Designing with Indigenous Knowledge:
Policy and protocols for respectful and authentic cross-cultural representation in communication design practice

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Key words

Appropriation, collaboration, consultation, design, ethical, Indigenous, knowledge, professional, practice, representation, respect.
Preface

It is important for me to declare at the outset that I, the author of this PhD dissertation, am not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander decent. I pursue this research from the perspective of a communication designer who is unclear about the positioning of Indigenous culture within Australia’s national identity. My motivation emanates from a concern I have had for many years about the representation, referencing and application of Indigenous culture in professional design practice.

The topic of Indigenous culture representation has attracted little academic study in the field of communication design. This lack of specific literature required this dissertation to align knowledge from both the fine arts and social sciences. This required building an informed level of familiarity with fields of cross-cultural research, cultural appropriation, nation building and the law (Indigenous cultural expression and heritage). Having stated that, it should be made clear that this research is positioned firmly in the field of design studies. It references and intersects associated areas of epistemology, as ‘design’ research should. However, this dissertation does not claim to speak with expert authority in the fields law, philosophy, ethics of appropriation or the social sciences. This study is framed from a practitioner’s perspective (Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous) and is specifically focused on appropriate, ethical conduct of design practice.

Although not an Indigenous Australian, I have a long-standing interest in exploring the relationship between Australian Indigenous culture and national identity. Over the past three decades, I have worked on projects that operated at the intersection of cross-cultural design practice. I believe it is important for Australia and other countries to appropriately acknowledge and represent their Indigenous heritage in the expressions of communication design.

NOTE: The following dissertation uses a number of phrases and terms to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples (see Glossary). They include ‘Indigenous’, ‘Indigenous Australian’, ‘Aboriginal’, and ‘Aboriginal and ‘Torres Strait Island (ATSI)’. In some cases, the document refers specifically to community, tribal or regional names of Aboriginal sectors. In most cases, the term, ‘Indigenous’ is used when it clearly applies to the Australian context.
I have used the one-word term, ‘Indigenous’ because it is an efficient way to describe all people whose ancestors were the original, pre-colonial people of the country we now know as Australia.

Since 1984, I have worked to refine methodologies and improve practice methods involving both commercial and non-commercial projects featuring Indigenous themes and content. In retrospect, these methods could have been better, but it is fair to say they improved incrementally over that period. My related experiences, as professional designer, filmmaker and academic, highlighted the need for rigorous academic examination into this issue. Following is a summary of projects I have worked on that have required respectful consideration of Indigenous knowledge.

In 1984, I commenced research for Rose against the odds, an internationally distributed television mini-series about Aboriginal boxer Lionel Rose. My credits were co-creator, co-producer and second unit director. I was also involved as a screenplay researcher. The Seven Network first broadcast Rose against the odds in Australia in 1990.

Related academic research in this area involved the exploration of national identity, Indigenous culture and vexillography (flag design). In 2003, my Masters thesis proposed a new Australian flag design and supporting ensigns, including an Australian Reconciliation flag. This research activity was undertaken in the Department of Design at Monash University with the support of Monash University’s Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies (CAIS). An outcome of this research was the Australian Reconciliation flag, which is currently flown at schools and Aboriginal communities across Australia. In 2000, it was officially recognised by the Nillumbik Shire Council in Victoria.

In 2005, I initiated and established INDIGO, an International Indigenous design network. This initiative was developed with the assistance of a research grant from the Institute for the Study of Global Movements at Monash University. The 2006 pilot project involved collaborative workshops and exhibitions with undergraduate students from both the University of Hartford in the USA and Monash University in Australia. These workshops, called the Migrant Indigenous Exchange 2006 (MIX06), were co-developed by Robert L. Peters, Koopman Distinguished Chair in the Visual Arts at the University of Hartford, and myself. The workshop outcomes were exhibited in galleries at the respective campuses in the USA and Australia under the title of One step back, two steps forward. MIX06 explored the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture within the context of national
identity. It also investigated issues of cross-cultural co-creation and the methodologies required to do so effectively. It was a successful pilot project for INDIGO and also inspired further research in this area. I regard MIX06 as a precursor to this PhD study.

In 2014, INDIGO still presents opportunities for local and Indigenous designers across the globe to exchange knowledge and experiences. It provides a platform for evolving creative expressions that shape the formation of national and cultural identities. INDIGO is supported by the international design community and hosted in Montreal, Canada, by Icograda, the International Council of Design Associations, a partner of the International Design Alliance (IDA).

I acknowledge that although the above-mentioned projects employed considered methods of Indigenous engagement they would all have benefited from scientifically based practice systems, including protocols and the broader consideration of cultural ontologies. Although there are protocol guides for the visual and media arts, there is no resource dedicated specifically to communication design. My past experiences and long-standing interest in this area have provided the inspiration and motivation for this research. My aim is to develop processes for professional engagement with Indigenous design and visual culture. This new knowledge can then be used as a practice method tool for designers and image creation companies.
Abstract

Despite the existence of protocols for the creation, distribution and ownership of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual and media arts, there remains a lack of information, guidance and professional leadership regarding the appropriate creation and commercial use of Indigenous graphical representations. This dissertation responds directly to Australian Government and professional representative design associations. The Australian Government has called on the creative industries to consider more closely the relationship between Indigenous cultures and national identity. The design profession, represented by peak bodies, the Design Institute of Australia (DIA) and the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), have identified a need to develop methods to assist communication designers to understand and appropriately represent Indigenous ontology in their work.

The literature review identified a clear knowledge gap existing between the practices of communication designers and the representation of Indigenous ontology. This suggests that guidance is needed in relation to the use of Indigenous culture in communication design practice. It also highlights the sensitivities, sensibilities and commercial dynamics associated with this issue, which also impacts on the relationship of Indigenous cultures to the Australian national identity.

Using a qualitative approach involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, this dissertation aims to investigate the role of the design profession and governments in developing an associated strategic innovation policy. The primary question of this research asks: Are protocols required to assist practising communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the respectful representation of Australian Indigenous visual culture in communication design practice. And if so, what should they be?

The suggestion of protocols and practice guidelines raises additional questions such as whose voice do they speak with; who speaks on behalf of whom and what protocols would need to be put in place for use by designers (non-Indigenous and Indigenous)?

This dissertation presents an argument that the Australian design profession requires workable methods and processes to help practising designers access and engage appropriately and ethically with Indigenous knowledge on projects that involve the graphical
depiction of Indigenous culture, national authenticity and the specific representation of ‘place’.

The study also considers Indigenous designers who may require guidance when working on projects from unfamiliar regions of Australia and/or involving communities other than their own (out of country). It further argues that the proactive facilitation of authentic, visible representation of Indigenous culture would also advance the reconciliation process by promoting respectful cross-cultural exchange.

Qualitative research processes were used to gather empirical data. These processes included the use of secondary data, interviews with 41 Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders and documented outcomes of a focus group/workshop attended by nine key stakeholders, including professional association representatives and owners of Indigenous design companies.

The data was evaluated and used to inform professional practice protocols and processes for respectful engagement with, and authentic representation of, Indigenous culture. The process resulted in the creation of content and structure for a proposed design practice document. The draft document outlines a recommended framework for engagement, including ethical codes of conduct for use by communication design practitioners when undertaking projects requiring visual representation of Indigenous culture.

It is envisaged that formal methods to improve ‘impact and effective practices’ could be used by Australian professional design associations in the development of a design industry charter and/or associated professional practice guidelines. There is also potential for further post-doctoral research activity involving policy development for other countries with similar Indigenous knowledge and communication design practice dynamics.
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The following definition of the term ‘Indigenous peoples’ is the author’s interpretation of what can sometimes be a contentious term. When referring to people, the word ‘Indigenous’ can differ in meaning, but for the sake of efficiency and the lack of a more appropriate alternative word the author has opted to use the United Nations definition of ‘Indigenous peoples’.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues makes the following statement:

*Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples, an official definition of ‘indigenous’ has not been adopted by any UN-system body. Instead the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following:*

- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UNPFOII, 2013).
TERMS

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS – people whose ancestors were indigenous to the Australian continent.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES – those whose ancestors were the original, pre-colonial people of the region.

ABORIGINAL MAP OF AUSTRALIA (AIATSIS) – The AIASIS Map represents language, tribal or nation groups of Australia’s Indigenous peoples.

AUTHENTIC – This dissertation uses the words ‘authentic’ and ‘authenticity’ in a context, derived from the Greek authentikós, which means ‘original’.

COMMUNICATION DESIGN – the term used to describe the profession, which encompasses the disciplines of both graphic and digital/interactive design. This definition reflects the global shift from focusing on design as the production of an artefact to design as a strategic process. Following are the official Icograda definitions of both communication design and communication designer ratified by the Icograda General Assembly 22, La Habana, Cuba, 26 October 2007:

- Communication design is an intellectual, technical and creative activity concerned not simply with the production of images but with the analysis, organisation and methods of presentation of visual solutions to communication problems.
- Communication Designer, one who has the sensibility, skill and experience and/or training professionally to create designs or images for reproduction by any means of visual communication, and who may be concerned with graphic design; illustration; typography; calligraphy; surface design for packaging or the design of patterns, books, advertising and publicity material; broadcast, interactive or environmental design; or any form of visual communication (Icograda, 2007).

FIRST NATION PEOPLES – a term often used to describe Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples.

GRAPHIC DESIGN – the term for a profession, which is now more commonly referred to as ‘communication design’ because of the trending shift from print media to digital/interactive design applications that engage with both visual and non-visual senses.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – those whose ancestors were the original, pre-colonial people of a region.
INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS – those whose ancestors were the original, pre-colonial people of the Australian continent and surrounding islands including Tasmania and the Torres Strait Islands.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE – a term used to describe ways of knowing, seeing, and thinking that are passed down orally and visually from generation to generation of Indigenous peoples.

STAKEHOLDER – a person, group, organisation, escrow agent or custodian with a legitimate interest in a given situation, action or enterprise.

WICKED PROBLEMS – problems that are regarded as difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements, which are difficult to recognise, and efforts to address them often reveal or even create other problems.
ABBREVIATIONS

AGDA – Australian Graphic Design Association
ADA – Australian Design Alliance
AIATSIS – Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CSR – Corporate social responsibility
DIA – Design Institute of Australia
ICSID – International Council of Societies of Industrial Design
ICOGRADA – International Council of Communication Design
IDA – International Design Alliance
IFI – International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers
INDIGO – International Indigenous Design Network
KHT – Koorie Heritage Trust: an organisation representing the culture, history and future development of Aboriginal peoples in the south-east region of Australia.
NITV – National Indigenous Television
RANZCP – Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
RSA – Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
SEE – Sharing Experience Europe: Policy Innovation Design
UN – United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNPFOII – United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organization (United Nations)
Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

I also state that this research recognises the diversity of Indigenous peoples, including their different languages, cultures, histories and perspectives and adheres to the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies.

Signature: ____________________________

Date: ______________________________
I acknowledge the following individuals and organisations:

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) for establishing clear guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies.

The Koorie Heritage Trust, Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre – Melbourne Museum and the National Aboriginal Design Agency for their formal support and cultural alignment with this research study.

Alison Page (Walbanga–Wadi Wadi), Creative Director, National Aboriginal Design Agency for co-facilitating the focus group/workshop, which was hosted by the Koorie Heritage Trust.

Design Institute of Australia (DIA) and the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) for their official support of this research study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The communication gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous design appears to be widening. This dissertation suggests that a cognitive, interventionist strategy is required by the communication design profession to ensure appropriate engagement and representation is achieved. Carefully considered policy incorporating co-created protocols and processes would help designers engage with Indigenous culture in a way that promotes cultural authenticity but also provides flexibility for inclusive, progressive, contemporary interpretation.

This dissertation supports the need for an inherent research culture in communication design practice. Having said that, the field of research proposed by this study requires specific attention. New Zealand Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith commented: ‘The word “research” is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary’ (Smith, 1999, p. 1).

Aboriginal culture is often presented as an adjunct to mainstream Australian society. There is a clear division between Indigenous and non-Indigenous/migrant cultural representation. Non-Indigenous designers are wary of using or even referencing Aboriginal iconography because of the potential for misuse. Design educators caution students against referencing Indigenous cultural imagery for the same reason. Although this advice respects the integrity of Aboriginal culture, it can be argued that it actually hinders the evolutionary development of a uniquely Australian style and historically respectful national identity.

The problem with this form of self-regulated ‘avoidance’ is that it discourages communication designers from incorporating Aboriginal culture when dealing with national identity. Although it may be considered respectful, and completely understandable, this approach inadvertently contributes to the invisibility of Australia’s Aboriginality and further widens the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture. Some believe Indigenous culture should remain separate, but others believe Indigenous culture should be embedded into the broader Australian lexicon. The overriding thread of most literature on the subject relates to the use/reproduction of existing imagery. This research investigates knowledge-sharing and co-creation methodologies for the professional practice in communication design.
Norman Sheehan and Polly Walker (2001) highlighted the importance of co-creation methodologies in the context of research in their article titled *The Purga Project: Indigenous knowledge research (IKR)*. Under the section heading ‘Let the environment of IKR “speak” and listen deeply to all the voices that emerge’, they argue that the sharing of knowledge is possible if approached respectfully:

*This can be achieved through co-designing projects within community that respect the Indigenous Knowledge (IK) context and recognise that local intent, processes, agendas and solutions are the best informed. Within IKR it is crucial to realise that we cannot ‘have’ another’s life experiences. Therefore in deep listening we seek the solutions that emerge from the whole environment. Deep listening by all participants also means that voices from the land, the spirit and the people can be heard. These voices are not acknowledged within the traditional Western research paradigm. As a consequence it is all the more crucial that they are listened to with respect and inform the IKR process* (Sheehan & Walker, 2001, p. 13).

Sheehan and Walker also made the point that Indigenous knowledge is not open knowledge, and that cultural mores need to be respected and managed within Indigenous groups. Protocols in shared knowledge or hybridity may or may not be deemed as appropriate by all Australian Indigenous communities. As stated earlier, this is a difficult area of research, which needs to be approached in a spirit of self-determination, empowerment, inclusiveness and a sincere want for reconciliation. The answer to the question of what is appropriate representation of Indigenous culture is unclear, as can be the word ‘appropriate’ itself. Ironically ‘appropriate’ can be used as a verb or an adjective, which has the opposite meaning, but both are relevant to the discourse of this research.

*appropriate* (adjective): suitable or proper in the circumstances

*appropriate* (verb): take (something) for one’s own use, typically without the owner’s permission (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

Grounded in over 30 years of experience in design practice, education and advocacy, this dissertation makes the assertion that communication designers are unclear about how to position Indigenous culture within the Australian national identity. There is also uncertainty about the appropriate use of Indigenous culture in design practice. Communication designers and academics are confronted with this issue on a regular basis. Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, reconciliation, the Australian republic and national flag debates are intertwined. They all directly impact on the national identity and how Australians view themselves.
It can be argued that the Australian identity is ambiguous and lacks authenticity. The question can be asked: Do designers reflect society’s values in their work, or do they aim to project what should be? When interviewed for this research, Mimmo Cozzolino, co-author of *Symbols of Australia*, argued that ‘... advertising is totally reflective of the society that produces it.’ (M. Cozzolino, 2013, personal communication, 2013). Is this the case, or are today’s designers more aware of their corporate and social responsibility and pro-actively and strategically working towards improving their contribution to society?

Understanding the Australian national identity is important to design, branding, publishing and advertising businesses because it is something they are required to work with every day. The aim of this process-focused study is to explore the need for improved work practices relating to the awareness and respectful actions of communication design practitioners when representing Indigenous culture in their work. The objective is to find an ethical bridge between the representation of Indigenous culture and commercial design practice by exploring potential protocols for designers (non-Indigenous and Indigenous). The proposition is that protocols would help designers to gain access to Indigenous knowledge and engage appropriately with cultural stakeholders as part of their professional practice. Importantly, this study focuses on the right of Indigenous people to maintain, control, protect and develop the intellectual property of their heritage, traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

A workable framework will require a new approach to design practice involving Indigenous-led discussion, collaboration, protocol development and co-creation. It is a difficult area to navigate and one that has been avoided for many years. Discourse involving Indigenous knowledge and cultural engagement by non-Indigenous designers involves issues of appropriate or inappropriate representation, self-determination, national identity, reconciliation and power balance. Research in this area requires exploration into the for-and-against argument of knowledge ownership, knowledge sharing and hybridity. Sir Francis Bacon, an icon of English Literature expounded: ‘Knowledge is power’ (Bacon, 1597). Conversely, denying access to knowledge can perpetuate a climate of cultural ignorance. As Socrates stressed: ‘There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance’ (Socrates, Trans. Hicks, 1925).
In 1998, Coombe pre-empted the need to formally recognise the intellectual property and cultural ownership rights of Indigenous peoples:

The increasingly transnational character of economic power, elite exploitation, indigenous political mobilization, flows of cultural information and genetic resources, indigenous knowledge sharing, and assertions of cultural significance suggest that traditional analyses of sovereignty cannot do justice to the complexities of the networks of power and resistance in which intellectual properties are increasingly relevant. Intellectual property protections are becoming more extensive and more pervasive. An acknowledgement of their status as human rights instruments seems timely, if not urgent, given the contemporary hegemony of financial and trade considerations in global (Coombe, 1998, p. 29)

Regarded by many as a ‘great wicked problem’, the issue of appropriate representation and cultural self-determination of Indigenous people was formally recognised by the United Nations in their 2007 (drafted 2006) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The declaration describes the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of their cultures, including designs (UNDRIP, 2006, p. 11).

Originally coined by C. West Churchman in 1967, the phrase ‘wicked problem’ is used by social scientists to describe a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise, and the effort to solve one aspect may reveal or even create other problems.

The appropriate representation of Indigenous people remains unresolved around the world and despite a broad acknowledgement of the problem there is little written on how designers should approach the issue. This study sets out to facilitate the development of methods that respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It also aims to examine the role and responsibilities of the design profession as it relates to cross-cultural communication design and the representation of Indigenous culture including the use of symbols and imagery. Within the framework of ‘cultural respect’, this study will develop a prototype professional practice protocol document that will be targeted towards communication design practitioners (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

As mentioned, this is a difficult and sensitive area with many complexities of opinion. The protocols established for Australian representation Indigenous knowledge and visual culture in the visual arts does not directly translate to communication design practice. Australian Indigenous visual arts protocols (p. 83) are relevant when referring to the acquisition and
commercial reproduction of existing imagery, but lack clarity in regard to the creation of new works that reflect or are inspired by Indigenous visual culture. There remains a gap in knowledge and professional guidance regarding new marks created for commercial and non-commercial applications, including nation branding. The commercial nature of design practice can and should evoke cautious enquiry. Motives, use and beneficiaries need to be transparently identified, permissions granted by appropriate custodians, and financial arrangements agreed to by all parties. For example, identifying authority is not as clear as being Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The views of Indigenous designers may or may not align with those of other Indigenous stakeholders. Simply being an ‘Aboriginal designer’ does not give one authority to represent all other communities or use their symbols and iconography. Individual and collective opinions can vary dramatically between city, regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as they can from Indigenous peoples with mixed heritage. Broad national statements reflecting Indigenous culture require a different approach to location/community specific representation. Some expressions will look traditional; others will be depicted with a contemporary aesthetic; but all designs should adopt a bespoke approach to research involving Indigenous knowledge and/or cultural representation. These sensibilities form multiple layers of complexity for communication design projects involving cultural representation.

Brunk and Young propose the need for an ethical solution to the problems posed by cultural appropriation. They argue that power is historically what ultimately determines outcomes, as exhibited by the colonialism that has given rise to so many of the worst examples of cultural misappropriation (Brunck & Young, 2009):

*We believe that the first objective of an ‘ethical’ analysis of a problem is to look for ground upon which one can find common values. If the search for such values fails, then negotiation and compromise may be the best next option. But it should never be mistaken for the just, the fair, or the ethical solution* (Brunck & Young, 2009).

