and clean, practicing a foreign religion and being integrated into the local public school in town where she attended without any shoes. She smiles and laughs whilst talking about her childhood as she is adamant that she didn't conform and kept her identity, they may have taken her from her family, but they could not mold her into something she wasn't.

- » **RITA WRIGHT** was born in Brewarrina, NSW, 1953. Rita was removed from her family at the age of 2, and sent to Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls for processing, down to Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home, and later to Redacted mission, which was run by the Redacted family. Working on the farm, Rita spent most of the day picking fruit that would later be sold by the family, as well as caring for the chickens, milking the cows, skimming the milk and whipping the butter. These duties were undertaken every morning - rain, hail or shine - and barefoot even in the winter. All the while she received neither payment nor education. Rita was released from the mission at the age of 19 and was given no contact details or any information regarding her family. Lost, she lived on the streets and 'couched surfed' through Redfern. Here she felt her first sense of freedom, even when she was eating out of rubbish bins and sleeping in Victoria Park, as she was free from the authority and control of anyone else.
- » **DOCTOR ROS KIDD**'s PhD investigated how Queensland governments controlled Aboriginal lives between 1840-1988. Based on open access to government files, the thesis was reworked in 1997 as *The Way We Civilise*. A subsequent book, *Black Lives, Government Lies* was written as a response to federal government rhetoric that removal of Aboriginal children was 'for their own good' and 'a long time ago'. Dr Kidd's evidence to the HREOC Inquiry into underpaid wages at Palm Island revealed the government had deliberately and intentionally pursued this policy until 1986 knowing underpayment was illegal after the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. The Beattie government paid



out \$40 million in compensation. Ros' writings over many years in part forced the latest government offer of \$55 million as compensation on the stolen wages. Dr Kidd also undertakes historical research for Native Title claims.

- » **PROFESSOR LARISSA BEHRENDT** is a Eualeyai/Kamillaroï woman. She is the Professor of Law and Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. She is admitted to the Supreme Court of the ACT and NSW as a barrister. Larissa is a Land Commissioner at the Land and Environment Court and the Alternate Chair of the Serious Offenders Review Board, a member of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia and a founding member of the Australian Academy of Law. She is the Chair of the Humanities and Creative Arts panel of the Australian Research Council College of Experts. She is the author of several books on Indigenous legal issues. She won the 2002 David Unaipon Award and a 2005 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for her novel *Home*. Her latest novel, *Legacy*, is due for release in October this year. Larissa is a past Board Member of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, a board member of Tranby Aboriginal College and a Chair of the Bangarra Dance Theatre. She was named as 2009 NAIDOC Person of the Year.
- » **DOCTOR FIONA SKYRING** is a Sydney-based historian who works for native title organisations, and contributes to a range of community history projects and academic publications. She has worked as an expert witness historian for the Kimberley Land Council in Western Australia, and gave evidence on behalf of native title applicants in five trials in the Federal Court of Australia. In 2006, Fiona prepared several submissions on behalf of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (Inc.) for the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Stolen Wages, and gave evidence at the Inquiry hearings in Perth.
- » **STEVEN MCGREGOR** (Director)
  - "I would like audiences to walk away from this film with a sense of empathy for the ladies and to acknowledge their story. I hope this film starts a conversation that Australia was also entrenched in the slave trade and that it didn't just happen in other parts of the world but right here. Also I would like the audience to admire the strength of the ladies"
  - In addition to McGregor, *Servant or Slave* is backed by a stellar production team including Writer/Narrator **HETTI PERKINS** (*art + soul*) and Writer/Producer **MITCHELL STANLEY** (NITV's *Colour Theory*).



## The Australian Curriculum

*Servant or Slave* directly meets the aims of the Year 10 History, Civics & Citizenship as well as the Health Education content descriptions of the Australian Curriculum. The film also allows students to develop their Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding and Personal and Social general capabilities, through the lens of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority.

This study guide will outline how to work through *Servant or Slave* with your students, by directly linking the themes and issues addressed in the film with the requirements of the Australian Curriculum.