The hypothesis underlying this thesis is based on an assertion that calls for a paradigm shift; one that acknowledges the historical ‘truth’ and embraces the claim of Australia being the home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are still not recognised in the Australian Constitution as Australia’s first peoples. The absence of formal recognition of Indigenous peoples in a constitution that only
acknowledges a brief colonial history must have an effect on the way Australia constructs its national identity.

Ken Friedman, University Distinguished Professor at Swinburne University of Technology, Design, believes that design can involve a number of research domains, in differing aspects and proportions, which depend on the project at hand and the problem to be solved. Friedman highlights the unique sensibilities of design research:

\[\text{The nature of design as an integrative discipline places it at the intersection of several large fields. In one dimension, design is a field of thinking and pure research. In another, it is a field of practice and applied research. When applications are used to solve specific problems in a specific setting, it is a field of clinical research. One model of the design field represents six general domains. These domains are (1) natural sciences, (2) humanities and liberal arts, (3) social and behavioural sciences, (4) human professions and services, (5) creative and applied arts, and (6) technology and engineering} (\text{Friedman, 2003, p. 508})\]

Experts who normally work in this field include academics, lawyers, anthropologist, authors and social scientist. The people who have been the most relevant to this research are Australian Aboriginal Lawyer, Terri Janke, New Zealand academic, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Canadian academic, Rosemary J. Coombe. Many comparisons can be made between Canada, New Zealand and Australia regarding the representation of and appropriate access to Indigenous knowledge and visual culture. Having said that there are also different political and power-based dynamics that also creates complexity when making direct comparisons. New Zealand’s Treaty of Waitangi (agreement made in 1840 between the British Crown and more than 500 Maori chiefs) creates a different historical climate to Australia that was built on a concept of ‘Terra Nullius’ (Latin expression deriving from Roman law meaning ‘nobody’s land’). The concept of ‘Terra Nullius’ was challenged and won in 1992 in a case known as Mabo v. Queensland. This landmark High Court of Australia decision recognising native title in Australia for the first time and paved the way for ongoing discussion regarding the recognition of Indigenous peoples in the Australian Constitution.

Terri Janke’s work has been prolific. In Australia she is regarded as a leader in developing Indigenous protocols for the creative industries including the visual arts, media arts and new media. To the best of my knowledge, protocols on Indigenous representation have not been specifically written for the communication design practice. However, her related work in other creative disciplines has provided valuable references for this research. The work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith has also been a significant reference for this research.
Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a professor of Indigenous education at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. Her work is considered to have made a major contribution to research methods in social justice research. Smith’s publication *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (1999) is regarded as having made a major contribution to research methods in social justice research. Smith’s research is significant because it seeks clarity for communication designers on how to deal with larger national issues relating to cultural ownership, Indigenous knowledge and shared identity.

Rosemary J. Coombe is a Canada Research Chair in Law, Communication and Cultural Studies at York University in Toronto. She teaches in anthropology and is widely published in the fields of anthropology and political and legal theory. Her research addresses the cultural, political, and social implications of intellectual property laws. Coombe’s book, *The cultural life of intellectual properties: Authorship, appropriation, and the law*, is described as a legal ethnography of the ways in which intellectual property law shapes cultural politics in consumer societies.

The appropriate, ethical and respectful use of Indigenous visual iconography has become an important issue around the world, especially when designers are required to visually represent national identity. Many countries now feel a need to acknowledge their whole history and not just their colonial history. This awkward cultural dynamic exists in many countries, including Australia. Rights associated with Indigenous representation are now championed by world NGOs. UNESCO asserted the right to develop a culture and proclaimed a ‘right to cultural identity’ at the World Conference on Cultural Policies in 1982 (Coombe, 1998, p. 8). Another United Nations agency relevant to this dissertation is the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). WIPO, in cooperation with other international organisations, provides a forum for international policy debate concerning the interplay between intellectual property (IP) and traditional knowledge, genetic resources and traditional cultural expressions (folklore).

Design is emerging globally as a powerful problem-solving tool that can empower real outcomes to serve public good, whether social, cultural or economic. Other areas of endeavour are now using empathy-based, ‘design thinking’ methodologies as an alternative pathway to problem solving. Likewise, this study suggests that designers might also benefit from looking at methodologies that are outside their current frame of thinking. The forecasted outcome of a practice guide or standards document for the communication design industry also anticipates the inclusion of a professional code of ethics.
While acknowledging layered cultural complexities and sensitive pecuniary dynamics, this study openly asserts the need for a respectful approach to Indigenous cultural representation and a re-evaluation of the Australian national identity. The study is conscious of the demographic and political sensibilities associated with graphically representing Indigenous culture in a commercial context. This dissertation also acknowledges that Indigenous participation and leadership is vital to its credibility and authenticity of this and any subsequent research. Like the reconciliation process itself, the coming together of cultures requires a collaborative spirit of goodwill. This study proposes that a new approach is required to unite associated stakeholders. It suggests the need for a process or system that facilitates respectful, inclusive relationships and workable conjunctions between Indigenous knowledge and its graphical representation in communication design, place branding and national identity. The leadership role of design’s peak professional associations is vital in the development of best practice policy in business and education.

The graphical representation of Indigenous culture in communication design is a complex field and, as mentioned earlier, ‘design’ often attracts investigation and critical discourse from the social sciences. Although national identity and the positioning of Indigenous representation is an issue for the broader society, it is also an issue for designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who are required to deal with an evolving national identity as part of their daily profession.

Don Norman (2011) supports this view in an article titled ‘The design dilemma: Dismay vs. delight’:

Designers are trained as craftspeople, without any substantive knowledge of the content areas in which they do their work. My dismay comes from their lack of understanding and by the confidence with which they proclaim masterful solutions to the world’s problems. They often produce innovative, clever solutions, but with no evidence that they have actually addressed the most critical parts of the problem or that their solutions actually work. They are often unaware that others have toiled with those issues for decades, that the problems are deep and profound, and that no single approach, no matter how brilliant, will suddenly solve all the issues (Norman, 2011).
Friedman (2003) adds additional weight to this line of thinking:

All knowledge, all science, all practice relies on a rich cycle of knowledge management that moves from tacit knowledge to explicit and back again. So far, design with its craft tradition has relied far more on tacit knowledge. It is now time to consider the explicit ways in which design theory can be built – and to recognize that without a body of theory-based knowledge, the design profession will not be prepared to meet the challenges that face designers in today’s complex world (Friedman, 2003, p. 520).

As a non-Indigenous researcher I am cognisant of the potential for criticism such as that expressed by Janke (2009, p. 5): ‘In the past, research on Indigenous people was undertaken by non-Indigenous people, who imposed their worldviews on Indigenous subject and themes.’ However, what must be realised is that this research is positioned from within, and speaks for the communication design profession, which involves both non-Indigenous and Indigenous designers. Even though professional design practice is an, ‘old world’ construct, this study sets out to frame it within a combined, pre- and post-colonial historical paradigm. Janke (2009) supports the need to decolonise Indigenous research: ‘It is the role of the Indigenous researcher to decolonise research. The Indigenous researcher decolonises research by shifting their colonising lens of scientific rationality to an Indigenous perspective that considers traditional knowledge.’ Maori academic and author of Decolonizing methodologies Smith (2009) argues that research is linked to colonialism and oppression and must be decolonised.

Within the Australian context, an unprecedented step towards decolonisation occurred when on February 13, 2008, the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for past wrongs of successive Australian governments. He made the apology on behalf of all the Australian members of parliament. The symbolism of this event was highly significant from a perspective of cultural and national identity. In April 2008, 1,000 Australians assembled in Canberra to be a part of the Australia 2020 Summit. The task was to shape a vision for the nation’s future and explore new ideas on dealing with the challenges ahead. With over 900 ideas generated, the final report from the summit titled Responding to the Australia 2020 Summit highlighted the need for an Indigenous cultural education and knowledge centre, which would engage with the Indigenous community and existing institutions on options for supporting, strengthening and preserving Indigenous culture and heritage (p. 175). Incorporating visual expressions of Indigenous knowledge to
design practice methodology requires a sensitive approach to unique sensibilities. Sheehan and Walker (2001) describe the research aspect of such engagement:

*Indigenous Knowledge Research (IKR) aims to establish a philosophic equality as the only authentic basis for research in many Indigenous community contexts. Pathways to meaning are vital components of a people’s way of being in the world. The imposition of methodologies that do not consider Indigenous ontologies represents a ‘process racism’.*

Establishing workable methodologies will require a new approach to design practice involving dedicated, Indigenous-led discussion, collaboration, protocol development and co-creation. It is a difficult area to navigate and one that has been avoided for many years. Discourse involving Indigenous knowledge engagement by non-Indigenous participants involves issues of appropriateness, misrepresentation, self-determination, national identity, reconciliation and political power. This dissertation explores the for-and-against argument of knowledge ownership, knowledge sharing and hybridity. It will also seek methods including, ‘design thinking’ approaches to connect with both tacit and explicit knowledge.

Visible recognition and appropriate representation of Indigenous culture communication design is an important issue and one that is difficult to resolve in the broader context of national identity. Professor Patrick Dodson, Co-Chair of the Australian Federal Government’s Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians made the following statement: ‘The social degradation that exists has come about because of policies in the past, poor strategies, the lack of recognition and slow attempt to seriously recognise the uniqueness of the Indigenous peoples ...’ (Dodson, 2011).

Social science research lends unquestionable support to Dodson’s emphasis on the need ‘to seriously recognise the uniqueness of the Indigenous peoples ...’

Communication design has a vital role to play in forming public opinion, solving societal problems and responding to the negative impacts of globalisation.

Robert L. Peters, Koopman Distinguished Chair in Visual Arts at the University of Hartford and Icograda President 2001–03 made a passionate plea for designers to embrace their potential to influence society in a positive way in his board message article titled ‘Moving Forward’:

*We have an important role to play. As information designers in an information age, we are in a position of responsibility. Design shapes culture, it influences societal values, it informs, and it clarifies. The world needs us, and we can do much to expose injustice, to counteract*
patriarchal violence, to build empathy for one another, to promote peace, to alleviate despair, and to uphold humanity (Peters, 1999).

A renewed focus on cultural diversity within the design community may well be a reaction to the aesthetic internationalisation of design, which has been accelerated by the pursuit of common ground when designing for global audiences. Innovation is the key word in most design policies; it is described as the important ingredient to creating a competitive edge. But it can be argued that unique cultural attributes can also create valuable points of difference, especially in industries such as tourism where the aim is to attract rather than export. For many, any commercial use of Indigenous culture is problematic; for others, it helps to elevate cultural profile and establish national equity and broader awareness through everyday visibility. Sheehan (2010) highlights concerns about the mindset of acquiring rather than understanding knowledge when referring to the establishment of a Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Design Anthropology (CIKADA) at the Swinburne University of Technology, Faculty of Design:

Too much emphasis has been placed on acquiring and mining knowledge and not enough on developing an understanding of knowledge as a way of being, or existing. What we are aiming to do with the centre is to develop Indigenous knowledge as a basis for educational programs for everybody.

Andrew Peters, a Wurundjeri–Yorta Yorta descendant, and lecturer in Indigenous studies and tourism at Swinburne University of Technology supports Sheehan’s statement by adding additional comment about the broader ignorance of Indigenous culture in Australia:

Australia is home to the world’s oldest living culture. Our Indigenous culture and history is one of our most precious cultural assets. However, the Australian community’s knowledge of its Indigenous background is scant; the depth of tradition and history unique to this country, barely scratched. This wide gulf in awareness and understanding is one of the reasons why most non-Indigenous Australians remain unaware of the enormous challenges that so many Indigenous Australians face on a daily basis. The representations of Indigenous Australians in our mainstream media continues to perpetuate the false perception that ‘real’ Indigenous culture exists only in remote Australia. The reality is that everyone in this land is standing on what was once Indigenous land (Peters, A. 2011).

The literature search for this research identified a clear knowledge gap in the area of Indigenous design protocols for communication design practice. The search did not uncover any policy that specifically incorporates best practice guidance regarding appropriate
engagement with Indigenous visual culture for the communication design profession. During the period of this research, the author identified and reviewed emerging design policies around the world that had cultural identity considerations in line with the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This research investigates processes and methods currently used by designers and companies (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to engage with Indigenous knowledge. It will also propose a requirement for appropriate representation of Indigenous culture to be incorporated into all government policy and in particular any policy developed with a specific design focus.

It is important to be clear that this research does not suggest the handover of Indigenous knowledge to non-Indigenous designers. This would be wrong, and is not the intention of this study. On the contrary, a policy on Indigenous design should encourage the mainstream stakeholders of the design profession, studios, advertising agencies and branding consultancies to engage appropriately and adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) methods. It also has the potential to create career pathways and opportunities for Indigenous designers and companies. This research seeks ways to encourage accurate, respectful and visible representation of Indigenous culture in mainstream media through collaboration, consultation, co-creation, rigorous research and stakeholder participation.

The study investigates different methods for designers to engage with Indigenous knowledge. It also looks at the best way to deliver protocols to the profession and to encourage their compliance. If used correctly, these protocols and engagement processes have the potential to inform an evolving Australian national identity and ensure that respectful acknowledgement and representation of traditional owners is achieved and maintained by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers. It is envisaged that the findings of this research will be of particular value to designers working in the areas of national identity place branding, advertising, tourism promotion and event marketing.

Maximising the creative and technological capabilities of any country is vital to producing the factors conducive to developing innovation through design. The acceptance of design as a major economic and social driver for industry, manufacturing and trade is important, but many countries now believe design also has a more direct role to play in improving the human condition apart from increasing general economic prosperity. Policy development is now starting to consider design from a human-centred perspective. Victor Papanek (1972), author of Design for the real world expounds: ‘The only important thing about design is how it relates to people.’
Yet, another author focused on design, Sabine Junginger, (2011) made the following observation in regard to the potential contribution of designers to policymaking:

*Design professionals continue to have a key role in developing the products and services that are necessary to implement policy-decisions; design researchers and design professionals influence policies by informing policy-makers about their insights into the ways ordinary citizens go about their lives and businesses and their ability to improve their experiences.*

This research cites related case studies to help identify specific cultural and socially responsive considerations for a proposed Australian design policy. The research reviews these and other strategic models that aim to deliver culturally specific outcomes. It analyses examples that acknowledge Indigenous culture and that offer the greatest insight into the need for identity representation. The Victorian State Government in Australia published a report in 2009 titled *Five years on: Victoria’s design sector 2003–2008*, which reported on the state’s design sector after five years of government design policy. The report stated: ‘The most frequently mentioned social benefit of design projects was benefits to local communities, in terms of greater cohesion, communication or participation’ (Victorian Government, 2009).

A national policy on design will develop Australia’s creative and technological capability by understanding the factors conducive to creating innovation through design and the acceptance of design as a major economic driver for industry, manufacturing and trade. This research suggests that any new policy should be supported by case studies and data that demonstrate how design can improve the human condition. The final aim is for this study to produce a knowledge resource that can be used by policy makers to help inform the development and strategic delivery of design policy in Australia, a country that is yet to develop a national policy on design. It is also envisaged that this research will produce a universal outcome, which can work for other Indigenous communities around the world. To do this effectively will require a respectful approach and conscious awareness of the diversities, differences and multi-culture within broader Indigenous groupings in countries and geographical regions.

On October 13, 2006, Australia was one of three countries in the world, including the United States and New Zealand, that voted against the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Point two of a five-point list of UN recommendations relates directly to the need for effective participation in maintaining cultural integrity. The recommendation states:
Promoting full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in decisions which directly or indirectly affect their lifestyles, traditional lands and territories, their cultural integrity as Indigenous peoples with collective rights or any other aspect of their lives, considering the principle of free, prior and informed consent (UN, 2006).

It is important to note that in 2009 Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States all reversed their positions and now endorse the declaration. This is a significant indicator of change, but incorporating Indigenous recognition, representation and knowledge into broader practice of the design profession remains a challenge.

The Australian identity also remains a major challenge for designers. Indigenous representation is not the only cultural identity issue in Australian. Sheba Nandkeolyar (2011), Chair of the Communications Council’s multicultural committee, said, ‘Australia is at least 20 years behind the US and the UK in how ethnic minorities are portrayed in advertising.’

The visual representation of our nation extends far beyond flags and logos. Aboriginal visual culture does provide a unique point of difference but it has often been misused when translated to the mainstream applications. It is an area of design research that needs further exploration.

Melissa Aronczyk argues that nation branding is not ‘destination’ (tourism) branding or marketing initiatives; it is not an ‘image makeover’, nor an advertising campaign or a marketing strategy; and it is most emphatically not a mere logo and slogan. Rather, all of these things are part and parcel of the totality of the nation brand; but they are not in themselves constitutive (Aronczyk, 2008):

Nation branding is a very long-term thing and it involves a very comprehensive strategy bringing in all the players’ governments whether it’s city governments, national governments, tourism authorities, inward investment, outward – any force, including private companies, who help to define the way all those billions of people out there, in particular the several millions who really, really matter, view your place (Aronczyk, 2008).

A deep understanding of Indigenous culture is rarely evident in nation branding. Systems of engagement by designers are ad hoc, if at all. Research is often superficial, with development and process methods lacking the appropriate levels of consultation and rigour. This dissertation aims to address this issue, but with a clear understanding that a document of best practice guidelines must be framed in a way to accommodate the diversities and sensibilities
of its stakeholders. The challenge is to create a policy framework that has broad acceptance without losing relevance through over-simplification.

**1.1 HYPOTHESES AND ASSERTIONS**

The hypothesis of this study suggests a need for policy that includes professional codes of practice, protocols and guidelines to improve awareness and actions in the area of Indigenous representation by communication designers.

The assertion made by this study is that there is a widening gap between Indigenous cultural understanding and communication design practice, which suggests that a cognitive strategy based on shared knowledge and collaboration is required to help facilitate appropriate engagement in the future. It also asserts that the majority of Australian communication designers lack an informed understanding of how to appropriately engage with Indigenous culture and its broader relationship to national representation. These assertions respond to the often-expressed allegation that designers tend to default to stereotypes and clichés and are not rigorous enough in their research when working on project briefs involving Indigenous representation. This position is based on firsthand experiences in design practice.

This study aims to explore thinking on this subject and to develop processes that relate to Indigenous cultural ownership and the expanded use of cultural symbols. The ability to compatibly connect business with cultural expression is at the epicentre of this research. This dissertation aims to explore the need for formalised methods to improve processes to achieve respectful representation and effective communication design practice. It investigates the concept shared of knowledge with an objective to improve the quality of Indigenous graphical representation in commercial design. This dissertation also aims to explore the relationship between Indigenous culture and national representation, an issue identified by the Australian Government referred to later in the dissertation. It suggests a more mature way of thinking is required to address such issues, which have domestic and global implications. The research identifies humanity’s relationship with symbols and acknowledges that we live in a time where population increase, migration and technology have created a world that is more interactive than ever before. Although focusing on communication design, this research acknowledges the broader disciplinary scope of this discussion. It also recognises the potential of its outcomes to help curtail conflict, promote pride and facilitate reconciliation through the shared knowledge and appropriate and ethically produced cross-cultural representation.
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question is:

What are the appropriate protocols to assist practising communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the respectful use of Australian Indigenous knowledge and representation of visual culture?

Additional research questions are:

1) What methods do communication designers currently use when representing Indigenous cultures?

2) What methods do communication designers currently use when representing Indigenous cultures in their professional practice?

3) Do communication designers require assistance when representing Indigenous cultures in their professional practice?

4) What tools are required for communication designers to assist Indigenous cultures when representing Indigenous cultures (industry protocols, charter/professional practice policy)?

5) Should protocols and/or practice guidelines speak with an Indigenous voice or that of the communication design profession or both?

6) How should the message be presented and delivered (language, tone)?