Teachers must exercise caution in teaching this incredibly important film. Year 10 is deemed the most appropriate year level to work through the content of the film. However it could be shown to earlier year levels if teachers believe their classes to be emotionally mature enough to work through the confronting Australian history of the rape, abuse and slavery of Aboriginal people.

Such subject matter is painful and perhaps challenging for teachers to work through with their students (especially exercise caution throughout the final questions of this study guide). However, *Servant or Slave* aptly explains the abhorrent history of Australian policy that paved the way for the country's political and economic position it is in today. More importantly, students will come to understand the vast upheaval these policies had on the lives of Aboriginal families, the emotional, economic, physical and psychological repercussions of which burden those still today.

This study guide hopes to equip students with critical analytical skills in order to understand why Aboriginal people continue to experience such hardship and marginalisation today due to the genocidal policies of child removal and assimilation at the hands of the State. In doing so, students will develop skills in civics and citizenship by being more informed and ideally, motivated to promote change and equality in Australia.

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### CURRICULUM STRAND:

#### History

The Year 10 Australian History Curriculum provides the study of the history of the modern world and Australia from 1918 to the present. The twentieth century became a critical period in Australia's social, cultural, economic and political development. To develop both strands of historical knowledge and historical skills, Year 10 students should be able to interpret sources, analyse different perspectives, display empathy and scrutinise evidence of modern history.

### SERVANT OR SLAVE THEME:

#### Relationship between Australia's Economy and Aboriginal Labour

Relevant Year 10 History content descriptions:

- ACOKFH022
- *Extend Historical Skills:*
- ACHHS182
- ACHHS190
- ACHHS191

*Servant or Slave* illustrates the enormous profitability of the State due to the contribution of Aboriginal free labour. Dr. Fiona Skyring discusses how pastoral stations were not viable economic propositions without the huge economic contribution that Aboriginal people made to the industry.

*"Aboriginal workers on stations just couldn't up and leave when they wanted to, they were bound by employment contracts and employment permits. In economic terms they were making so much money for the pastoral station owners because they were being paid either nothing at all, or a fraction of the award wages".* – Doctor Fiona Skyring





## SERVANT OR SLAVE THEME:

### Aboriginal Rights and Freedoms in Australia:

Relevant Year 10 History content descriptions:

- ACDSEH023
- ACDSEH104
- ACDSEH106
- ACDSEH134
- ACDSEH143

#### STUDENT QUESTIONS:

- 1 Explain the implications of the exploitation of Aboriginal domestic workers for Australia's:
  - a Social development
  - b Cultural development
  - c Economic development
  - d Political development
- 2 Explain what you think the “one-way transfer of economic resources” was that Dr. Fiona Skyring refers to during the film?
- 3 How were the wages earned by Aboriginal people during this time managed by the ‘Aborigines Department’?
- 4 Research how much the wage was that these workers might have received (if any). If 80% was paid in work shirts, tobacco and other mandatory items, what could these workers purchase with the remaining 20% during this time?
- 5 When was the *Racial Discrimination Act* implemented? What effect did this have on the payment of Aboriginal wages, if any?
- 6 In her discussion of the movements for Equal Pay and Worker’s Rights. Dr. Ros Kidd refers to the pittance the workers received, if any, as “pocket money”.
  - a Do you think that this would be offensive to Aboriginal people? Explain.
  - b The Northern Territory Intervention “income management scheme” suspends between 50-100% of welfare payments paid to Aboriginal people (Australian Human Rights Commission 2007). Discuss what similarities there are between this recent legislation and past policies of white control over Aboriginal money.
  - c What other strategies could the government, during both eras, have implemented instead?
- 7 In your own words, what is Australia’s Stolen Wages Story?
- 8 How is Australia’s Stolen Wages Story entwined with the Stolen Generation’s Story?
- 9 Find definitions for both of the words ‘servant’ and ‘slave’. Discuss as a class what the differences are between each term.
- 10 Professor Larissa Behrendt argues that the exploitation of Aboriginal labour during this time is a precursor to the poverty today in Indigenous communities. How?



*“We were treated like slaves... we kept that farm going”*

RITA WRIGHT

- 1 Investigate the legacy of children’s experiences in ‘care’ (their placement in orphanages, Children’s Homes, foster care and other forms of out-of-home-care), and the significance of the 1990 United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child.
- 2 Larissa Behrendt discusses how the belief at the time was that “the best time to remove children was the youngest you could possibly get them”. What are the implications of removing children at a young age from their families, rather than when they are older?
- 3 What new legislation or policies do you think would be appropriate reparations for victims of the Stolen Generations?
- 4 How would the following reparations be successful?
  - a Acknowledgment and apology
  - b Guarantees against repetition
  - c Measures of restitution and rehabilitation
  - d Monetary compensation
- 5 How have rights and freedoms been ignored, demanded or achieved in Australia?
- 6 What are the origins and significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
  - a What was Australia’s involvement in the development of the declaration?
- 7 Research the background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for



AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES CONFERENCE  
Sesqui-Centenary

DAY OF MOURNING & PROTEST

to be held in

THE AUSTRALIAN HALL, SYDNEY  
(No. 148 Elizabeth Street)

on

WEDNESDAY, 26th JANUARY, 1938  
(Australia Day)

from

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION WILL BE MOVED:

"WE, representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in Conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the whitemen's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian Nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY."

*Aborigines and Persons of Aboriginal Blood only are invited to attend. Please come if you can!*

Signed for and on behalf of  
THE ABORIGINES PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

J. T. Patten, President.  
W. Ferguson, Organising Secretary

Address: c/o Box 1924 KK  
General Post Office, Sydney



- rights and freedoms before 1965. List a timeline of significant events.
- 8 Explain the 1938 'Day of Mourning'. **See above.**
  - 9 After watching *Servant or Slave*, write a personal response about the major events and issues that affected you the most and why.
  - 10 Describe the aims, tactics and outcomes of the following events during the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' struggle for rights and freedoms:
    - a 1962 right to vote federally

- b 1967 Referendum
  - c Racial Discrimination Act
  - d Reconciliation
  - e Mabo decision
  - f Bringing Them Home Report into the Stolen Generations
  - g The Apology
- 11 Research the methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Investigate the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle.
  - 12 What is the continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia?
  - 13 What is the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
    - a Explain what it protects.
  - 14 Identify areas (such as education, health, work) that are the focus for continued civil rights action for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
    - a Are they sufficient?
    - b How could they be improved?

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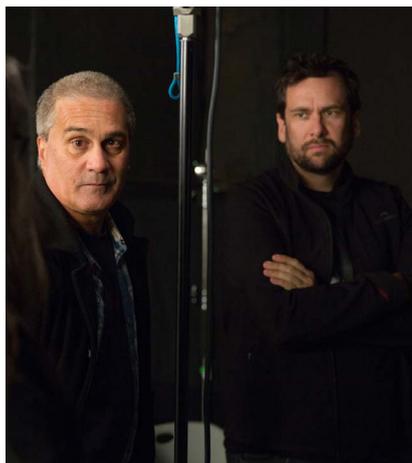
**CURRICULUM STRAND:**

**Civics and Citizenship:  
Laws and citizens**

Relevant Year 10 content descriptions:

- ACHCK093

- 1 Research and read the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of a Child (1990).
  - a What breaches shown in *Servant or Slave* of this declaration can you identify?
  - b Are these rights being adequately protected today?
  - c How?
- 2 Research and read the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
  - a What breaches shown in *Servant or Slave* of





Stolen Generations in New South Wales - Media Release 29 June 2015 (see Further Resources). Summarise the purpose of the document.