1.3 IMPACT

The impact of this research will be measured against its ability to fill the gap in knowledge as identified. The research responds to concerns expressed by Australia’s peak professional design bodies and the Australian Government as expressed as a priority in their Creative Australia policy document. The Australian Government Creative Australia national cultural policy was launched on 13 March 2013. The policy announced plans to work across government to develop a policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s traditional cultural expressions. (It should be noted that this government policy announcement was made during the twenty-fourth month of my candidature).

The description of the proposed framework aligns with the thesis proposed in my study; however, no details have been announced. The Creative Australia policy document anticipated that there would be an action plan for implementation from 2014. It is important
to note that on 7 September 2013 the Australian Labor Party (author of Creative Australia) lost government at an Australian federal election. At the 30-month mark of my candidature, there remains no evidence of a Commonwealth Government policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s traditional cultural expressions. There is also no evidence that the new Liberal Government will continue to support and implement the Creative Australia policy. Having said that, it is clear that the issue of traditional cultural expressions is on the political agenda, and this reinforces the need for this research. Both government and industry policy have identified the need to address Indigenous representation in regard to encouraging an elevated cultural profile and exploring its relationship to national identity. To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first of its kind to specifically address the issue in regard to professional practice policy in communication design. The data and analysis generated from this research project relates directly to appropriate expression of Indigenous culture and knowledge in communication design practice and will add to the established body of literature in the area of domestic and international cross-cultural representation and cultural ownership.

This research aims to develop an innovative professional practice policy that will impact on the quality of communication design practice in the area of ethical engagement with Indigenous knowledge. The utility value of this research has been confirmed in letters of support from the Design Institute of Australia (DIA), Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) and the Koorie Heritage Trust.

The outcome of this research is well placed to evolve practice methods and be used to better address a problem at a level of professional practice governance. Evaluation of the empirical data suggests a potential uptake of the research findings by the design profession. The idea is to show its utility value, both from an economic and identity authentication point of view. It also provides opportunities for strategic innovation and the proactive facilitation of reconciliation and the resultant wellness of Australia’s Indigenous people. The potential beneficial impact on Indigenous health and wellbeing has been identified in this research.

A renewed focus on cultural diversity may well be a reaction to the aesthetic internationalisation of design, which has been accelerated by the pursuit of common ground when designing for global audiences. Innovation is the key word in most design policies; it is described as the important ingredient to creating a competitive edge. It can be argued that unique cultural attributes can also create a valuable point of difference, especially in industries such as tourism where the aim is to attract rather than export. For some, any
commercial use of Indigenous culture is problematic while others believe it helps elevate profile and establish national equity and broader awareness through everyday visibility. Aboriginal visual culture provides a unique point of difference for Australia, but its representation requires further exploration and discussion, especially in the context of Australian national identity.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this research lies in the way it presents designers (non-Indigenous and Indigenous) with an improved way to think about problems related to appropriate representation of Indigenous knowledge and visual culture. This research attempts to formalise methods to improve impact and effective practice. This new approach is based on a shifted paradigm of Australian history, which appropriately acknowledges all stakeholders. Unresolved tensions and the social processes underpinning identity formation need to be acknowledged and respected within a 21st century context and the incremental advancement towards reconciliation.

1.5 ORIGINAL THINKING

Original thinking sometimes requires a glance back to move forward. Ironically, Australia is still referred to as a ‘young’ country, even though in reality it is home to the oldest continuous cultures in the world. In his essay Civilisation for the Australian legend and its discontents, Richard Nile (2000) presents his view of how Australians describe themselves and their nation:

*Australia continues to see itself as a place of the future still in the making, as a civilization that is always arriving but which has not yet quite arrived. We are a community of perpetual provisionally. We have come together out of fragments, out of bits and pieces from here and there, out of crosses and double crosses, out of colonialism and modernity.*

New approaches and revised thinking are required especially in relating to Australia’s perception of history and national identity. In the Operating manual for Spaceship Earth, Buckminster Fuller (1968) is critical of conventional approaches to problem solving and acceptance of the status quo:

*I am enthusiastic over humanity’s extraordinary and sometimes very timely ingenuities. If you are in a shipwreck and all the boats are gone, a piano top buoyant enough to keep you afloat may come along and make a fortuitous life preserver. This is not to say, though, that the best way to design a life preserver is in the form of a piano top. I think we are clinging to a great*
many piano tops in accepting yesterday’s fortuitous contrivings as constituting the only means for solving a given problem.

As Buckminster Fuller implies, problems need to be addressed, not endured. For example, the exploitation and unscrupulous representation of Aboriginal artists by art dealers, brokers and gallery owners led to the establishment of the Indigenous Art Code in 2007 (Indigenous Art Code, 2007). On one hand, the establishment of this code represented significant advances in the areas of ethical practice relating to acquisition, marketing, promotion and the protection of intellectual property. On the other hand, professional design practice has, and continues to operate without qualified guidance or regulation. In most cases, designers are answerable only to their client and the ambiguous parameters of intellectual property rights and common law. Indigenous collaboration rarely occurs, and if it does, it is often tokenistic and inappropriate.

During the candidature of this study, the Australian Government announced its intention to hold a national referendum to formally acknowledge Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution. The referendum has the support of both sides of parliament and will take place on a date to be determined. Expected to receive a ‘yes’ vote, this constitutional change has the potential to change the way Australia views both its past and its future. This research predicts the emergence of a new way of thinking, which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories. The process of reconciliation is already underway, but if Australians now formally acknowledge their full history it will potentially impact on communication design practice and the authentic representation of Australian national identity.

1.6 INNOVATION

This ‘cultural innovation’ exploration asserts the need for Indigenous-led guidance in reconstructing Aboriginal and Torres Strait identity within a 21st century construct. The need for Indigenous Australia to have a more prominent and visible presence within contemporary Australian has been identified in government policy, including the Commonwealth Government’s 2012 Creative Australia policy (see 2.4).

It is envisaged that the outcomes of this research will identify the need to establish protocols that ensure culturally respectful engagement by communication designers. Design practitioners who aim to have an authentic understanding of national identity can then use this knowledge to their strategic advantage. Culturally respectful practice and research methods should be valued by design businesses searching for an innovative edge, particular
in the areas of place branding, tourism and community engagement. Innovative practice in this area must be inclusive, collaborative and Indigenous led.

Tim Riches, managing director of international branding agency FutureBrand Australia, made the following statement about Indigenous knowledge collaboration:

*In the local operation we have worked with many brands that express elements of Australian identity – most notably in a very successful collaboration with the Jumbana Group as part of our brand work on Brand Australia with Tourism Australia* (Riches, 2008).

As more and more designers work within a global context, we need to consider how design practice contributes to the formation of national cultural identity from a post-colonial perspective. The next step for educators and practitioners is to develop appropriate and respectful processes so they can work effectively in this area. Government policy and guidance of this kind would help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers engage with Indigenous culture in a way that not only promotes cultural authenticity and integrity, but also allows flexibility for inclusive, progressive, contemporary interpretation. It would provide designers with a valuable resource to use when depicting Australian nationhood in their practice.

This research has the potential to provide designers with access to a shared knowledge base, but the process needs to be Indigenous led and supported. Consultation with policy writers and stakeholders already working in this area is essential to ensure that this is an Indigenous-led initiative. It is vitally important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are both in control, and seen to be in control, of their own culture. There are a number of Aboriginal-owned and operated design and architecture firms that have developed independent methodologies for projects requiring Indigenous knowledge. Their experiences and processes have been investigated in this research as documented in Chapter 5, titled ‘Analysis of Data’.

For many communication designers operating under self-regulated ethical guidelines when representing Indigenous culture would be a significant innovation to their current research and practice methods. This research suggests that, in the future, designers will choose to adopt respectful and ethical Indigenous design methods as mandatory best practice or CSR policy.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review identifies academic research and professional discourse relating to graphical representation of Indigenous culture. Global discussions are compared to the specificity of the Australian context. The literature is analysed in regard to its knowledge and commentary on appropriate and inappropriate protocols for dealing with (a) Indigenous knowledge and (b) Indigenous visual culture, the visible expression of Indigenous knowledge. Data is also evaluated against the primary research question: What are the appropriate protocols to assist practising communication designers in the respectful use of Indigenous knowledge and visual culture?

A common criticism of communication designers is that they do not implement the appropriate consultation processes required for respectful representation of Indigenous knowledge and culture. As highlighted earlier in this dissertation, this criticism points to ineffectual research practices resulting in ignorant design outcomes that reinforce cultural stereotypes and clichés. Grounded professional practice requires respectful understanding and appreciation of the demographic diversity of Indigenous Australia involving language, region, customs, opinions and attitudes. This dissertation asserts that the professional practice dynamics of visual art and design are different and that communication designers need specific protocols to navigate this area. The literature review examined data that specifically addressed the differences between art and the commercial practice of design in regard to Indigenous representation.

Investigating the relationship between communication design practice and Indigenous knowledge requires a multifarious base of study that positions ‘design research’ within the broader scope of the social sciences. This literature review bridges a number of associated areas of Indigenous knowledge and design practice, including government and professional policy, cultural studies and anthropology. Existing literature in the field was considered for its relevance to this study but the review did not set out to be a critical appraisal as such. The aim was to review the data analytically while deliberately maintaining a respectful distance. The review was undertaken within the framework of the thesis, the focus of which is to treat those involved in the field with equal consideration and to nurture a practical working environment that is inclusive and acknowledges diversity and differences in perspectives, opinions and ideas.
The following review of relevant literature suggests that the appropriate graphical representation of Indigenous culture in communication/graphic design has been an issue in Australia since the beginning of colonisation. The inappropriate representation and appropriation of Indigenous culture in commercial design practice has been identified but not resolved. The profession, policy makers, politicians and Indigenous leaders have all avoided this issue within the communication design area of the creative industries.

This awkward cultural, commercial and societal problem was reaffirmed in the analysis and commentary gathered in the literature search. The appropriate positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture within the Australian identity is, and will continue to be, a problem unless it is consciously addressed. Having said that, intellectual property rights (IPRs) in regard to cultural identity are multifaceted. This study identifies the personal biases, political motivations and philosophical dogmas that further complicate what is already a difficult area to navigate.

The protection of cultural identity and assignment of ownership is complex and often political. The recognition of IPRs as human rights entails a renewed concern for social justice issues in an era of so-called global harmonisation of intellectual property protections that further challenges our considerations of sovereignty. One cannot counterpose absolutely global scientific knowledge with local Indigenous knowledge. People everywhere have access to both and use them in conjunction. The issue of intellectual property has, for many Indigenous people, been an effective rhetorical vehicle to keep issues of autonomy and self-determination on the global bargaining table (Coombe, 1998).

Stephen Bush suggests that the issue is over-complicated and argues that, although contemporary social science acknowledges the reality of the exchange of information between cultures and the cultural hybridity of most innovation, the law and legal activists to reify knowledge systems and set artificial boundaries culture where none exist in everyday life (Brush, 1998). Coombe suggests that in the contexts of inequality, the idea of cultural boundaries makes it easier to locate, identify and decry especially egregious forms of expropriation (Coombe, 1998).

The book *The past is a foreign country*, explores the level to which objects, architectural motifs and other manifestations of the past permeate the present. The conclusion is drawn that that contemporary Western society is largely composed of elements derived from
other times and places and our access to cultures, both foreign and ancient, is the culmination of centuries of archaeological and historical inquiry, now facilitated by the ease of worldwide travel and electronic communication (Lowenthal, 1985). George Nicholas highlights a position promoted by the Open Access and A2K (Access to Knowledge) movements, and by individual scholars, arguing that society benefits from shared ideas and information (2014). He balances this position by concluding that not everyone benefits from increased access to information, whether in the sciences, the arts or entertainment. He points out that there are already limitations on accessing certain types of information. In the business world, for example, some types of information are proprietary, and justifiably so, since their loss can financially jeopardise the company’s success (Nicholas, 2014). He then asks, ‘But what about protecting information or restricting its dissemination and use when it is vital to cultural identity, as is the case with First Nations in Canada and Indigenous peoples elsewhere?’ (Nicholas, 2014):

Indigenous peoples seek to protect their cultural and intellectual property, to control the flow of information and materials emanating from their cultural heritage, and to restrict or stop unauthorised and inappropriate use of that heritage. Failing to do so has real costs, social, economic, and other, to the community. Given that there is limited legal protection for the tangible elements of their heritage, and even less for the intangible ones, the challenge of achieving adequate control and protection is substantial, especially when that heritage is viewed as public domain (Nicholas, 2014).

There are two prominent clusters of academics with opposing opinions regarding the sharing of Indigenous knowledge. Smith, Sheehan, Walker and others (see Section 2.1) propose a cautious hands-off approach, suggesting that to allow non-Indigenous people access to this knowledge would weaken the rights of Indigenous custodians to control their own destiny. The position implies the need for Indigenous communities to have time and space to learn more about their own culture and understand its relationship with broader Australia. This position does not necessarily oppose the sharing of knowledge but it does firmly argue that accessing culture must be facilitated on the owners'/custodians’ terms. King, Lowenthal, Fatnowa, Picket and others (see Section 2.1) do not disagree with this position but argue that the sharing of knowledge should be encouraged when appropriate. This position cautions that the practice of knowledge sharing needs to
include methodological structures and tools to manage and oversee ethical engagement between designers and Indigenous knowledge.

This dissertation understands and respects the sensitivities and sensibilities of both positions. After more than two centuries of inappropriate and inaccurate representation of Indigenous Australians, there needed to be a cooling-off period, which has given Indigenous people an opportunity to regroup, rediscover their culture and strategically plan for the future. This period of consolidation also provided non-Indigenous designers time to respectfully and authentically re-evaluate the Australian identity and its relationship to Indigenous culture.

This dissertation argues that the current political and sociological setting is right for a participatory, cross-cultural approach to Indigenous knowledge research and design practice. It also asserts the need to transform reconciliation rhetoric into action through a strategy to create a respectful shared space within the domains of knowledge, education and professional practice.

The literature review identified significant writings in the area of Indigenous knowledge by scholars, social commentators and lawyers. Although there has been considerable research undertaken in this field, it is evident that a clear knowledge gap exists within the communication design profession in the area of Indigenous knowledge. There is a lack of data that specifically speaks from, or to, the communication/graphic design profession. On the other hand, the amount of scholarly and non-scholarly dissertations in the associated fields suggests that Indigenous representation is an emerging area of contemporary research.

As noted in Chapter 1, Indigenous New Zealand academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples [1999]), is regarded as a key author in the field of contemporary Indigenous cultural research. Another eminent leader in the field is Terri Janke. Janke has been prolific in writing policy relating to copyright law and Indigenous knowledge and has published numerous articles, papers and protocols documents. This research study acknowledges Terri Janke’s high standing in the field. It also recognises her policy writings and protocol documents relating to the creative representation of Indigenous knowledge. Janke has been prominent in developing protocols in the areas of new media, filmmaking, the visual arts and crafts and the performing arts.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical context of research is vital because it aligns the research with issues of Indigenous displacement, discrimination, racism, recognition, representation and reconciliation. This literature review focuses on writings relevant to the emergence of the Australian commercial art profession (communication design/graphic design). It highlights documents that outline strategic approaches to design promotion and policy by governments as well as relevant articles and papers with wider social objectives relating to culture and community. It also includes literature pertaining to past appropriation and misrepresentation of Indigenous culture in commercial design practice.

The literature search also aimed to compare global discourse pertaining to Indigenous identity. The issue of appropriate representation and cultural self-determination of Indigenous people is recognised by the United Nations in its 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which describes rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of their cultures, including designs. The statement also reinforces Indigenous people’s right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (UNDPR, 2007, p. 11). The United Nations declaration reminds us that appropriate Indigenous representation is a global issue that is gaining attention. The declaration supports the reinstatement of control to the cultural custodians.

For many Australians, Cathy Freeman highlighted the problem when she wrapped herself in both the Australian National and Aboriginal flags after winning a gold medal in the women’s 400 metres final at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. After the race, Freeman ran a lap of honour with both flags tied together as a symbolic gesture of reconciliation, and by doing so might have provided a clue to the solution. In 1994, at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada, Freeman first made it clear that she did not feel comfortable identifying with only one flag when she ran a victory lap with both flags after winning the 200 metres final. By symbolically tying the flags together, her statement, six years later in Sydney, advanced the discussion a step further. Freeman’s display highlighted the need for a flag to be authentic from a personal, cultural and national perspective. By wrapping herself in both the Australian National and Aboriginal flags after winning a gold medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympics in the women’s 400 metres final, Freeman made it very clear
that a future Australian flag must resonate with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (See Fig. 2.1).

… if we can think of the 2000 Olympics: the sensitivity of the flag within our cultural discourse was made clear when Cathy Freeman and the nation faced the issue of cultural fragmentation in the question of which flag should she carry, the Australian Flag or the Aboriginal Flag? (Whitehouse, 2005, p. 1)

Freeman herself represented another element required in a national flag – that being a unifying symbol that all Australians identify with. Freeman was certainly that in 2000.

With this symbolic gesture, Freeman also demonstrated to the world that national identities do not form naturally and that they are often created or imagined. Social anthropologist Benedict Anderson (USA) and Ernest André Gellner, British-Czech philosopher, agreed on the manufactured nature of nationalism but differed in the use of words to describe the intent. In his book Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism, Anderson compared his definition of Nationhood with Gellner’s:

Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that ‘Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.’ The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates ‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity’, rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’. In this way he implies that
‘true’ communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1991, pp. 5–7).

The style in which Australia should be imagined was challenged by Freeman’s symbolic gesture. It questioned the authenticity of national representation and illustrated the need for communication designers to understand and respect Indigenous sensibilities when asked to represent national identity in their work. The question of how to engage appropriately in that process remains a conundrum for many designers.

STRUCTURE
The literature grounding this study is presented in four thematic groupings that relate to associate areas of knowledge: design practice, policy development, national authenticity, cultural appropriation and research theory. These have been categorised under the headings: 1) Indigenous Knowledge, 2) Indigenous Representation, 3) Professional Practice and 4) Associated Policies, Protocols and Codes.

Indigenous authors have been identified and their community groups cited.

Each of the thematic groups poses a specific question:

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: What do relevant agencies, institutions and scholars consider to be Indigenous knowledge, especially as it relates to Indigenous visual culture?

INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION: What do scholars and practitioners consider being Indigenous visual culture as it relates to the representation of the broader Australian identity?

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (communication design): What are the perceptions and behaviours of Australian Indigenous visual culture within the Australian design profession since its establishment as professional commercial arts until today?

ASSOCIATED POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND CODES: What are the perceptions and actions governing the interaction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers and the producers of Australian Indigenous visual culture and knowledge?
2.1 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

What do relevant agencies, institutions and scholars consider to be Indigenous knowledge, especially as it relates to Indigenous visual culture?

The examples cited in this literature review represent those positioned either for or against the suggestion of shared access to Indigenous visual culture and its embedded knowledge. Although the selected literature focuses mainly on the Australian/New Zealand experience, it does highlight some North American research as well as relevant international agency policy. Even though the dynamics of Indigenous cultures differ globally, Australia does share similar colonisation experiences with many countries.

Direct comparisons can be made regarding Indigenous knowledge and their respective approaches to cultural representation. Canadian academic Rosemary Coombe acknowledges the global presence of Indigenous knowledge. However, she asserts that it would be a gross misrepresentation of global cultural politics to suggest that all Indigenous interest in intellectual property assumes a collective cultural form (Coombe, 1998). Howard Mann also identifies the complexities but also provides clarity when proposing that Indigenous knowledge (IK) as a concept concerns information, understanding, and knowledge that reflects symbiotic relationships between individuals, communities, generations, the physical environment, and other living creatures, and the spiritual relationships of a people. IK evolves as ecosystems and other factors change, but remains grounded in the more enduring aspects of identity, culture, generations and spirituality (Mann, 1997).

As mentioned in the Glossary, the term Indigenous itself is not clearly defined. The Cambridge Dictionary describes Indigenous as, ‘naturally existing in a place or country rather than arriving from another place’, where as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is less definitive:

> Considering the diversity of Indigenous peoples, no UN-system body has adopted an official definition of ‘Indigenous’. Instead the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following:

- Self-identification as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- Distinct social, economic or political systems.
• Distinct language, culture and beliefs.
• Form non-dominant groups of society.
• Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UNPFOII, 2013).

Reconciliation Australia states clearly that one’s physical appearance has nothing to do with defining whether a person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In Australia there are three legal ‘tests’ that determine whether a person is Indigenous. They must:

1) be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent,

2) identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and

3) be recognised as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people (Reconciliation Australia, 2013).

Reconciliation Australia also refers to the importance of Indigenous people maintaining their cultural identity:

All Indigenous people take pride in their ancestry that goes back tens of thousands of years. Indigenous cultures have evolved over time, just like all cultures, such as through contact with other people, new technologies and new ideas. While Indigenous Australians move between two cultures they are still incorporating traditional practices and beliefs in their everyday life (Reconciliation Australia, 2013).

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) recognises the variety of knowledge systems that exist in different Indigenous communities when they state their definition of Indigenous knowledge:

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) can be broadly defined as the knowledge that an Indigenous (local) community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. This definition encompasses all forms of knowledge – technologies, know how skills, practices and beliefs – that enable the community to achieve stable livelihoods in their environment. A number of terms are used interchangeably to refer to the concept of IK, including Traditional Knowledge (TK), Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), Local Knowledge (LK) and Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). IK is unique to every culture and society and it is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. IK is considered a part of the local knowledge in the sense that it is rooted in a particular community and situated within broader cultural traditions. It is a set of experiences generated by people living in those communities (UNEP, 2011).
In the context of this dissertation, the term ‘Indigenous knowledge’ is also used to describe the inherent knowledge embedded in Indigenous visual cultures.

Maori researcher Smith (1999) posits that academic knowledge is organised according to disciplines and fields of knowledge that are grounded in Western contexts and are therefore culturally insensitive. Smith claims that Western research interprets Indigenous knowledge from a Western framework, which has an effect of distorting reality. She further argues that traditional research approaches need to be challenged and a new agenda of Indigenous research developed to ‘decolonise’ existing methodologies. According to Smith, ‘decolonisation’ requires a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices.

The thesis of this study is aligned with Smith’s position. It aims to inform non-Indigenous researchers of the sensitive issues that need to be considered when engaging with Indigenous knowledge and peoples. Non-Indigenous researchers and designers can improve their practices with Indigenous peoples but they must also be aware that in some cases it may not be appropriate for non-Indigenous individuals or groups to be involved in research with Indigenous people at all.

In Australia, Indigenous researchers have claimed that Western research has led to a continuing oppression and subordination of Indigenous Australians in every facet of Australian society to the point that there is no where that we can stand that is free of racism (Smith, 2009).

Peter Shand, another prominent New Zealand researcher in the field of contemporary design practice and the interrelationship of cultural heritage, argues that clarity is required regarding Maori intellectual property rights pertaining to graphic works and the fashion industry. The claim that Maori design has been copied and utilised by non-Maori has been investigated by Shand from two fields of inquiry: cultural appropriation (as this has been figured in art history and cultural studies), and the law pertaining to intellectual property (Shand, 2002). The graphical representation of Indigenous culture in contemporary design practice is highlighted as a problem in New Zealand; however, Shand’s 2002 thesis needs to be contextualised. In 2014, New Zealand design has improved dramatically in the area of graphical representation of Indigenous culture to a point where it is now regarded as a leader in this form of cultural expression.
New Zealand and Australia share a similar history of colonisation, which resulted in comparable experiences of displacement and discrimination for their respective Indigenous populations. The image of a primitive underclass was perpetuated for many years in anthropological constructs and communication media practices including design. The ignorant and ill-informed representation of Indigenous peoples still exists today, highlighting the need for the design profession to establish an ethical framework that promotes a culture of collaborative, practice-based research into Indigenous knowledge.

Australian Aboriginal academic Norman Sheehan (Wiradjuri) argues that design fits well within the visual narrative basis of Aboriginal culture, explaining that Indigenous knowledge is a layered understanding that includes divergent streams of knowledge related to natural systems (Sheehan, 2011). This positioning of design within the broader context of research is a significant point that reinforces the need for the design profession to develop a rigorous research culture. Sheehan describes appropriate and respectful methods of engagement including ‘yarning circles’ and other interactive methods of knowledge sharing and exchange that both align with and inform the thesis of this study.

Sheehan’s position had slightly softened from opinions expressed 10 years earlier in a paper co-authored with Cherokee descendant Polly Walker titled *The Purga Project: Indigenous knowledge research* (Sheehan & Walker, 2001). Although they present a similar thesis of co-creation, they project a less welcoming attitude to the sharing of Indigenous knowledge, and lean more to the consolidationist position. Sheehan and Walker argue that successful design solutions can be achieved by co-designing projects that are produced within community, respect the context of Indigenous knowledge (IK) and recognise local intent, processes and agendas. They present the view that deep listening is required to seek the solutions that emerge from the broader environment. These solutions are embedded in voices from the land, the spirit and the people. These voices are not currently acknowledged within the traditional Western research paradigm. Designers also need to understand that one cannot ‘have’ another’s life experiences. Indigenous knowledge is not open knowledge, and cultural mores need to be respected and managed within Indigenous groups (Sheehan & Walker, 2001). A deep and detailed process of understanding is required to build trust and respect with Indigenous peoples and communities.
Although presenting a strong philosophical argument, Sheehan and Walker tend to generalise by implying that the remote community example represents all Indigenous Australians. It is important that researchers identify the varying sensibilities of the dispersal/concentration of the Indigenous population throughout Australia – urban/regional/remote. The stereotype is ‘remote’, while the reality is often ‘urban’. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) warns researchers against generalising. AIATSIS state as Principle 1 in its *Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies* that: ‘Recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of peoples, as well as of individuals, is essential’ (AIATSIS, 2012).

The emphasis placed on the need to build trust is not questioned. However, the depth, detail and time required to gain trust and acquire the necessary level of Indigenous knowledge to execute a respectful cross-cultural design would vary on a case-by-case basis. Effective relationship building would depend on a number of demographics factors including existing community protocols, geographic location (city, regional, remote), level of traditional connection, language, pre-established relationships with the IK researcher/designer, requirements and expectations of the brief itself, and the Aboriginality of the designer (from the community or other community).

Academic discourse surrounding shared knowledge and third-party cultural representation of Indigenous culture is dynamic. A case exists for a paradigm shift in pedagogy that considers shared knowledge, lifestyles and values of both groups Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Scott Fatnowna and Harry Picket (2002) support the expansionist view and suggest that it is possible to create a shared decolonising space, which looks at issues from both angles in the domains of knowledge, education and practice. The concept of considering the interests of all stakeholders aligns with the theoretical premise of this research, which proposes institutional frameworks and models to facilitate shared knowledge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Designers cannot, and should not, work in isolation when working with Indigenous knowledge. There must be mutual benefits for all stakeholders.

The Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin Indigenous Research Centre and other similar institutions around Australia have already established decolonising spaces, which are articulated, controlled and developed by Indigenous people:
From this base, Indigenous management and staff negotiate partnerships and develop protocol with non-Indigenous colleagues. These are expressed in policy and practice, and are managed in ways that continue to privilege, preserve and strengthen the development of core Indigenous realities appropriately, while at the same time facilitation critique, connections, choice and capacity within the wider society (Fatnowna & Picket, 2002, p. 68).

Institutional participation in culture is delicate and often contentious, particularly in the area of Indigenous research and knowledge sharing. This is very much a global discussion. Cochran et al. (2008) remind researchers of their responsibilities and warn them not to cause more harm in the pursuit of knowledge. Past research practices have been a source of distress for Indigenous people because of inappropriate attitudes and methods. Participatory research methods are now preferred when engaging with Indigenous communities because such methods engage participants in the research process at all stages. However, a balance is required when comparing Indigenous communities around the world. Diversity needs to be respected, but there are also cultural and spiritual connections that are undeniable. Patricia Cochran, Catherine Marshall, Carmen Garcia-Downing, Elizabeth Kendall, Doris Cook, Laurie McCubbin & Reva Mariah Gover (2008) write from a North American experience but they also argue from a collective international Indigenous position. As already mentioned AIATSIS encourage researchers to respect diversity. However, in some cases it is also valuable to compare the common ground and share experiences of Indigenous communities around the world:

Researchers working with Indigenous communities must continue to resolve conflict between the values of the academic setting and those of the community. It is important to consider the ways of knowing that exist in Indigenous communities when developing research methods (Cochran et al., 2008).

This dissertation explores potential health benefits of appropriate, ethical positive representation within the broader media. This implies the need for collaboration between an even wider set of stakeholders. There has been an extensive body of health-related research conducted about Indigenous populations around the world with arguably very little impact on the overall wellbeing of those who were the focus of the research. Fenelon and Hall (2004) ask why so much research has produced so few solutions. They suggest that new thinking, which involves collective self-reflective enquiry, needs to be undertaken by participants in social situations. New thinking and approaches need to be contextualised within a changing world and contemporary cultural and societal dynamics
influenced by the electronic media, communications and the rapidly emerging social media phenomenon.

Indigenous knowledge can only be understood by linking highly localised processes with larger global and historical forces. Indigenous peoples have been resisting and adapting to invasion and its subsequent influences for hundreds of years. Unlike anti-globalisation activists, Indigenous people primarily seek autonomy and the right to determine their own processes of adaptation and change, especially in relation to their origin, land, community and cultural identity. This reflects an opinion held by some academics and Indigenous stakeholders, but it is not the view of all. It also represents a position that opposes the thesis of this study that asserts that a method of shared knowledge can be built and used by designers as a tool for appropriate Indigenous representation and the development of an authentic national identity. This study regards the separatist approach as an outdated paradigm given that many Indigenous people want their cultural identity to be more visible, and interfaced with Australia’s broader identity.

The issue of self-determination in relation to identity is an issue facing many Indigenous communities around the world. Poirier (2010) compares how Indigenous groups in Australia and Canada have reproduced and transformed their identities in response to a need for self-determination and self-management. The comparisons are based on two selected topics: the politics of identity, and identification and local responses to the policies of self-determination/self-management. The two Indigenous groups selected for this study were the Kukatja Aboriginal group from Australia’s Western Desert region, and the Atikamekw, an Indian Nation of north-central Quebec. These communities are redefining their cultural identity in their own context rather than by the state. Historical contexts, political motivations and diversity of culture have created a variety of complex identity issues in both countries that act as a precursory warning for designers not to generalise or assume that one set of protocols will work for all Indigenous groups and communities. Each community has its own protocols. This suggests that a professional practice guide would need to be written in a way that respects diversity and acknowledges different protocol systems. It also implies that designers should also understand and respect that some communities may not want to share their knowledge at all, or if they do, it is done on their terms and for their benefit.

Respecting different community protocols is important. In some cases there may be a need to take a tandem or dual approach to the law when dealing with Indigenous
communities on issues of intellectual property. Permission to access and utilise intellectual property should incorporate respectful recognition of both Western and traditional law. Michael Christie (2009) refers to the Yolŋu communities of Australia’s Northern Territory when he argues that, if possible, it is vitally important to ensure that the intellectual property is protected under the Yolŋu Knowledge Authority law as well as by Australian law. Designers need to understand that community policies and protocols vary across Australia. There needs to be a system to alert those who engage with such policies and protocols so that they respect the different ways of knowing and community-based interpretations of intellectual property ownership. The framing of a professional practice document needs to respect both local Indigenous and academic epistemologies and knowledge practices. Christie’s Yolŋu example is one of many that explain how both Australian law and local Indigenous law need to be acknowledged in the context of gaining permission to utilise Indigenous intellectual property.

Respecting diversity and cultural intellectual property ownership is a constant theme among academics and design practitioners. Aboriginal Architect Dillon Kombumerri (Yugembir), Principal Indigenous Architect for the NSW Government and founder of Merrima Design, describes the development path he has taken as a designer:

> Early attempts at addressing the question of creating an Aboriginal architecture tended to focus on employing an iconographic language that drew on specific cultural symbols. This approach tends to present problems when many different Indigenous communities are involved in a project (Kombumerri, 2010, p. 18).

Different approaches are required for regional and national representation and professional practice guidelines would benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers and companies. Kombumerri argues for a different approach to thinking about architecture, which uses a specific set of cultural and spatial principles as a means by which to remake ‘place’. He proposes that a more culturally and environmentally sustainable approach to design is required and that representing ‘place by connecting it with culture and sustainability is a preferred path than trying to create an aestheticised or monumentalised form of Aboriginal architecture’ (Kombumerri, 2010). Kombumerri has developed his own engagement methodologies, which enable him to work within a complex, multifaceted, multicultural space of Indigenous culture.

Indigenous designers are already developing dedicated design philosophies, protocols and systems of engagement. The expansionist approaches and the engagement methods of
contemporary Indigenous designers are vital to this research. The Indigenous-knowledge-inspired ‘remaking of place’ broadens the potential for Aboriginal influence in architecture, which exceeds the aesthetic (Kombumerri, 2010). This philosophical frame could be used to inform the practice methods of communication designers as well as architects.

This overlap of culture and broader acceptance of Indigenous knowledge in design practice is a process, which is affected by many forces including constitutional recognition and politics. The residual effect of unresolved issues on Indigenous identity in both Australia and New Zealand have been marked by powerful claims for reparation for wrongs committed against Indigenous peoples (Celermajer & Kidman, 2012). Identity issues remain unresolved, even though national apologies have been made to the Indigenous peoples of both countries. The institutionalisation of Crown apologies to the Maori people of New Zealand has led to a certain disconnect of these apologies from broader Pakeha (non-Indigenous) society, whereas the failure to institutionalise recognition (Australian Constitution) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in Australia has more deeply engaged questions of national identity for Australia as a whole (Celermajer & Kidman, 2012). Direct comparison can be made between the government impact on Indigenous identity in Australia and New Zealand. Without doubt, governments have an important role in positioning Indigenous culture within a national identity.

Issues of national identity, cultural representation and colonisation are consistently investigated in a pedagogical context, and the teaching of Indigenous knowledge faces similar issues to those of representing it in design practice. The current pedagogical approach is fixated on simplistic decolonisation of Western knowledge and practices (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). The same argument can be made about the approach of design practitioners to Indigenous knowledge, which involves generalisation, oversimplification and the misunderstanding of connections between primitivism and modernity.

Parallels can be drawn between Indigenous pedagogy and design practice, particularly in the area of shared knowledge and non-Indigenous interpretation and representation. This is a complex domain that informs contemporary Indigenous Australian culture and a wide range of academic and professional endeavours. Fatnowna and Picket (2002) argue that
research requires continuing shared development and application involving community participants:

Secondary to this important internal intra-cultural core dimension of development, is the re-negotiating of mutuality in ways of working, living and sharing with non-Indigenous people – a developing engagement with non-Indigenous society that protects, yet also informs and allows for the development of both and the relationships between both (Fatnowna & Picket, 2002, p. 68).

Although referring to pedagogical research, there is a consistent call for collaboration between researchers and those whom they are representing. This translates directly to design practice. Indeed, Indigenous studies has become fixated on a simplistic decolonisation of Western knowledge and practices (Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012). Questioning the pedagogical approach is relevant to this study because one can argue that many communication design practitioners also rationalise the representation of Indigenous culture from the same vantage point.

Research into Indigenous knowledge pedagogy has identified the need to develop methods to help teachers engage with Indigenous culture and incorporate it into their teaching. Western knowledge systems perpetuate shallow perceptions of Indigenous knowledge and limit the teaching to token cultural items and symbols. A greater emphasis on meta-knowledge and application of process is required rather than content (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). The focus on process and methods is of particular relevance for this study, especially in regard to sharing knowledge with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders and participants. The need for a synergy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values is becoming recognised in many fields, and is equally relevant to design practice and the proposition stated in this study. The motivation to share knowledge comes primarily from a desire for reconciliation, or it can come from a desire for a natural change. This change is affected by environmental surroundings and the belief that interaction, and the land, bring peoples together and shapes new cultures. Michael King, a non-Indigenous (Pakeha) New Zealand writer explains a phenomenon that he argues connects cultures through the land:

Like Maori, our culture – mainstream Pakeha culture – altered here in response to a relationship with the land and its flora and fauna. Ultimately that culture was transformed by interaction, history and experience into something whose proportions and combinations bore only a distant relationship to the original ingredients, and a major and
influential part of that transforming interaction was with Maori. At the same time Maori culture too was changed significantly by its interaction with Pakeha (King, 1999, p. 235).

The definition of Indigenous and the desirability of a bicultural nation are challenged. King argues that as a Pakeha (non-Maori) New Zealander who is committed to this land and its people, he is no less ‘Indigenous’ than Maori:

For me, then, to be Pakeha on the cusp of the twenty-first century is not to be European; it is not to be an alien or a stranger in my own country. It is to be a non-Maori New Zealander who is aware of and proud of my antecedents, but who identifies as intimately with this land, as intensively and as strongly, as anybody Maori. It is to be, as I have already argued, another kind of Indigenous New Zealander (King, 1999, p. 239).

New Zealand is still regarded as a global leader in the bicultural development of Indigenous (Maori) visual culture and Indigenous knowledge into the broader national identity. This study identifies this as an area of design that requires further exploration but also acknowledges the differences between the two countries (Australia and New Zealand). It is interesting to compare the cultural histories of both countries. The Treaty of Waitangi has created a political dynamic between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in New Zealand that is considerably different to Australia, a country still going through the reconciliation process with its Indigenous peoples.

In Australia, the more widely accepted understanding of the term ‘Indigenous peoples’ is that they are the peoples of First Nation heritage. The Indigenous definition is an important aspect of this research, as is the New Zealand case study (King, 2004), which has managed to integrate a contemporary interpretation within the broader national identity. King refers to the living and evolving nature of Indigenous culture, This is now starting to influence non-Maori culture:

The Maori culture of the 21st century is not culture frozen at 1769, nor at 1840. Nor should it be ... Pakeha (non-Maori) culture continues to borrow and learn from Maori. That was one of the features that made it different from its European cultures of origin (King, 2004)

The Australian example differs in that reconciliation is embedded in the much broader issue of national identity. In 2003, Germaine Greer proposed an explicit expansionist mantra when she suggested that embracing Aboriginality is the only way Australia can fully imagine itself as a nation (Greer, 2003, pp. 1–78). Greer’s suggestion that
Australians should re-imagine Australia as an Aboriginal nation is not unlike the thoughts expressed by King. Greer investigates the interdependence of black and white and suggests not how the Aborigine question may be settled, but how all Australians should discover their Aboriginality. Greer presents a case that it may not be too late for Australia as a nation to root itself in Aboriginal history and culture in a way that performs a similar function but has different origins (Greer, 2003, pp. 1–78). Interestingly, Greer and King both propose the sharing of Indigenous knowledge as potentially leading to a re-evaluation of national identity and the defining of ‘Indigenous’. This is a legitimate expansionist aspiration. However, achieving it requires more than words; it entails the development and application of strategic processes, tools and actions, including those proposed in this study.

2.2 INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION (COMMUNICATION DESIGN)

What do scholars and practitioners consider being Indigenous visual culture as it relates to the representation of the broader Australian identity?