- 5 Research the 2006 Inquiry into Stolen Wages
  - a Mentioned in the *Servant or Slave*, what did the Senate committee find significant?
  - b What was the amount of stolen wages found in Queensland alone?
  - c How many years has it been for claimants who are still waiting for compensation?
  - d Has a policy been written to protect future exploitative practices?
- 6 During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Commonwealth had the power to make laws relating to any race of people in Australia except for Aboriginal people. Federated states retained exclusive power over Aboriginal affairs until 1967 referendum. Explain the main differences between State and Federal (Commonwealth) powers.
- 7 Find a definition for the word 'protection'. How was this definition distorted during this time?
- 8 What do you think is meant by "officially sanctioned enslavement"?
- 9 What do you think the true intent of the government policy of 'protection' prevalent throughout the twentieth century really was?
- 10 Professor Larissa Behrendt discusses how 'protection' and 'welfare' were ironic words during this time. How?

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### CURRICULUM STRAND:

## Civic & Citizenship: Problem-solving and decision-making

Relevant Year 10 content descriptions:

- ACHCS099
- 1 Radio host, Alan Jones, recently stated on national radio that "we need stolen generations" - The Age, Wednesday 24 February 2016, p. 46.
    - a What do you think the repercussions of someone in such positions influence are by



- c this declaration can you identify?
  - b Are these rights being adequately protected today?
  - c How?
  - d If not, what steps need to be taken to ensure the rights of Indigenous peoples are protected?
- 3 Research and read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
  - a What breaches shown in *Servant or Slave* of this declaration can you identify?
  - b Are these rights being adequately protected today?
  - c How?
- 4 Read the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) that resulted from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Their Families.
  - a Which of these recommendations do you think would benefit the storytellers of *Servant or Slave*?
  - b Do you think these recommendations suffice?
  - c What different recommendations would you include?
  - d Read the Inquiry into Reparations for the

saying this?

- b How can you consider multiple perspectives in order to inform your position on an issue?
  - c How would you negotiate a discussion with Alan Jones, equipped with the knowledge learnt in *Servant or Slave*?
- 2 Professor Larissa Behrendt acknowledges that reparations are a “very tricky issue”, especially when long-term psychological damage has taken place. How would you resolve this contentious issue?
- a What legal remedies do you believe are appropriate for the victims?
  - b Do you think that legal remedies are enough to compensate the vast array of abuses that have been inflicted upon Aboriginal people?
  - c What other remedies or negotiations could



*We were all sitting on the outside, the officer, where they had their meals, on the steps and the matron said, “Oh, Adelaide’s a very clever little girl” and one of the officers said, “What’s the point of her being clever, she’s only going to be a domestic”. And that stuck with me and I never tried again, never.’*

ADELAIDE

be offered to the victims and their families?

- 3 When Peter Beattie was in government in Queensland, \$55.6 million was awarded to the victims of stolen wages. This amounted to \$2,000 for younger victims and \$4,000 for older victims. No money was offered to the families of the victims who had since deceased.
- a Do you think these reparations are adequate? Why/why not?
  - b How do you think the victims would have felt upon hearing this news?
  - c How do you think the families whose family members had since deceased felt about not receiving any compensation?
  - d How would these families be affected by the legacy of their relative’s trauma, despite them since passing?



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### CURRICULUM STRAND:

### Health and Physical Education: Personal, Social and Community Health

Relevant Year 10 content descriptions:

- ACPPS089
- ACPPS090
- ACPPS092
- ACPPS093
- ACPPS094
- ACPPS098

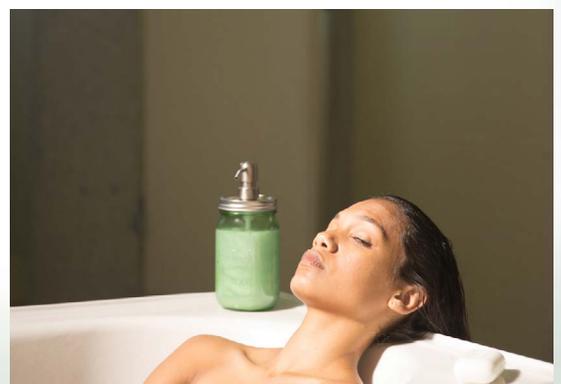
### SERVANT OR SLAVE THEME:

### Expectations

- 1 *‘I loved school. I loved it with a dear passion; I did very well at school... We were all sitting on the outside, the officer, where they had their meals, on the steps and the matron said, “Oh, Adelaide’s a very clever little girl” and one of the officers said, “What’s the point of her being clever, she’s only going to be a domestic”. And that stuck with me and I never tried again, never.’*

– Adelaide Wenberg

- a What factors shaped Adelaide’s identity today?
- b How do you think low expectations of Adelaide would have affected her motivation to achieve?





age of two with her sisters. Unfortunately, where Valerie is from, “It’s not really important, to me it’s not ‘cause I was too much in the institutions”. She discovered more family members at other Children’s Homes but she “...wasn’t brought up with them. If you’re not brought up with someone how could you connect?” Rita Wenberg also shared that she grew up not knowing that her siblings were also in the Home and is now not close with her biological brothers and sisters stating, “...they’re strangers”.

- a What would the repercussions of being removed from her Country at two-years-old be for Valerie?
- b How would living in the Children’s Home impact Valerie’s ability to speak and connect in her own language?
- c How do you think Valerie’s ability to have relationships with her family, siblings and friends be impacted by living in the Home from such a young age?

5 Adelaide stated that, “When we were all taken, he [dad] just took to drink, you know all his kids were gone so what the hell? He had nothing to live for.” Just as Valerie stated that when the boys and girls escaped their enslavement, they “get on the drugs and get on the alcohol”. Why do you think this is?

- c When have you felt you didn’t want to try because of the impact of someone else around you?
  - d What role do you think self-esteem has in one’s identity?
  - e How can others impact one’s self-esteem, both positively and negatively?
- 2 When a female station owner is interviewed in *Servant or Slave*, she refers to her non-Indigenous workers as “white housemaids” while labeling her Aboriginal workers as “girls”. Why do you think this is? What effect would this have for the:
- a White workers
  - b Indigenous workers
  - c Station owners

*If you’re not brought up with someone how could you connect?”*

VALERIE

**SERVANT OR SLAVE THEME:**

**Removal from Country and the weakening of Culture**

- 3 Violet West tells us how she was told she was removed from her family and put in the Home because they said that her mother “was a dirty drunken woman” and that she was supposed to have been malnourished. However, she has no memory of this and her Aunty told her that her mother “was one of the cleanest women up there in Brewarrina”. Please check correct spelling.
- a Why do you think the authorities lied to Violet?
  - b Do you think that just because people live differently that they deserve to be removed from loving families and put into Homes, where “there is no love”? Explain your answer.
- 4 People and place are crucial foundations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Valerie was forcibly removed and sent to Bomaderry Children’s Home at the



- 6 What flow-on effect would the stealing of children have on:
  - a Their families?
  - b Their communities?
  - c Their language and cultural knowledge?
- 7 Professor Larissa Behrendt discusses the devastation that was left behind in the community after taking 50 to 100 children away. List the different repercussions from this type of trauma to communities at this time.
- 8 Behrendt also refers to the trauma to the individual child, “especially after fourteen years time when you turn that child into something that it shouldn’t be”. What do you think she means by this?