Historically, the issues relating to the representation of Indigenous culture have primarily centred on the fine/visual arts, performing arts, film and television. Communication design continues to operate without qualified guidance and Indigenous collaboration rarely occurs, and if it does it is often tokenistic and inappropriate. Although a spirit it of collaboration is asserted, this study acknowledges that some Australian Indigenous communities may not deem the concept of knowledge sharing or hybridity appropriate. Coombe makes a pragmatic point when she argues a case for exceptions in the application of intellectual property rights and cultural referencing:

People travel between communities, taking knowledge with them and incorporating it into local knowledges (or cultural frames of reference), which are then transplanted to new contexts. This fluidity of knowledges across porous borders of complexly layered communities makes IPRs difficult to delineate and to control. However, such objections may be overstated; fair use exemptions for non-commercial uses or those which do not involve mass reproduction of articles for commerce could be incorporated into any new or revised legal regime to ensure that ordinary forms of knowledge transmission are not seen as forms of infringement. Any new regime of rights will have to be accompanied by a related set of exemptions that are relevant to the different forms of knowledge to be protected and their likely uses, if it is to be congruent with human rights principles (Coombe, 1998).
As stated earlier, this is a difficult area of research, which needs to be approached in a climate of self-determination, empowerment, inclusiveness and a sincere want for reconciliation. The visibility and the positioning of Indigenous identity within a mainstream context are important to the development of an authentic national identity and advancement of reconciliation. However, there is a paradox in Australian history that suggests that Aborigines are often remembered as absent in the face of a continuing and actual Indigenous historical presence (Healy, 2008, p. 10). This unbalanced perspective occurs because of the way Australians remember their history. Aborigines are visible at certain times but then fade from memory. Aboriginal issues can be on the front page for weeks, prompting white Australians to ask questions such as: ‘Why weren’t we told?’ and then recede again (Healy, 2008, p. 18). Indigenous culture and knowledge is treated as an adjunct to mainstream Australian society, whereas the teaching and writing of Aboriginal history in Australia needs to be contextualised and contemporised, acknowledging and celebrating Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continual living cultures.

This need is reflected in attitudes to Aboriginal art. Described as a ‘hidden history’, Aboriginal art in the south-east of Australia has been referred to as invisible, yet the practice of art among Aboriginal people in the region has been continuous and thematic in its response to colonisation. An issue for artists from the south-east region is that Aboriginal art in Australia is often associated with the work of artists from the central or northern regions of the country (Edmonds & Clarke, 2009). Central Desert artwork is very different to that produced by the south-east communities; they do not associate themselves with the distinct iconography of circular and dot patterns (Edmonds & Clarke, 2009).

During the period of European settlement of the south-east region of Australia, prominent Aboriginal collaborators Tommy McRae and William Barak used art/communication design to communicate across cultures. The hybrid blend of traditional and Western techniques and methods developed independently by both McRae and Barak provide an early example of a shared knowledge approach to communication design. William Barak, Yarra Yarra chief (1824–1903), is described as a man whose troubled but dignified life bridged two very disparate cultures and whose art has not only survived but strengthened over this past century, continuing to communicate something both unique and significant about Aboriginal life in Melbourne and its rural environs (Cooper, Murphy-Wandin & Ryan, 2003).
Indigenous culture has been visually represented by the non-Indigenous since colonisation; however, the issue of application and appropriateness of representation remains unresolved to this day. This issue is important in relation to Australia’s ongoing search for a national visual style and understanding the role Indigenous visual culture plays in that. There is consternation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity being represented as part of Australia’s national identity. Some argue for control and ownership in a quest for Aboriginal political autonomy:

*Whether this should be envisaged as within or separate from the nation is however a political issue that could not be worked through simply at a level of politics of visual representation. This also collides with the increasing complex issue of what it means to be Aboriginal – whether there are threads of tradition that link the significance accorded to commonalities across a diversity of ways of life, from ‘assimilation’ to re-made tradition, from poverty to relative affluence, from city to country. Or whether the most meaningful connection is the commonality of the experience of dispossession* (Wills, 1993, pp. 124–125).

The discourse surrounding inappropriate attempts to connect Indigenous culture to the Australian identity has been robust and opinions diverse: ‘An awareness of their implications cannot be ignored by those who would claim the progressive agency of Aboriginal art for Aboriginal people of by those by who would wish to claim it as ‘uniquely’ Australian’ (Wills, 1993, p. 125). A knowledge gap has always existed regarding guidance in the appropriate representation of Aboriginal iconography: ‘There is no singular mechanism that controls the overall appropriation and flow of Aboriginal imagery’ (Wills, 1993, p. 124). The multifaceted complexities surrounding appropriation relate to issues born out of a disconnection between traditional culture and contemporary urban expressions by Aboriginal artists.

Non-Aboriginal Australian artists explored the relationship between Aboriginal art and national identity in the early 1900s, including Margaret Preston. Wills quotes Preston:

... *I have gone to the art of a people who have never seen or known anything different from themselves, and were accustomed always to use the same symbols to express themselves. These are the Australian Aboriginals, and it is only from the art of such people in any land that a national art can spring. Later come the individual or individuals who with conscious knowledge (education) use these symbols that are their heritage, and thus a great national art is founded* (Preston, 1925, p. 151).
Preston’s case to incorporate Indigenous culture into Australia’s national identity is honourable; however, she has been criticised for her methods and motivation. Although well intended, her commentary and the referencing of Indigenous culture at the time was seen as patronising and tokenistic. Preston is accused of perpetuating a colonial approach to assimilating one visual culture into another and picking up on a European modern art trend of this period to reference ‘primitive art’ (Wills, 1993). The focus on aesthetic without understanding the meaning was and remains problematic and disrespectful. The term ‘primitive art’ is regarded as demeaning in the context of Indigenous visual representation (Wills, 1993). This discussion relates directly to the essence of this research and emphasises a knowledge gap that still exists today.

Representation of Indigenous culture for tourism promotion is the mainstream media is also contentious. Countries with a colonial history often misrepresent Indigenous culture, which suggests a need to advance the academic discussion. In New Zealand cultural hybridity has been proposed as a way for tourism to represent an authentic product by involving Maori tourism businesses and associated stakeholders. The hybridised incorporation of Maori identity in tourism promotion creates a third space for interpretation, which presents Indigenous peoples with new strategies of self-determination (Amoamo & Thompson, 2010).

Photography has been an important form of image used by communication designers since its inception. Photography has also has played an important role in the depiction and representation of Indigenous culture. In the early 1900s, the inappropriate and racist use of Aboriginal iconography in advertising, logo design and the applied arts, including pottery, was quite common. Photography played its role by creating images that both appropriated and subverted anthropological claims about Aboriginality. Catherine De Lorenzo argues that commercial photographers did not so much diminish or contaminate an anthropological paradigm as they did extend a rhetorical activity of inventing and reinventing authenticity over the period from the 1870s to the 1950s (De Lorenzo, 2000). The international popularity of Aboriginal dot painting from the Western Desert region of Australia in the 1970s has inadvertently distorted the broader understanding of Indigenous visual culture. People now perceive dot painting as representative of all Aboriginal communities in Australia, where in fact it is not.

Much can be learned from the Western Desert dot painting experience where Aboriginal artists were encouraged to transfer some of their traditional designs to contemporary
painting media. This was criticised by some at the time who thought it was wrong to commodify spiritual artefacts and that the use of acrylic paint was not authentic to the traditional culture of the Pintupi Aboriginal people (Myers, 2007). This case study in of critical relevance to this current study because it documents a process adopted by a remote community in central Australia that has ensured the longevity and relevance of their culture into the future. One can only surmise what the status of their visual culture would be now if they had not contemporised the techniques and purpose of their cultural expression. The transformation of Aboriginal art into internationally respected high art is an example of how Indigenous knowledge can inform national identity. All cultures need to evolve to survive and remain relevant (Myers, 2007).

Communication design can also draw on the fine art experience to address potential issues and criticism relating to tokenism, over-commercialisation, commodification and rightful ownership. Nation branding and tourism are both impacted by the positioning of Indigenous Australian within the broader national identity. Identity portrayal of Indigenous Australians in contemporary advertising campaign is an important consideration for governments, businesses and designers.

Post-colonial Indigenous Australian identity is currently staged as authentic, using palatable, emblematic stereotypes that hark back to the notion of the noble savage (Pomering & White, 2001). However, there is incongruity between a national brand based on a post-colonial and staged portrayal of Indigenous identity compared to one that reflects its full cultural history of over 70,000 years. On the other hand, consumers’ prior-held nation-brand beliefs might affect the persuasiveness of such an inclusive approach to place branding. Even though Indigenous Australians make up only around 2 per cent of the national population, they have often played a central role in Australia’s national identity (as it is portrayed to the world through its tourism advertising). Unsolved post-colonial related social challenges such as reconciliation are accentuated when nation-branding strategies are pursued. Alan Pomering and Leanne White are critical of the manner in which Aboriginals have been represented as typically being one-dimensional, with the dominant ethnic group exerting power and authority over the portrayal of Indigenous Australian identity (Pomering & White, 2001).

According to Bruce Ziff and Pratima Rao (1997), cultural appropriation involves a multifaceted dynamic web of forces including politics, power, degradation and values. They define cultural appropriation as, ‘the taking from a culture that which is not one’s
own – of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artefacts, history and one’s knowledge’ Ziff, Pratima and Rao then ask: ‘What does it mean by taking? What values and concerns are implicated in the process of appropriation? And how, if at all, should we respond?’ Should hybridisation be encouraged or should Indigenous culture remain separate so that it can be used as a commodity in the struggle for political autonomy?

There are more questions than answers that relate to cultural appropriation and appropriate representation, but this study asserts that the solution can be found with respectful consultation, education, awareness and understanding. On the other hand, the damage to trust caused by colonisation and past incidents of cultural theft makes this a difficult transition. There are also residual issues yet to be resolved, which relate to the legalities of property rights and the inability of copyright law to adequately address the issue of appropriation. Copyright and colonial law categorises art, culture, and authorial identity as property that has an owner (Coombe, 1993):

> Ultimately the question of ‘whose voice is it’, who speaks on behalf of whom, and whether one can ‘steal the culture of another’ are not legal questions to be addressed in terms of asserting rights, but ethical one to be addressed in terms of moral and political commitments (Coombe, 1993, p. 93).

There are many issues pertaining to Indigenous intellectual property because of the seamless and interconnected sensibilities of knowledge. Intellectual and cultural property rights overlap and interface with other aspects of heritage, the relationship with country and the sense of identity. Indigenous rights include the right to determine the extent of use in accordance with specific laws and customs. Owners of intellectual and cultural property rights also have the right to manage and control and to exclude others from access and use of their intellectual and cultural property (Wardrop, 2002). Wardrop presents a thesis that Indigenous intellectual property consists of the intangible ideas and knowledge associated with artistic works and designs and other forms of cultural expression such as music, dance, song and story (Wardrop, 2002). Wardrop also argues a case for compensation where there has been proven unauthorised use or misuse of Indigenous intellectual property. The use of Indigenous culture as a tool in the struggle for political autonomy and self-determination is in direct response to the misuse, appropriation and ignorance of the past.

The actions of ignorance are often well intended but the delivery naive. For example, Deborah Root presents the scenario of ‘white Indians’ and the motivations behind the
phenomenon in the USA, whereby hippies and new agers in the 1960s tried to be more Indian than the Indians (Root, 1997). Root highlights that there is almost an automatic default to tribal culture aesthetics with people who want to make a visual statement against modern society. It this good or bad, and does it represent a misunderstanding and romantic ignorance of Indigenous culture? These questions relate directly to this research. As inferred by King and Greer in Section 2.1 ‘Indigenous Knowledge’, the concept and definition of Indigeneity or Aboriginality is being embraced by some non-Indigenous academics; however, this construct has been questioned. Trigger and Dalley (2010) ask: ‘Does “Indigeneity” make sense only if it is understood in relation to the “non-Indigenous” ’:

> Defining ‘Indigeneity’ has recently been approached with renewed vigour. While the field can involve quite passionate commitment to advocacy among scholars, theoretical clarity is needed in understanding just who might be thought of as Indigenous, and the reasons why this is so (Trigger & Dalley, 2010).

Attitudes towards reconciliation and dealing with issues relating to Indigenous culture are often hindered by guilt and awkwardness. Attitudes vary depending on the perceived distance one has from the cause of the injustices (personal, national). Research in this area showed that collective guilt was stronger under the unfavourable rather than the favourable history condition, but only when personal identity was salient (Halloran, 2007). Halloran’s findings also showed some support for the proposition that reconciliation views would be most positive under the unfavourable history condition when Australian identity was salient.

These findings indicate that government leadership might assist in facilitating improved representation of Indigenous knowledge because individual designers might be more likely to act (support reconciliation) if ‘guilt’ was to be shared rather than personalised. These issues directly result from Australia not coming to terms with its history and the way it is taught. A ‘hidden national curriculum’ is claimed to exist in schools and the broader media around the formative national white Australian identity (O’Dowd, 2011). O’Dowd argues that ignorance of the past is more likely to foster racism rather than understanding, and so limit social justice for Indigenous Australians (O’Dowd, 2011). It is important that the past is known and accepted in order to move forward with understanding. Australia needs to foster a sense of mutual national belonging (O’Dowd, 2011). The social and cultural make-up of Australia changes rapidly, and with it attitudes
towards Indigenous Australia. Dowling argues that while this research is clearly embedded in, and responds to, domestic issues, it also makes clear contributions to international debates (Dowling, 2005). Australia currently presents itself as a post-colonial and multicultural nation, but where do Indigenous people fit within that frame? Social and cultural geographers agree that the end of the 20th century saw substantial debate on what it meant to be ‘Australian’.

Major steps forward were made for Indigenous people in 1992 through the Mabo High Court decision to recognise native title. Mabo was a landmark decision of the High Court of Australia that overturned the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* (land belonging to nothing, no one), which characterised Australian law with regard to land and title. Although this event was significant, its impact on the Australian identity was overshadowed by the prime minister (John Howard), who was unwilling to apologise for past injustices to Aboriginal people, and the rise to national prominence of a politician (Pauline Hanson) with an explicitly anti-immigration and anti-Indigenous stance (Dowling, 2005).

Negative commentary is damaging and understanding the connection between respectful recognition, and personal health and self-esteem is important. Without self-esteem (self-respect, personal worth, autonomy) one cannot reach self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Respectful acknowledgement and the feeling of belonging is a motivation point for this research. The authentic, accurate and respectful historical and contemporary representation of Indigenous knowledge and culture is vital to establishing a context of belonging. Recognition and respectful representation are social determinants of Aboriginal health that are not properly understood or dealt with. Anderson, Baum and Bentley (2007) argue that a wide range of social and economic factors including culture, law, education, employment and models of governance, affect the health of Aboriginal Australians, and social and community interactions. Their underlying thesis is that social and economic factors have a major impact on personal wellbeing and that one’s position within society can underpin health outcomes. To overcome these issues, a combination of education and public interface is important. To this end, museums have an important role to play in stimulating discourse regarding national identity.

Concepts and symbols of national identity, including Indigenous imagery, have been used and developed by Australian graphic designers throughout the 20th century. ‘Before the late 1960s almost all commercial ‘Australian Aboriginal designs’ were produced by non-
Indigenous artists and designers, invariably without consultation, authorisation or consent by the Indigenous custodians of the designs’ (Powerhouse Museum, 2002). In 2002, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney held an exhibition that displayed a concise historical overview of Australian national visual representation by communication design practitioners. The exhibition, *Celebrating Australia: Identity by Design*, was targeted towards primary and secondary school students. Teachers’ notes published for the exhibition describes the emerging importance of contemporary Indigenous representation (Powerhouse Museum, 2002, p. 8). The ‘Celebrating Australia: Identity by Design’ page on the Powerhouse Museum website states:

*Indigenous art and culture began to make a reinvigorated contribution to Australian graphic design from the late 1960s. After Indigenous artist Harold Thomas’s flag design (1971) was flown on the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the forecourt of Parliament House, Canberra, in 1972, it was adopted nationally by Aboriginal communities. (It is now recognised by the Australian federal and state governments and is flown on special occasions. The world saw it when athlete Cathy Freeman paraded both it and the Australian flag during her victory lap at the Commonwealth Games in 1994)* (Powerhouse Museum, 2002).

A workable framework for appropriate engagement with Indigenous knowledge requires a new approach to design practice incorporating Indigenous-led discussion, collaboration, protocol development and co-creation. It is a difficult area to navigate, and one that requires patience, respect and determination. Discourse concerning Indigenous knowledge engagement by non-Indigenous persons involves issues of appropriate or inappropriate representation, self-determination, national identity, reconciliation and political power. Research in this area requires exploration into the for-and-against argument of knowledge ownership, knowledge sharing and hybridity.

Respecting our differences is just as important as highlighting our similarities. Sheehan (2010) highlights concerns about the mindset of acquiring rather than understanding knowledge when referring to the establishment of a Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Design Anthropology (CIKADA) at the Swinburne University of Technology, Faculty of Design:

*Too much emphasis has been placed on acquiring and mining knowledge and not enough on developing an understanding of knowledge as a way of being, or existing. What we are aiming to do with the centre is to develop Indigenous knowledge as a basis for educational programs for everybody* (Sheehan, 2010, p. 7).
In affirmation of Sheehan’s stance, Peters, Wurundjeri/Yorta Yorta descendant, and lecturer in Indigenous studies and tourism, Swinburne University of Technology made the following comment:

*Australia is home to the world’s oldest living culture. Our Indigenous culture and history is one of our most precious cultural assets. However, the Australian community’s knowledge of its Indigenous background is scant; the depth of tradition and history unique to this country, barely scratched. This wide gulf in awareness and understanding is one of the reasons why most non-Indigenous Australians remain unaware of the enormous challenges that so many Indigenous Australians face on a daily basis. The representations of Indigenous Australians in our mainstream media continues to perpetuate the false perception that ‘real’ Indigenous culture exists only in remote Australia. The reality is that everyone in this land is standing on what was once Indigenous land* (Peters, 2011, p. 3).

As more and more designers work within a global context, we need to consider how design practice contributes to the formation of national cultural identity. Both government and the corporate sector need to show leadership. Government policy and guidance is required to help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers engage with Indigenous culture in a way that promotes cultural authenticity and integrity but also allows flexibility for inclusive, progressive, contemporary interpretation. The question for business is whether or not they see a strategic corporate social responsibility (CSR) or brand positioning benefit in adopting an active approach to this issue. Guidance in this area will also help designers and companies avoid copyright and intellectual property infringements.

In the USA, illegal appropriation of Indigenous culture became a news item when the Navajo Nation sued clothing retailer Urban Outfitters. The lawsuit, filed in February 2012 in New Mexico, alleges trademark violations (unlawful appropriation). Unfortunately, the potential for a positive outcome with broad public appeal was spoiled by inappropriate and disrespectful business practices that included the production and sale of an alcohol hip flask featuring Navajo patterns (Fig. 2.2.1).
This situation can be avoided in the future by implementing an industry-based education campaign on the issue or through the establishment of formal policy and protocols for appropriate engagement with Indigenous knowledge and cultural representation. Consultation with policy makers and stakeholders who are already working in this area is essential, but it is crucially important that any related policy development is Indigenous led. There is an emerging number of Aboriginal-owned and operated design and architecture firms that have developed independent but generally undocumented methodologies for projects requiring Indigenous cultural representation. Their experiences and processes, along with insights from non-Indigenous companies such as David Lancashire Design and FutureBrand should be considered when developing effective methods of engagement.

This lack of specific literature specific to communication design suggests that practitioners and their clients would benefit from the development of an Indigenous-led government and/or industry policy. Such a policy would potentially help create a climate that honours respectful methods of research, production, procurement and representation. A framework for representing Indigenous culture would educate and inform stakeholders on issues relating to ownership and appropriation. It would also help avoid generalising and stereotyping by promoting the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities across Australia. A dedicated policy in this area would help facilitate the transition to an authentic national identity, one that celebrates Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture. Those who embrace this unique point of difference will benefit from the strategic value it offers, both from a commercial positioning and CSR perspective.
2.3 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (COMMUNICATION DESIGN)

What are the perceptions and behaviours of respectful and disrespectful use of Australian Indigenous visual culture within the Australian design profession since its establishment as professional commercial arts until today?

The representation of Indigenous culture via fine/visual arts, performing arts, film and television has seen significant advances in the areas of ethical practice relating to acquisition, marketing, promotion and the protection of intellectual property. Design practitioners also have an increased appreciation of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) in relation to issues including sustainability and the appropriate representation of culture, gender and sexuality.

Indigenous identity and its relationship to national identity is also an issue for an emerging group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designers. The designer/client relationship is important to every business. However, the challenge for practitioners is to have both parties and all associated stakeholders buying into the one CSR vision.

The early evolution of Indigenous representation in commercial design practice in Australia is documented by Bogle (Design in Australia 1880–1970). The representation of Indigenous culture in mainstream design practice was rare in Australia during this period and if it appeared it was often created by non-Indigenous designers. The chapter titled ‘Shared Culture, Aboriginal Art and the Search for an Indigenous Style’ is of particular relevance to this study because it discusses topics such as Aboriginality and design supported by context and examples of periodical attempts to embed Indigenous culture into Australia’s national identity. An intense desire to discover, develop and refine an Indigenous Australian style had been shared by designers for decades along with the incorporation of Aboriginality within national identity. This strategic view is discussed in a dedicated section titled ‘Aboriginal Art and Design’. It describes past practices of designers incorporating Aboriginal aesthetics into their work and provides examples of these works. Margaret Preston and others are identified as designers who used, referenced and appropriated Aboriginal motifs in their search to create a unique identity for Australia. Significantly, the chapter concludes under the heading ‘A Shared Culture’. The pressure to embrace a globalised aesthetic juxtaposed with the ideal of an Indigenous style or shared imagery is a perennial theme in Australian design commentary and criticism.
In his book titled *Design in Australia, 1880–1970*, Michael Bogle argues that the persistent push for an Indigenous style seems to be a symptom of a post-colonial society, and that one day it will be less awkward dynamic for Australia (Bogle, 1998). Bogle’s text, the scope of which ended in 1970, highlighted examples of Indigenous representation by non-Indigenous designers. But since that time Australia has seen an avoidance of non-Indigenous designers referencing Aboriginal iconography. There has also been the emergence of a diverse group of Indigenous designers and Indigenous-owned practices. Building awareness and promotion of individuals and groups helps to encourage others. It is important that their stories be told.

Aboriginal designer and Indigenous advocate Alison Page (Walbanga–Wadi Wadi), in her 2012 published ANU Reconciliation Lecture titled ‘Fifty Shades of Brown’ spoke about her final year of university when she was introduced to Aboriginal architecture for the first time. Page describes her inspiring meeting with Dillon Kombumerri and Kevin O’Brien, Australia’s first Indigenous architects, which resulted in her working with them as part of Merrima Design Group. The Merima group is significant in Australian design history and extremely relevant to this research. Working with Merrima enabled Page to understand that contemporary Aboriginal culture combines traditional and modern definitions of identity. Design from an Aboriginal perspective aims to match outcomes with the intent and talent of their ancestral designers (Page, 2012). Methods are based on community collaboration and shared participation in the creative process of Aboriginal architecture and design. Aboriginal Australia embraces a ‘living’ definition of culture that is continually evolving (Page, 2012).

The Merrima story represents that mantra and is significant to this research for that reason. It represents a ground breaking example of self-determination and cultural representation from an Indigenous-owned design and architecture practice perspective. Cultural representation, Indigenous knowledge, place branding and national identity are all intertwined. The referencing of Indigenous culture is becoming more common in place branding because it can provide a unique point of difference in a globalised world. The application of brand strategies and other marketing techniques are used to stimulate the economic, social, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries.

Anholt (2008) challenged the industry claim that ‘place branding is policy’. He argues that place branding can only reflect the results of policy but not policy in itself: ‘There are certainly policy approaches that enable places to improve the speed, efficiency and
effectiveness with which they achieve a better image but that better image can only be earned; it cannot be constructed or invented’ (Anholt, 2008). A robust and productive coalition between government, business and civil society, as well as the creation of new institutions and structures is required to achieve a positive representation of place. This is essential to achieving the long-term harmonisation of goals, themes, communications and behaviours:

*Strategy, in its simplest terms, is simply knowing what a nation is and where it stands today (both in reality and according to internal and external perceptions); knowing where it wants to get to; and knowing how it is going to get there. The two main difficulties associated with strategy development are (a) reconciling the needs and desires of a wide range of different national actors into a more or less single direction, and (b) finding a strategic goal that is both inspiring and feasible, since these two requirements are frequently contradictory (Anholt, 2008).*

This opinion is important in the context of Indigenous knowledge informing national identity. Anholt encapsulates the relevance, integrity and stakeholder considerations required for place branding in this statement:

*Symbolic actions should emanate from as many different sectors as possible in order to build a rounded and believable image for the place. They should never be empty – they must be communicative substance rather than mere communication. Each symbolic action must be intrinsically defensible against the accusation of empty rhetoric, even when taken out of context and scrutinized on its own account (as commentators in a healthy democracy are bound to do) (Anholt, 2008).*

A focus on authenticity and substance has seen branding agencies identify Indigenous culture as an important strategic consideration of place branding. A country’s brand strength is driven by perceptions of five key dimensions: tourism, heritage and culture, good for business, quality of life and value systems (FutureBrand 2010). Indigenous culture is seen to represent uniqueness in heritage and culture. FutureBrand’s Country Brand Index is regarded as the definitive global resource on the effectiveness of place branding. Produced in partnership with BBC World News, the 2010 Country Brand Index was the sixth edition of what is a comprehensive study of country brands representing five years of research. This index measures levels of awareness, familiarity, preference, consideration, advocacy and active decisions to visit. Data that identifies and prioritises attributes that drive the desire to visit a country or the desire to live in a country other
than one’s own is valuable information for communication designers working on projects that represent place:

Interestingly, the results show that visitors are more focused on a county’s essence (attractions, authenticity, culture, ethos), while the selection of a country to live in rests more heavily on its essentials (geography, infrastructure, governance, economy) and its solidity and steadiness as a nation (FutureBrand, 2008, p. 21).

Significantly, New Zealand was highlighted as a country that is dedicated to maintaining its true and unique essence by highlighting nature, culture and its people in its marketing and place branding. Indigenous knowledge and cultural representation have played a significant role in the formation of New Zealand’s branding strategies. Design firms in New Zealand have identified the need to develop methods of ethical engagement to maintain cultural integrity in their work.

The global branding company FutureBrand is a contemporary example of a design business that is dedicated to developing a rigorous research culture, especially in regard to Indigenous-themed projects. In 2008, the Managing Director of FutureBrand, Australia Tim Riches announced their support for a newly formed international Indigenous design network called INDIGO. They acknowledged the value it provided for cultural exchange and emphasised the importance of Indigenous knowledge to their company’s approach to place branding and national identity:

Our belief is that the sense of perspective and authenticity of response to the experiential brand concepts inherent to country branding create a compelling opportunity for Indigenous participation in this facet of brand practice. And Australia has traditionally neglected this unique contribution to its detriment – which shows up quite clearly in our Country Brand Index study (Riches, 2008).

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ‘design thinking’ methodologies into the strategic principles of place branding, the Netherlands-based branding agency Placebrands identified eight principles of place branding:

1) **Purpose and potential** – Place branding creates value for a city, region or country by aligning the messages that the place already sends out, in accordance with a powerful and distinctive strategic vision; by unlocking the talent of the people who live there and stimulating investment to reinforce and fulfil this vision; and by creating new, powerful and cost-effective ways to give the place a more effective and memorable voice and enhance its international reputation.
2) **Truth** – Places often suffer from an image that is out of date, unfair, unbalanced, or cliché-ridden. It is one of the tasks of place branding to ensure that the true, full, contemporary picture is communicated in a focused and effective way; never to compromise the truth or glamorise it irresponsibly.

3) **Aspirations and betterment** – The place brand needs to present a credible, compelling and sustainable vision for its future, firmly in the context of our shared future. This will support the overall aim of a real increase in the economic, political, cultural, and social wellbeing of the people who live in the place, while contributing in a more than token way to the wellbeing of other people in other places.

4) **Inclusiveness and common good** – Place branding can and should be used for achieving societal, political and economic objectives. Inevitably, a workable strategy will favour certain groups or individuals over others, and this creates an inalienable responsibility to ensure that they are supported in other ways.

5) **Creativity and innovation** – Place branding should find, release, and help direct the talents and skills of the population, and promote the creative use of these in order to achieve innovation in education, business, government, environment and the arts. Furthermore, only creativity of the highest order can ‘square the circle’ of translating the complexity of a place into purposeful, distinctive and effective brand strategy.

6) **Complexity and simplicity** – The reality of places is intricate and often contradictory, yet the essence of effective branding is simplicity and directness. It is one of the harder tasks of place branding to do justice to the richness and diversity of places and their peoples, yet to communicate this to the world in ways that are simple, truthful, motivating, appealing and memorable.

7) **Connectivity** – Place branding connects people and institutions at home and abroad. The clear and shared sense of purpose that good brand strategy engenders can help unite government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations; it stimulates involvement and participation among the population; externally, it helps build strong and positive links to other places and other people.

8) **Things take time** – Place branding is a long-term endeavour. It need not and should not cost more than any place can comfortably afford, but is neither a quick fix nor a short-term campaign. Devising an appropriate place brand strategy and implementing it thoroughly takes time and effort, wisdom and patience; if properly done, the long-term advantages, both tangible and intangible, will outweigh the costs by far (Placebrands, 2011).

Cultural integrity or respect for Indigenous knowledge could be considered as an additional principle in the future. The structure of a universal Indigenous knowledge
design principle would vary from country to country and depend on current and historical post-colonial contexts. It is asserted, for example, that design historians of the Americas have positioned Indigenous peoples as subordinate subjects of print culture rather than as agents of cultural difference and productive assimilation. Within its historical narratives, printing was used by those leaving Europe for other parts of the world as a benign instrument of cultural conversion (McKee, 2010). However, Western historians have misrepresented Indigenous American cultures by suppressing local forms of visual language and communication technology. McKee argues the need to deconstruct and contest the worldview of graphic design history as a singular and unified field of representation, and to encourage greater engagement with Indigenous design histories in contemporary movement towards cross-cultural design research and collaboration (McKee, 2010).

Appropriate Indigenous representation is a global issue. For example, the need to strategically introduce Indigenous African graphic communication, including writing systems into the history of graphic design in South Africa has also been identified. Cary (2011) argues that Indigenous graphic systems were more effective because they propose a culturally equal relationship. Conventional communication methods used in the past had presented a hierarchy of power favouring the dominant culture.

Additionally, perceptions of hierarchy of power are reinforced in the broader media, including publishing. In Australia the publishing industry has had a significant impact in shaping the direction of identity and culture, including the Indigenous. The representation of Indigenous peoples in *Walkabout*, an Australian magazine published between 1934 and 1972, highlights a clear distinction between the portrayals of ‘natives’ (Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders) to those of the emergent modernising Australian nation. Aborigines appeared in *Walkabout* as debased, as noble savages, or as bearers of an idealised and imagined traditional culture (Rolls, 2010). Rolls challenges dismissive criticism by academics that *Walkabout* presented Indigenous people without a voice, or politics of representation, and argues that more nuanced readings of the Aboriginal photographic representation in *Walkabout* is possible. A closer review has the potential to reveal a more diverse and complex understanding of the images appearing throughout the 1930s (Rolls, 2010).
The above discussion indicates that design requires a paradigm shift that embeds a research culture into its professional practice. This methodological adjustment incorporating the social sciences necessitates a wider set of skills and expertise. Clients also need to be understood and appreciate the benefits of such investment. Design anthropology is an area of scholarship that seeks to understand how design helps define what it means to be human, the diversity of human values, and then how design can translate these values into tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2008). Tunstall extrapolates: ‘Design anthropology is the field to help you feel confident in your design decisions by showing you the global ramifications of past, current, and potential communications, artefacts, and experiences as they affect the human context.’ Tunstall contends that interfaces can be developed based on values of shared learning versus individual study, and that the growing complexity of the human context and the potential of technologies to lead to greater social equality and inequalities requires a more rigorous approach to the representation of Indigenous knowledge, ‘… it’s not just the words but the meanings behind words change as you design for one culture versus another.’ (Tunstall, 2008). Consequently, a commitment to design research in professional practice demands increased scope and connectivity:

Design anthropology does not place separate emphasis on values, or design, or experience, which are the domains of philosophy, academic design research, and psychology, respectively. Rather, design anthropology focuses on the interconnecting threads among all three, requiring hybrid practices. The outcomes of design anthropology include statements providing some deeper understanding of human nature as well as designed communications, products, and experiences (Tunstall, 2008).

Papanek (1971) also professed that design can be incorporated into many areas of life and not just the design of aesthetically appealing forms. Over four decades later, the design profession is still defining itself and balancing the forces of commerce with the imperative of social responsibility. The potential of design and communication design to improve the human condition is untapped. In support of this contention, Papanek argues that ‘Design is the conscious effort to impose meaningful order on the world.’ This descriptor still resonates today as designers take on a responsibility that exceeds the commercial traditions of the profession. Design has been criticised in the past for contribution to society’s problems rather than solving them, as it often professes to do.
Indeed, communication design is a facet of both the advertising and branding industries, which are often scrutinised in a negative manner:

*There are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a few of them ... only one profession is phonier. Advertising design, in persuading people to buy things they don’t need, with money they don’t have, in order to impress other who don’t care* (Papanek, 1971, Preface).

Papanek spent time living within Navajo, Inuit and Balinese communities, where he observed firsthand the syncopation of Indigenous cultures and sustainable living. The consumerist role the design profession plays in the society is undeniable, but Papanek devoted his life to finding a better use for his craft, believing that the design profession could set out to achieve social change. This ethos represents an early example of corporate social responsibility (CSR) philosophy. It also supports the hypothesis of this research, in that design can play a role in maintaining integrity by assisting designers with the appropriate representation of Indigenous cultures. Designers do have a deeper moral obligation to create ecologically sound design, serve the poor, the elderly, the disabled and other minority sectors of society (Papanek, 1971). Unquestionably, communication design has the ability to persuade but there should be a rider of responsibility that accompanies that ability. In 1999, Peters made a passionate plea for designers to embrace their potential to influence society in a positive way:

*We have an important role to play. As information designers in an information age, we are in a position of responsibility. Design shapes culture, it influences societal values, it informs, and it clarifies. The world needs us, and we can do much to expose injustice, to counteract patriarchal violence, to build empathy for one another, to promote peace, to alleviate despair, and to uphold humanity* (Peters, 1999, p. 1).

These words are as relevant today as when they were written. They underline an overlooked issue relating to the potential of communication design to influence thinking and to change behaviour for the betterment of society. Peters also implies that communication designers are part of the problem because they often do not understand the power of their potential. This is an important theme with reoccurring threads to this current study. ‘Design is a powerful conduit for change.’ (The Living Principles, 2010). The *Living Principles Roadmap for designers* aims to weave sustainability into the broader fabric of culture and to shift consumption and lifestyle aspirations to a more sustainable basis for living (Destandau & Linden, 2011). To facilitate action The Living
Principles propose a framework/roadmap for use by designers to help them achieve sustainable solutions in their practice.

Four key areas of focus have been identified for consideration in all design: environment, people, economy, and culture. These four streams of sustainability are the key elements of the framework that is intended to be a catalyst for driving positive cultural change. The Living Principles Roadmap refers to culture as a mandatory consideration for all design and calls on designers to promote cultural diversity in their work whenever possible:

‘Actions and issues that affect how communities manifest identity, preserve and cultivate traditions, and develop belief systems and commonly accepted values.’ (Destandau & Linden, 2011). This workable framework of best practice provides a potential model for other initiatives to help designers and their clients take a responsible approach to their professional practice. The aim of is personified in their call to action: ‘Designers, business leaders, and educators can use The Living Principles to guide every decision, every day.’ (Destandau & Linden, 2011).

The requisite call for designers and design companies to act rather than respond has been made for some time. Innovation and brilliant ideas do not leap from the minds of geniuses and most innovations come from a process of rigorous examination (Brown, 2009). Tim Brown is a champion of ‘design thinking’, a concept also described as the ‘method for doing’. ‘Design thinking’ is a collaborative, human-centred approach to problem solving that helps people and organisations become more innovative and creative. The techniques and strategies of design belong at every level of business (Brown, 2009). The aim of ‘design thinking’ is to extend design processes beyond the use of designers and the creative industries, and places the focus on process rather than results, which is the thesis underpinning this research. A process approach has been used in this study to frame methods in Indigenous knowledge engagement for both designers and their clients. New thinking and approaches are required to facilitate new results. Current approaches will only deliver what we already have:

_I am enthusiastic over humanity’s extraordinary and sometimes very timely ingenuities. If you are in a shipwreck and all the boats are gone, a piano top buoyant enough to keep you afloat may come along and make a fortuitous life preserver. This is not to say, though, that the best way to design a life preserver is in the form of a piano top. I think we are clinging to a great many piano tops in accepting yesterday’s fortuitous contrivings as constituting the only means for solving a given problem_ (Buckminster Fuller, 1968, p. 2).
These are relevant words when dealing with the complexities of appropriate Indigenous representation in a post-colonial, unreconciled landscape. The design profession has identified the need to move beyond assumptions and conventional approaches to problem solving. Problem solving is sometimes difficult, especially when tackling ‘wicked problems’, which have been avoided because of their complex difficulty, with no apparent perfect solution. Perhaps we have to concede that a perfect solution is unattainable and is not the answer to the problem anyway. Problems are solved through motion, not by inertia. Inaction provides no action and therefore no solution. Society must look at alternative approaches to this issue, including corporate theories and business models. Although not perfect, some companies strategically release products and systems into the market place before they are perfected. To wait for perfection may take too long and perfection may never be confirmed unless tested by consumers in a variety of real environments. This process is common practice in the computer software industry, where developers and their companies often rely on user feedback to refine and improve their product. The process of testing done by customers is referred to as ‘beta testing’ or ‘field testing’:

‘Pre-release testing’ is another term which is motivated by both testing and marketing. ‘Beta testing’ can be considered ‘pre-release testing’. Beta test versions of software are now distributed to a wide audience on the Web partly to give the program a ‘real-world’ test and partly to provide a preview of the next release’ (Rouse, 2005).

This approach (test and promote) may be applicable for further research extending from this study, which acknowledges that a complete and effective evaluation will not be determined until communication designers, working on real projects, test the findings in the market place.

For example a test could be framed as a hypothetical, asking communication designers the question, What would Australia’s national identity look like if it promoted itself as home of one of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures? It is a legitimist question to ask of designers from a country still coming to terms with post-colonialism and grappling with the economic and cultural realities of globalisation. If constitutional change recognises Indigenous Australia then it will raise many issues involving national representation and designers will be called on to guide us through what will be a significant readjustment of identity. If we change the way we look at things, then the things we look at will need to change (Kennedy, 2014). When interviewed for an article
in Spark, a Design Institute of Australia publication, John and Ros Moriarty spoke passionately about design as a forum to foster deep engagement and understanding between Indigenous communities, business, and the broader Australian community. They also clearly articulated the guiding principle to advance the development of an authentic Australian identity.

_We wanted to challenge existing approaches to Australian visual identity which looked largely to Europe and America for inspiration, and which failed, in our view, to harness the unique heartbeat of Australia_ (Moriarty, 2014).

‘The home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures’ is a genuine claim and one that could be used to market Australia. A study in 2011 by the University of Copenhagen established Aboriginal Australians as one of the oldest continuous population histories outside sub-Saharan Africa, and that current Aboriginal Australians have the longest association with the land on which they live. The study argues that Aboriginal descendants migrated into Asia before finally reaching Australia about 50,000 years ago. Willerslev (2011) claims that ‘Aboriginal Australians descend from the first human explorers.’

Global dynamics and power bases are shifting, especially when one considers that over half of the world’s top 100 economies are corporations, not countries. Eminent Canadian designer, writer and design advocate Robert L. Peters points out that the practice of past decades to homogenise, monopolise and dominate markets is being questioned and re-examined. He questions whether design can become more holistic, inclusive, sensitive, eclectic, empowering and sustainable. Peters, in his 2005 article for _Communication Arts_ magazine titled, ‘Identity matters’, describes our time as the ‘age of ideas’, where communication designers play an increasingly vital role in creating economic success, shaping communities and forming culture:

_Clearly, designers have real power – we also bear considerable responsibility for how things are consumed, how people are depicted, how media are deployed, and ultimately, what form the future will take … diverse cultures and their vibrant differences? Can we still make useful contributions to humankind’s collective visual vocabulary?_ (Peters, 2005)

Appropriate, ethical and respectful depiction and referencing of Indigenous visual iconography has become a topical issue around the world, especially when designers and
their clients choose to visually represent national identity. Many countries now feel a need to adjust their national imagery to acknowledge both their Indigenous and colonial history. This awkward cultural dynamic still exists, but designers and businesses are now becoming aware of their social and ethical responsibility to deal with the issue.