### SERVANT OR SLAVE THEME:

## Breaking the Cycle of Trauma

- 9 The women were subjected to an “enormous amount of abuse” which they continue to live with everyday – as Professor Larissa Behrendt highlights, “these are not matters of the past”. What ripple effect can you imagine this trauma might have on these women’s futures?
- 10 Adelaide was abused with a cat-of-nine-tails during her time at the Home, where a lifetime of pain was inflicted. For what reason was she whipped?
- 11 Rita Wright recalls how she was stolen from her home as she was playing with her sisters, stating that, “It hurts to see what the welfare had done to us”. Explain how you think this explains the beginning of bad relationships with welfare and state authorities for Indigenous people.
- 12 Rita Wenberg and Valerie Linow share how they endured horrific instances of rape and kept it to themselves. Rita believed that, “We’ll get into trouble and they won’t believe me anyway”. What do you think would happen psychologically to someone who had gone through such abuse and had no support to work through it?
- 13 It is important to understand the intergenerational trauma that is handed down to Indigenous children after their parents and grandparents were treated so atrociously. How would future generations share the burden of these traumas?
- 14 These women were brainwashed and “taught that white fellas were the superior race”. After living in these Homes for so many years it took Rita Wright “a long time to realise that I wasn’t really white”. What effect would this brainwashing have on Rita, and on her family and community?
- 15 Why do you think many Indigenous people after enduring such traumas found themselves homeless and unemployed?
- 16 What examples from the film can you remember of when these women found it very difficult to be in families of their own once they were free?
- 17 How was the trust of these women affected?



- 18 Why do you think these women found it challenging to have children of their own?
- 19 Rita Wright says that they were “treated as slaves, as little children. We were like dogs”. How would this affect *your* self-esteem?
- 20 In what ways did these women work through their depression?
- 21 The women display incredible strength in being determined not to be broken. Why do you think the Australian government tried so hard to break these women?
- 22 Why did Rita have to go to TAFE as a grown woman to learn about her people?
- 23 Why were these women not taught about their people and histories in school?
- 24 Do you believe that these women were slaves? Explain.
- 25 Write the reasons why you think these women deserve to be “proud Aboriginal women”.

...

*Also to be considered, where relevant, in relations to the questions listed above is content strand:*

### **Languages / Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages: Understanding – Role of Languages Building**

Relevant Year 10 content descriptions:  
ACLFWU066:

*Investigate programs, initiatives and techniques that keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages strong*



- *Understanding the importance of intergenerational collaboration and transmission in keeping languages strong and discussing some of the associated challenges*
- *Exploring the role and importance of advocacy in supporting the maintenance and development of language and culture*

## *National Professional Standards for Teachers*

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (launched in February 2011) have been an important response by the Australian educational system where in the problems of Indigenous education are critical.

Focus area 1.4 provides strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while focus area 2.4 mandates teachers to ‘understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ (AITSL 2015). These requirements are interwoven and place expectations on all teachers to be committed to challenging colonial paradigms surrounding the delivery of education.

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* states (AITSL, 2011b, p. 11) that:

- At Graduate Level that a teacher can:  
*Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.*
- At Proficient Level that a teacher can:  
*Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.*
- At Highly Accomplished Level that a teacher can:  
*Support colleagues with providing opportunities for students to develop understanding of and*

*respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and Languages.*

- At Lead Level that a teacher can:  
*Lead initiatives to assist colleagues with opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.*

This is arguably a more complicated Focus Area to measure and address because it is predicated in the personal understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies held by each teacher and how this translates into their professional practice in promoting reconciliation (Monash University, Edith Cowan University and Charles Sturt University 2013, p. 23)

## *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians encourages students to:

*Understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians [and in doing so] become active and informed citizens (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008, p. 8).*

By holding Indigenous knowledge in esteem and teaching learning outcomes from alternate viewpoints, students and teachers can work toward attaining these educational aims. Using these curriculum outcomes in partnership with professional standards contracts teachers to recognise how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education allows for students to transmit cultural heritage and self-empowerment.



## Further resources

Trustees on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages – Rosalind Kidd: <http://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/products/trustees-trial-recovering-stolen-wages/ebook>

Justice: A History of the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia – Fiona Skyring: <http://uwap.uwa.edu.au/collections/fiona-skyring/products/justice-a-history-of-the-aboriginal-legal-service-of-western-australia>

Australian Curriculum: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>

Bringing Them Home Report (1997) - National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Their Families

The Marumali Program: <http://marumali.com.au>

United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of a Child (1990)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians: [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf)

Monash University, Edith Cowan University and Charles Sturt University, (2013). A unit outline and content for professional learning units to support teachers in meeting Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4. February 2013.



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