There is growing enthusiasm globally for incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy into strategic business planning. And design is proving to play an important role in the delivery of CSR initiatives by producing ‘socially responsible’ actions that contribute to improved performance and profit maximisation for companies. This is not ‘green-washing’; it is about companies creating a competitive advantage by adopting a sincere and respectful approach to ethical practice.

Appropriate and ethical representation of Indigenous culture in Australia requires a dedicated and respectful approach to what is a diverse array of multi-cultures. This study highlights the need for all stakeholders, governments, the private sector and the design community to work together to ensure respectful representation and engagement with Indigenous knowledge. It is a sensitive area where guidance is required to assist companies and designers to engage appropriately with Indigenous culture when required.

A design-led ethos towards environmental responsibility and sustainability practice is already front-of-mind in the building, automobile and energy industries. The shifting paradigm now extends to every aspect of the way we live, as companies acknowledge the value of aligned (CSR) policy. The way companies interface with their clients is also changing. Global awareness and multicultural understanding is now identified as integral to corporate success. Businesses have become more strategic in delivering their message through communication design including advertising, social media and branding. A rapidly maturing market is more diverse and knowledgeable than ever before. Businesses are constantly seeking more sensitive and effective methods of engagement with stakeholders. Those companies promoting ethical authenticity can also obtain benefits, but this is an area of design that requires attention in Australia; in particular the depiction of Indigenous culture within the context of national identity and place branding.

Communication design, including branding and advertising, has an important role to play in the positive representation and presentation of Indigenous culture in Australia. Unfortunately, the commercial dynamic and subsequent potential for exploitation has proven problematic in the past. The development of corporate social responsibility (CSR)
practice policies and strategic understanding of the field has seen significant improvements in the approach of these professional design sectors to Indigenous representation. A recent trend in branding has seen an increased emphasis on authenticity as the key strategic aim of marketers and brand managers. Indeed, the English word, ‘authentic’ is derived from the Greek authentikós, which means ‘original’.

Authenticity in the contemporary branding context refers to truthfulness of origin, sincerity and credibility. This is a major shift from the brand strategies of the nineties when the concept of brand moved from a manufacturer’s mark of quality to a point where the brand or trademark had become the product itself. In 2000, author Naomi Klein, in her landmark book No logo, identified the point in history when the brand ideal got off track:

The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multinational corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products (Klein, 2000, p. 3).

In an article for The Identity Journal, the author made the following comment about a contemporary shift in brand strategies:

Interestingly, this approach of ‘selling the sizzle without delivering the steak’ has lost its effectiveness; social media can kill a product over night if its brand does not deliver on expectations (Kennedy, 2013, p. 64).

Authenticity is quickly judged by a discerning audience, which is now connected via a global web of instantaneous commentary and opinion. Jamie Monberg, Chief Experience Officer at Hornall Anderson, made the following observation in his article for Co. Design titled, ‘Authenticity Is King Because Branding Bores Everyone – Brand’s Audience Needs to Experience Your Message’:

Today, any brand has a potential army of credible, unpaid spokespeople that are willing to work on its behalf. And this army is the exact same group of people who are willing to work against it (Monberg, 2012).

Monberg describes this brand strategy realignment as the ‘post-positioning era’. He goes on to write:

In the post-positioning era of branding, what you say about your product or service matters almost nothing at all, and what I, the consumer, can do with it matters completely
... Our ability as advertisers to contrive and disseminate an emotional response through advertising is diminishing rapidly. And brand exposure is not the same as brand experience. A single one-star review on Yelp trumps 60 seconds of Super Bowl airtime (Monberg, 2012).

Contemporary thinking suggests that branding is rapidly reverting to its original role as a visual connector to product and that the true meaning (authenticity) of brand lies in the product itself.

This strategic discourse is of particular relevance to Australian as it struggles with national identity issues involving reconciliation, the republic debate and the national flag. It is not unreasonable to suggest that ‘post-positioning’ brand strategies could be used to address Australia’s alleged post-colonial identity issues. Conversely Melissa Aronczyk argues that national governments prefer to use the tools and techniques of commercial branding in an attempt to articulate a more coherent and cohesive identity as a means to attract foreign capital and maintain citizen loyalty (Aronczyk, 2013):

> Nations are only able to draw on those things that can make them money because, fundamentally, the purpose of branding is to increase funding, not talk about what you really stand for as a country (Aronczyk, 2013).

Critics of branding may reject comparisons made between commercially motivated branding and the sanctity of national symbols but in reality the objectives and strategies development are the same … especially when the primary objectives are to represent uniqueness, authenticity and visible identification. This study asserts that in regard to national identity or place branding, designers need to combine empathy and context with communication design processes to generate insights and solutions.

The Country Brand Index (CBI) is a global study that aims to determine the strength and effectiveness of country brands. This research initiative is undertaken on an annual basis by the international branding agency, FutureBrand. The 2010 Country Brand Index Executive Summary identified and prioritised attributes that drive the desire to visit a country or the desire to live in a country other than one’s own. The summary states:
Interestingly, the results show that visitors are more focused on a country’s essence (attractions, authenticity, culture, ethos), while the selection of a country to live in rests more heavily on its essentials (geography, infrastructure, governance, economy) and its solidity and steadiness as a nation (FutureBrand, 2008, p. 24).

New Zealand was highlighted as a country that is dedicated to maintaining its true and unique essence by highlighting nature, culture and its people in its marketing and place branding. Appropriate use of Indigenous knowledge and cultural representation play a big role in the formation of these place-branding strategies.

FutureBrand Australia has a history of incorporating Indigenous iconography into place and event branding dating back to the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Fig. 2.3.1). Although generally well regarded, the 2000 Sydney Olympics logo featuring boomerangs was criticised at the time for referencing Indigenous culture without adequate consultation. Since 2000, FutureBrand Australia (then FHA Design) has progressively developed in-house research methods for Indigenous knowledge engagement. But even so, they openly acknowledge that there is a need for greater Indigenous involvement in the area of place branding.

![Sydney Olympic logo](image)

Figure 2.3.1 Sydney Olympic logo – FutureBrand Australia (formerly FHA Design).

In 2011, FutureBrand incorporated the Indigenous cultures of the two countries into the Cricket World Cup 2015 logo for the International Cricket Council. They collaborated/co-created this project with respected Aboriginal designer John Kundereri Moriarty and his company, the Jumbana Group.
FutureBrand Australia’s creative director Ken Shadbolt explained the reason behind using Indigenous culture to represent a common link between Australia and New Zealand: ‘It has been a fascinating challenge to consider what our two countries share, and how to best express those similarities into a brand mark’ (Shadbolt, 2011).

FutureBrand also consulted with the Jumbana Group on the Brand Australia identity (Fig. 2.3.3). Their collaboration involved providing knowledge and advice on the use of cultural motifs including Aboriginal journey tracks. John Moriarty is a full member of the Yanyuwa people of his birthplace, Borroloola, in the Northern Territory. He is a graduate of Flinders University and has held many public positions, including chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council and deputy chairman of Indigenous Business Australia.

John Moriarty’s wife Ros is the managing director and creative director of the Jumbana Group’s Balarinji Studio. In an interview with *The Australian* newspaper, she made the point that John’s community engagement ability is an important facet of their business practice because he is able to facilitate cross-cultural communications and undertake
commercial conversations that lead to better outcomes and engagement of the Indigenous workforce (R. Moriarty, 2010).

In 2011, FutureBrand’s Argentinian office referenced ancient Inca symbols to create an Indigenous-inspired brand for neighbouring South American country Peru (Fig. 2.3.4). FutureBrand has clearly recognised the relationship between Indigenous representation and authenticity of place. However, until recently it was unclear how rigorous its methodology was and if processes are adopted consistently around the world.

![Figure 2.3.4 Brand Peru logo – FutureBrand Argentina.](image)

In 2013, Air Pacific was officially rebranded as Fiji Airways. FutureBrand proudly promote the fact that they co-created the new identity system with Makereta Matemosi, one of Fiji’s most acclaimed and respected Masi artists. The aim was for Makereta Matemosi and FutureBrand Australia to work together to co-create an identity that celebrated Masi art – an ancient art that embodies the spirit and stories of Fijian culture. The brief was to design a symbol that would be a proud symbol for the country of Fiji and its people.

![Figure 2.3.5 Fiji Airlines branding – FutureBrand Australia.](image)
FutureBrand was asked to develop an identity that was authentic, respectful, natural and handmade. Their processes and methodologies set out to appropriately incorporate ancient motifs into the final design, respecting the meanings and using the symbols appropriately across a range of applications. Their intention was to develop a working framework that was inclusive, incorporated Indigenous knowledge, acknowledged ownership and respected sensibilities required when incorporating traditional visual culture into commercial design practice and branding.

The aircraft’s livery features three Masi motifs. According to FutureBrand and Fiji Airways, the Teteva symbol represents the values and the spirit of Fiji (Fig. 2.3.5). The Rova motif on the aircraft engine symbolises the warm greeting Fijians extend to visitors, while the Makare motif around the border of the Teteva symbol on the tail represents clear water flowing on a white sandy beach. Fragments of the motifs also expand to the interior furnishings and other collateral.

The Fiji Airlines project demonstrated the result of progressive development of FutureBrand’s methods, which have evolved and matured over time. The company was proud of what they achieved and the processes they developed. Unfortunately, disappointment would follow when Fiji Airlines asked the creators to assign all associated copyright to them. This practice is not unusual. However, in this context a company was requesting ownership of traditional cultural property that could not be sold. Wendy Babasiga’s website blog comment accurately reflected the sentiments of those who objected to the design:

> While the grant of the trademark to Air Pacific/Fiji Airways may be recognition for Mrs Makereta Matemosi, the grant would not give clear recognition to those women and artisans who came before and created these motifs. Many of these motifs are used by the Taukei women of Fiji and Indigenous women in other Pacific islands for kesakesa or masi/ngatu/tapamaking do not belong solely to Mrs Matemosi or to Air Pacific/Fiji Airways, but are instead a collective cultural inheritance for the people of Fiji and the Pacific. To trademark the designs for one company’s sole and exclusive use is grossly unfair to other artisans and Masi makers, and to the human rights of the Indigenous people of the Pacific. While we applaud Air Pacific and Fiji Airways decision to use Indigenous motifs in their livery and logo, we do not support its exclusive use and trademark by Air Pacific/Fiji Airways alone. These motifs were not just created by Air Pacific/Fiji Airways in the last year since the Fiji Airways airline and logo were launched, and are the cultural heritage that should be protected and for the use of all the people of Fiji and the Pacific, in perpetuity (Babasiga, 2013).
This dissertation asserts the needs for an embedded approach to research and engagement by all designers working in this area. It is important that processes are developed that respect issues of ownership and borrowed power and also recognise the multicultural and diversity of Indigenous culture.

Design is now regarded internationally as a problem-solving process, a tool that can generate real outcomes to serve public good, whether social, cultural or economic. Companies are looking at processes such as ‘design thinking’ that sit outside their current frame of practice. ‘Design thinking’ methodologies have now been embraced by non-design companies. Maureen Thurston of Deloitte Australia made the following observation:

_We’re living in a moment in history where the canons of business are changing in ways that have never been seen before. The well-oiled tools, theories and practices that proved their worthiness over the last 100 years no longer suffice. Competitors are feistier. Customers are increasingly unpredictable. Commodityization is commonplace. The ideals of ‘reliability and predictability’ to mitigate risk have been swept up in a tornado of uncertainty. The world has turned upside-down. So we have to rely on our wits, our thinking, to survive and thrive. This is not to suggest critical analysis is not important, it is just no longer enough. Navigating the floodwaters of unprecedented change requires a more agile, creative instrument – a new kind of compass to guide our thinking. Thinking differently is the key to thriving in this competitive market. Design Thinking and diversity of thought are the new currency_ (Thurston, 2012).

Businesses now embrace design thinking as an innovative and effective pathway to finding solutions, with processes that utilise oppositional thinking to deal with the structural tensions often associated with complex problem solving.

_Design Thinking is a way of thinking about problems. A mind-set that doesn’t get flustered by ambiguity but finds inspiration within it. It is a process of diverging and converging, an ongoing quest for what’s possible – discovering the best solution that challenges the status quo. Like ‘systems thinking’, Design Thinking takes a holistic approach to understanding the problem from multiple angles and personal perspectives_ (Thurston, 2012).

This dissertation supports the claim that a new way of approaching problem solving is required on more complex global issues and wicked problems. This thesis refers to the
awkward relationship that exists between Indigenous knowledge and commercial graphical representation such as branding and national identity.

Design thinking is not a practice, it is a methodology. It can be used to approach wicked attributes by providing a deeper investigation of problem searching as part of the problem-solving process. As Professor Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall from Swinburne University points out, designers need more skills in their repertoire to be able to seriously take on these major challenges. These skills including an appreciation and understanding of design anthropology:

Designers primarily concern themselves with how to create a ‘successful’ communication, product, or experience. But with the past 10 years of globalization, digitalization, and ever increasing design complexity, designers have come to realize that to answer the question of design ‘success’ requires that they answer that question of how the processes and artefacts of design help define what it means to be human. This ‘humanness’ can range from how humans control the environment through tools (homo faber); how high-heeled shoes affect natural ways of walking; to moral issues of how participation in the design process empowers marginalized communities. In this space, the practice and theory of design anthropology has emerged (Tunstall, 2008).

In Tunstall’s paper Decolonized design and anthropology: The utility of design anthropology (2011), Tunstall proposes the methodology of design anthropology as an answer to how one might create a decolonised process of design and anthropological engagement. The paper also proposes a list of principles that have been developed to ensure respectful engagements of understanding and designing for self-determination:

I have proposed Design Anthropology as a methodology for a decolonized anthropology and design through the key principles listed here:

1. Value systems and cultures ought to be accepted as dynamic, not static. Each generation goes through the process of negotiating the elements that make up their value systems and cultures.

2. One ought to recognize the mutual borrowing that happens among value systems and cultures, and seek to mitigate or eliminate the under unequal circumstances in which that borrowing takes place.

3. One must look simultaneously at what is expressed as that to be gained, lost, and created new in the recombination of value systems and cultures by a group of people.
4. One should seek to eliminate false distinctions between art, craft, and design in order to better recognize all culturally important forms of making as a way in which people make value systems tangible to themselves and others.
5. One ought to create processes that enable respectful dialogue and relational interactions such that everyone is able to contribute their expertise equally to the process of designing and those contributions are properly recognized and remunerated.
6. Projects should use design processes and artifacts to work with groups to shift hegemonic value systems that are detrimental to the holistic well being of vulnerable groups, dominant groups, and their extended environments.
7. The ultimate criteria for success of any Design Anthropology engagements are the recognized creation of compassion among the participants in project and in harmony with their wider environments (Tunstall, 2011, p. 7).

Designers are now generally more aware of their responsibility to deal with these issues but do need to appreciate the contradictions that exist between the commercial design practices and cultural ownership, particularly in the area of Indigenous knowledge. An increased global focus and understanding of design research in areas of design anthropology and human-centred design will encourage more designers to operate in this space. The world is currently experiencing an increase of higher-degree design student enrolments. The expectation is that these graduates will possess specialist expertise including a greater appreciation and understanding of co-creation methodologies and engagement processes required to tackle these complex problems.

Robert L. Peters, Koopman Distinguished Chair in Visual Arts at the University of Hartford, Connecticut, USA and Icograda President 2001–2003, made a passionate plea for designers to embrace their potential to influence society in a positive way in his Board Message article titled ‘Moving Forward’:

_We have an important role to play. As information designers in an information age, we are in a position of responsibility. Design shapes culture, it influences societal values, it informs, and it clarifies. The world needs us, and we can do much to expose injustice, to counteract patriarchal violence, to build empathy for one another, to promote peace, to alleviate despair, and to uphold humanity_ (Peters, 2001, p. 1).

While the interest in Indigenous knowledge is growing, there remains a lack of information and guidance for designers that relates specifically to the appropriate
depiction of Indigenous visual culture in design practice. This is not unique to Australia. United States academic Dr Theodore Jojola from the School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico, made a similar observation regarding Indigenous design engagement in the United States:

There is very little written about the ethical, methodological, and epistemological approaches to community design and planning by indigenous communities. Historically, the mainstream professions have overlooked these in favor of Euro-Western practices. Indigenous design and planning is informed by an emerging paradigm that uses a culturally responsive and value-based approach to community development (Jojola, 2011).

One can argue that the periodical evaluation and questioning of national identity is healthy and necessary. Issues such as reconciliation and constitutional recognition of Indigenous people are important to framing a national identity, as are the design of state symbols and other government gazetted communication designs including the national flag. The appropriateness and authenticity of the Australian flag is regularly scrutinised. Does it represent what Australians stand for, and is it an appropriate symbol of a country that is the home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures?

If constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australia is adopted, it is likely to have an immediate effect on the way Australians view themselves in the context of nationhood. Indigenous recognition in the context of national identity will become an issue for consideration by social commentators, image-makers, designers and educators. It may change the way history is taught and the way Australia is represented as the home of the oldest continuous living culture in the world. Constitutional recognition of Indigenous people will persuade Australians to acknowledge a 70,000+ year history and not just a colonial history. Companies who currently incorporate Australian cultural identity into their business strategy may also find a need to rethink their approach so that it aligns with changing attitudes towards national representation and authenticity.

Maintaining local identity and traditional culture has become a global issue. The impact of globalisation and the pressure it places on the sustainability of traditional story telling was the theme of a poster designed for an international exhibition: Posters For Cultural Diversity. The poster titled Cultural Dismay (Fig. 2.3.6) asked the question: ‘Who’s the leader of the club that’s made for you and me?’ These theme song lyrics from the 1960s children’s television program The Mickey Mouse Club were featured on the poster to
make a statement about cultural appropriation, ownership and self-determination (Kennedy, 2007). It specifically asked who is in control of Hong Kong’s cultural identity and warned of the potential long-term impact Hong Kong Disneyland might have on local culture and tradition. The Posters For Cultural Diversity exhibition took place in October 2007 at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba.

Figure 2.3.6 Cultural Dismay by Russell Kennedy. Posters for Cultural Diversity International Exhibition. National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba, October 2007.

Communication designer and author, David Berman (2009) in his book Do Good Design discusses his trip to Tanzania in 2001, where he was astonished to discover that several of the towns he visited appeared to be sponsored by Coca-Cola. What he discovered was that Coca-Cola had provided signage featuring Coke logos for all the streets, hospitals, schools and even churches in Tanzania. No doubt Coca-Cola thought this was a clever way to gain visibility for their brand, but we need to ask ourselves if this was a responsible strategy and what was the broader impact on Tanzania’s cultural identity. Peters reminded us in his Communication Arts article titled Identity Matters that this phenomenon has been coming for some time when he wrote: ‘Not a new topic, really – Victor Papanek predicted the “Coca-colonisation” and “Disneyfication” of the entire planet a full generation ago’ (Peters, 2005, p. 337).
Historically Australia has regarded Aboriginal visual culture as an adjunct to mainstream society. Attitudes change from generation to generation. Designers appear to be sympathetic to the issue but remain wary of referencing Aboriginal iconography because of the potential for inadvertent appropriation and the associated legal and ethical use issues.

Cultural paradigm shifts in this area are not new; community values and attitudes constantly evolve. Australian history is littered with inappropriate examples of Indigenous representation such as those portrayed below (Figs. 2.3.7 and 2.3.8).

Figure 2.3.7 ABO Brand (paint can label) 1921.

Figure 2.3.8 Symbols of Australia book featuring various Australian Aboriginal-themed trademarks 1892–1954.
Although there were clear racist overtones in the past, some designers of the period did celebrate Aboriginal culture as a key component of an emerging Australian identity. Australian designers such as Estonian-born immigrant Gert Sellheim and his clients appreciated the emergence of a new aesthetic that made a stylistic connection between modernism and Aboriginal imagery. Sellheim, designer of the original Qantas Flying Kangaroo logo (1947), was an early explorer of an Australian identity that incorporated Aboriginal graphical representation (Fig. 2.3.9).

![Figure 2.3.9 Gert Sellheim (travel poster), 1957.](image)

Although having deep appreciation of Aboriginal art, designers like Sellheim had little understanding of the cultural context or meaning behind the work, which was often appropriated. Much of this questionable work was produced during the first half of the 20th century.

To understand the context, one needs to consider the shameful period of Australian history when all Aborigines did not have the right to vote until 1962 and were only included in the national census after a referendum in 1967. A high-profile example of inappropriate practice occurred in 1964 when Gordon Andrews, a much-celebrated Australian graphic and industrial designer incorporated David Malangi’s artwork *Gunmirrangu Funeral Scene* (see Fig. 2.3.11) on the reverse side of his design for the Australian one-dollar note (Fig. 2.3.10). He did so without asking permission. Malangi
was not aware of this until he saw the note after it was printed in 1966. The Reserve Bank later recognised his copyright and awarded him compensation. But to feature an image (funeral scene) on a national banknote without asking permission, or even understanding its meaning, was and is regarded as both ignorant and disrespectful. This copyright case was a milestone event in the recognition of Aboriginal art in Australia, but it also left a legacy of uncertainty for many years about the use of Indigenous imagery.

![Figure 2.3.10 Left – Section of Australian one-dollar bank note. Gordon Andrews (1964).](image1)

![Figure 2.3.11 Right – Painting titled Gunmiringu Funeral Scene. David Malangi (1963).](image2)

Representation of Indigenous culture in Australia requires a dedicated and respectful approach to what is a diverse array of multi-cultures. There is a need for governments, the private sector and the design community to show leadership in regard to appropriate representation and engagement with Indigenous knowledge. It is a sensitive area where guidance is needed to assist companies and designers to engage appropriately with Indigenous culture when required.

In 2010, highly respected Australian designer David Lancashire produced the following call to action when briefing participants of Icograda’s *Mother Tongue* exhibition:

> We need a culture shift! Can design reconcile differences? Does it hold this power? If design has the power to market products and services that make consumers consume, then I am sure it can (Lancashire, 2010).
Lancashire is a non-Indigenous communication designer who has been able to navigate this awkward period of history by persisting where others have found it too difficult. Lancashire understands the precarious relationship Indigenous culture has with contemporary Australian design. Migrating to Australia from England as a 19-year-old, Lancashire was immediately struck by the unique qualities of Aboriginal art and believes strongly that it should have an elevated status within Australia’s national identity. He has developed his own processes of engagement, which draw inspiration from Indigenous culture without ever a suggestion of appropriation. Lancashire’s Peace Roo poster for the Sydney Olympics 2000 demonstrates this ability (Fig. 2.3.12).

Cultural understanding, consultation, collaboration, and most importantly, respect for Aboriginal culture are crucial requirements in advancing the issue of an integrated national identity. Communication designers and their clients have an important role to play in resolving the challenges of cultural diversity and appropriate representation ... but they need assistance.

This dissertation identifies a need to develop an engagement framework that promotes and facilitates accurate and respectful representation of Indigenous culture in the mainstream media. Such a framework would set out methodologies for collaboration, consultation and co-creation. It would encourage rigorous research and stakeholder participation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers and companies. It
suggests that Indigenous knowledge be embedded into government policy, in particular, design policy. The Australian Government has already published protocols for producing Indigenous Australian media and visual arts but there are no documents that specifically target communication design or other commercial design disciplines.

The document titled *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Janke, 2007) was produced by the Australia Council for the Arts. Compiled and edited by Janke and Company, this document provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and protocols for the use of Indigenous visual arts. It also explains how protocols differ from legal obligations by outlining the current copyright law framework. It encourages culturally appropriate working practices, and promotes communication between all Australians with an interest in Indigenous visual arts. Although not targeted specifically at the design industry, it does make a relevant point when referring to appropriation of Indigenous visual culture:

*Indigenous people are concerned that such practices undermine the cultural authenticity of Indigenous visual arts, and also rob Indigenous artists and their communities of potential income streams and graphic designers, for example, copying sacred symbols from rock art books for commercial logos* (Janke, 2007, p. 14).

This document provides a checklist of key points to consider for visual arts projects or arts practice that are also relevant to design practice. The checklist points are:

1. Respect
2. Indigenous control
3. Communication, consultation and consent
4. Interpretation, integrity and authenticity
5. Secrecy and confidentiality
6. Attribution and copyright
7. Proper returns and royalties
8. Continuing cultures
9. Recognition and protection

This dissertation explores the assertion that a document like this, specifically targeting the design profession, would encourage more interaction and appropriate representation, which would in turn inform an evolving Australian national identity. It would also help to ensure that respectful acknowledgement and representation of traditional owners is
achieved and maintained by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers. Guidance in this area would be of particular value to designers working in the area of national identity, place branding, tourism, event marketing, promotion and advertising.

Maximising the creative and technological capabilities of any country is vital to producing factors conducive to developing innovation through design. The acceptance of design as a major economic and social driver for industry, manufacturing and trade is important, but many countries now believe design also has a more direct role to play in improving the human condition. Policy development is now starting to consider design from a human-centred perspective. As Victor Papanek, author of *Design for the real world* states: ‘The only important thing about design is how it relates to people’ (Papanek, 1972).

Papanek’s statement is as relevant to designers as it is to their clients. Governments around the world are developing policies that aim to deliver specific cultural identity outcomes. In Australia, the Victorian State Government published a document in 2009 titled *Five years on: Victoria’s design sector 2003–2008*, which reported on Victoria’s design sector after five years of government design policy. The report stated:

> The most frequently mentioned social benefit of design projects was ‘Benefits to local communities, in terms of greater cohesion, communication or participation’ (Design Victoria, 2008, p. 116).

Doctor Sabine Junginger, lecturer at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom and a Fellow at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany made the following observation in regard to the potential contribution of designers to policymaking (Lecture, Swinburne University of Technology, 2011):

> Design professionals continue to have a key role in developing the products and services that are necessary to implement policy decisions; design researchers and design professionals influence policies by informing policy makers about their insights into the ways ordinary citizens go about their lives and businesses and their ability to improve their experiences (Junginger, 2011).

A national Australian design policy would focus on the factors conducive to creating innovation through design and promote design as a major economic ingredient for industry, manufacturing and trade. Many countries have adopted design policies to
stimulate commercial innovation but also to improve social and cultural aspects of society.

Developing effective policy that incorporates protocols on appropriate representation of Indigenous graphical representation will require a respectful approach and conscious awareness of the diversities, differences and multi-cultures within broader Indigenous groupings in geographical regions.

Recent research into branding has revealed some interesting outcomes, which can be used to inform public discussion regarding national identity. The *Authentic Brand Index* conducted in Australia in 2006 was a global study into understanding and measuring the authentic equity of brands. Brand consultants, Principals and Brand Navigator, conducted the survey. The *Authentic Brand Index* states on its website:

> At its heart, authenticity is about practising what you preach; being totally clear about who you are and what you do best. When a brand’s rhetoric gets out of sync with customers’ actual experiences, the brand’s integrity and future persuasiveness suffers.

(Principals, Brand Navigator, 2006).

The spirit of this statement could apply just as well to flags. For example, when a flag’s narrative and authenticity is out of sync with people’s actual experiences, the flag’s integrity and future connectivity suffers.

In South Africa the so-called South African Renaissance has encouraged a new paradigm of interconnectedness rather than duality in cultural representation. South Africa presents a positive case study of how the cultural adjustment of national identity can help rectify the mistakes of the past. Initiated as a reconciliation flag by President Nelson Mandela and designed by Fred Brownell (Herald of South Africa), the South African flag was officially adopted on April 27, 1994. The flag change was followed closely by a complete realignment/rebranding of South Africa’s identity, which involved renaming provinces and the redesigning national symbols, including the South African Coat of Arms (Figs 2.3.13 and 2.3.14). In 2000, South African President Thabo Mbeki made the following statement in Kwaggafontein, South Africa about Indigenous representation through design being crucial to building self-esteem and purpose:

> Through this new coat of arms, we pay homage to our past. We seek to embrace the indigenous belief systems of our people, by demonstrating our respect for the relationship between people and nature, which for millions of years has been fundamental to our self-understanding of our African condition (Mbeki, 2000).
Lange and van Eeden point out that the revised South African identity had been building prior to Mandela’s release from prison in 1990. In 1988, the historian Smith remarked that the decolonisation of South African history had started to take place, ousting previous Eurocentric ideas and incorporating a richer social and more Africanised history (Smith, 1988). Lan and van Eeden describe how successive state or government institutions ‘scripted’ different versions of nationhood that were executed, acted out and performed by designers in the visual domain (Lange & van Eeden, 2015):

Colonial legacies of visual stereotyping in terms of race and national identity were found to be wanting, and a new, more inclusive and representative visual vocabulary was established that reflected and possibly helped to construct this
emerging Africanisation. This process is by no means over, as the imperatives of globalisation continue to inform the contemporary South African ‘imagined community’ and challenge the need for Indigenous and inclusive histories of the visual (Lange & van Eeden, 2015).

This South African example presents a positive case study of how the cultural adjustment of national identity can help rectify the mistakes of the past. Contrastingly, in 2005 the Venezuela Ministry of Culture set out to rebrand its major cultural institutions, including several iconic public museums and galleries. The new visual identity program replaced a series of very popular and long-standing identities with a single unifying mark, based on a traditional symbol from the Venezuelan Aboriginal group, Panare (Figs. 2.3.15 and 2.3.16).

Figure 2.3.15 New logo for Venezuela Ministry of Culture and its public institutions.
Figure 2.3.16 Display of former Venezuela Ministry of Culture institutional logos.
The Panare people were extremely critical of the Venezuelan Government because they were not consulted in the process and regarded the outcome as disrespectful to their culture. The Venezuelan design community overwhelmingly agreed that to replace such well-established visual identities required a broad-based consultation process involving designers, the Panare and the other cultural stakeholders. Lack of consultation had the effect of alienating the government from both the Venezuelan designers and the Panare community whom they thought they were championing.

These local and international examples and case studies of Indigenous representation by communication designers provide valuable reference when placed into a historical and societal values context.

2.4 INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

What are the perceptions and actions governing the interaction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers and the producers of Australian Indigenous visual culture and knowledge?

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE CODES, PROTOCOLS & GUIDELINES

Protocols involving shared knowledge, or hybridity, may or may not be deemed as appropriate by Australian Indigenous communities. As stated earlier, this is a difficult area of research that needs to be approached in a spirit of Indigenous self-determination, empowerment, inclusiveness and a sincere want for reconciliation. Governments, organisations and professional associations have acknowledged the issue, and their role in addressing the problem.

The Commonwealth Government of Australia acknowledges the existence of the need to represent Indigenous people appropriately and to formally recognise their history, culture and contributions. The Redfern speech, co-written with Don Watson, a speech writer for the Labor Party, was delivered by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating on 10 December 1992. The speech, which dealt with the challenges faced by Indigenous Australians, is regarded as one of the greatest Australian speeches delivered on the relationship of Indigenous culture to the Australian national identity. ‘How well we recognise the fact that as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia.’ (Watson & Keating, 1992, p. 2) Keating was the first Australian
prime minister to publicly acknowledge to Indigenous Australians that European settlers were responsible for the difficulties Australian Aboriginal communities continued to face. The speech also called for a shift in perceptions, attitudes and policy. ‘Ever so gradually, we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom obtained in their epic story’ (Watson & Keating, 1992, p. 6).

In 2008, The Rudd Labor Government followed its formal apology to Indigenous Australians with the 2020 Summit, a national think-tank on Australia’s future. As mentioned in the introduction, over 900 ideas were generated. The final report from the summit was titled *Responding to the Australian 2020 Summit*. The document highlighted the need for an Indigenous Cultural Education and Knowledge Centre. An institution of this kind would have the potential to assist in the research, co-creation and development of design policy. The Australian Government recommended the establishment of a national Indigenous knowledge centre, which would support the education of Australians in the history and understanding of Indigenous culture and affairs across Australia, and preserve Indigenous heritage (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 175). The Australian Government’s intention was to develop a policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The promotion of traditional cultural expressions was also identified as highly important in *Creative Australia*, the Australian Government’s national cultural policy, launched in March 2013. The policy document forecast that an action plan would be ready for implementation from 2014. Although seemingly stifled by a change of government in 2013, the *Creative Australia* policy was a significant development in the context of this research. The policy includes some encouraging statements. For example, GOAL ONE of the list of five goals states: ‘Creative Australia has five equally important and linked goals at its core: GOAL ONE: Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 6). The policy clearly highlights the need to encourage the cultural expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: ‘This central role shapes and reinforces Australia’s unique national cultural identity as home to one of the world’s oldest living cultures which are also creating some of the most dynamic and inspiring contemporary art work’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 28). The rhetoric expressed in the *Creative Australia* policy document certainly resonates with the spirit and thesis of this study:
Australia’s identity is developing further from its base as the home for one of the world’s oldest living cultures, and continues to welcome a diversity of cultures from around the globe. Every point in the development of our national identity has been given life and meaning through works of art, creativity and imagination. From ochre paintings on rock walls (still practised today) that recorded life as it was, to the paintings and drawings of those who came from afar, to the authors who wrote stories, plays and poems that made sense of a place and its peoples, to the architects and builders who imagined and crafted buildings that suited the climate and materials, to the performers and musicians whose soaring skill have filled our memories with sounds and characters, to the contemporary artists who bring screens to life. It is these works that endure to capture the spirit of the time, provide a foundation for the future, display the genius of artists, ensure the pleasure of participation and give substance to identity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 19).

Although referring to visual artists, the following statement is equally relevant to communication design practice:

The pathways to action are underpinned by a commitment to protecting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists by supporting professional development and training, and working with the industry to ensure these artists are treated ethically and receive a fair return for their work (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 19).

In 2010, prior to the release of the Creative Australia document, Alison Page (Walbanga–Wadi Wadi) was appointed to the Expert Panel established by Prime Minister Julia Gillard to advise the Australian Government on recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian Constitution. Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander peoples is integral to the thesis of appropriate recognition. Page argues that as far as the Constitution is concerned, Aboriginal Australians are invisible (Page, 2012). There is no mention in the current Constitution of their heritage and cultures; no mention of their place as the first inhabitants of this country and as the world’s oldest continuing cultures in human history. Page makes the point that while the 1967 Referendum removed some constitutional discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Constitution continues to permit racial discrimination against people of any race the Australian Constitution does not even afford Aboriginal Australians the dignity of recognition as the nation’s Indigenous peoples.

On January 2012, the Expert Panel to advise the Australian Government on recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Australian Constitution presented its
recommendations to the prime minister. The report was titled *Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution*. The Expert Panel was co-chaired by Patrick Dodson (Yawuru) and Mark Leibler AC. The report recommends the full inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution by recognising their continuing cultures, languages and heritage as an important part of our nation (Dodson & Leibler, 2012). The report also includes a submission by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, which states:

*The lack of acknowledgement of a people’s existence in a country’s constitution has a major impact on their sense of identity, value within the community and perpetuates discrimination and prejudice, which further erodes the hope of Indigenous people* (RANZCP, 2011, p. 40).

Visible recognition and appropriate representation of Indigenous culture is an important issue and one that is difficult to resolve in the broader context of national identity. Professor Patrick Dodson, Co-Chair of the Australian Federal Government’s Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians, made the following statement at Human Rights 2011, an event held by the Australian Human Rights Commission:

*The social degradation that exists has come about because of policies in the past, poor strategies, the lack of recognition and slow attempt to seriously recognise the uniqueness of the Indigenous peoples ...* (Dodson, 2011).

As stated by Don Norman earlier in this dissertation, designers are sometimes criticised for exaggerating the benefits of design. This raises the question, can designers credibly claim to be able to improve people’s health by promoting positive messages that could potentially lead to elevated sense of worth and self-esteem? For example, could a new, less divisive Australian national flag or more visible representation in advertising and the media positively contribute to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people by encouraging a sense of belonging and contemporary relevance? *NOTE: Many Indigenous Australians view the current Australian National flag as a symbol of invasion.*

Authentic representation and appropriate recognition are important elements in building self-esteem in Indigenous communities and to help realign national identities. The 2003 Australian National Aboriginal Health Strategy states that:

*Health to Aboriginal peoples is a matter of determining all aspects of their life, including control over their physical environment, of dignity, of community self-esteem, and of justice. It is not merely a matter of the provision of doctors, hospitals, medicines or the absence of disease and incapacity* (NATSIHC, 2003, pp. 3–4).
Cultural respect and recognition are directly connected to self-esteem. American psychologist Abraham Maslow was best known for creating Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs*, a theory of self-actualisation. In 1949, Maslow published his *Hierarchy of Needs* in a paper titled *A theory of human motivation*, which presented a model for understanding the elements of human motivation and personal development (see Fig. 2.4.1 below). Maslow’s pyramid suggests that esteem needs (self-respect, personal worth, autonomy) represent the second-last step to achieving one’s full potential (self-actualisation). It is significant to note that recognition, representation and acknowledgement play an important role in developing self-respect and personal worth as identified at level two of Maslow’s five-level pyramid. As highlighted in Section 2.2, Maslow argues that without self-esteem (self-respect, personal worth, autonomy) one cannot reach self-actualisation. It is suggested that respectful acknowledgement and the feeling of belonging are key to this theory.

![Figure 2.4.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)](image)

The indirect benefits of respectful and visible representation of Indigenous culture are difficult to quantify; however, the strategic benefits to design practice are quite clear. The demand for cultural authenticity place branding is growing as the marketplace matures and the quest for a unique cultural reference point becomes more difficult in a globalised world. Indigenous culture is now being identified as an important tool to represent cultural uniqueness, but this new emphasis raises ethical issues relating to appropriate engagement, knowledge ownership and the need for communities to have control of their own culture.

Protocols of engagement are not new, particularly in the area of government. *Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people* was first published in 1988 by the Queensland Government’s Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy
and Development. This document was originally conceived as a guide for Queensland Government officers to use when consulting with Queensland Aboriginal individuals, groups and/or communities (urban, rural and remote). This is an important historical document and has been cited by a variety of different protocol publications including the *Cultural respect and communication guide* produced by the North Coast Area Health Service, New South Wales. *Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people* makes an important and relevant point when it clearly states that this protocol booklet does not provide an answer to everything and that some problems have more than one answer, and there are other problems that have no readily apparent answer. The protocols outlined in this publication align with the spirit of those required for this dissertation. Government involvement is important at all levels and with all aligned stakeholders.

The New South Wales Government has also made attempts to address the issue of Indigenous identity in education. In 2006, the Board of Studies NSW published *Protecting Australian Indigenous art: Ownership, copyright and marketing issues for NSW schools* (NSW Board of Studies, 2006). In 2007, it published an educational resource titled *Affirmations of identity: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists resource kit* (NSW Board of Studies, 2007). This document aimed to provide information to teachers and students about appropriation, misappropriation, intellectual property and copyright in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts. This text places particular emphasis on permissions required for reproduction of Aboriginal art forms in communication design practice. This comprehensive document is primarily focused on the need for Aboriginal people to be able to control images and styles that are integral to community identity and meaning. Aboriginal people must have the right to control their own identity. Understanding and respecting the relationship between Australian copyright law and Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights is vital:

> It is clear that as we enter the new millennium, the protection of Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property rights must be secured by recognised and respected laws. The need to secure such rights was demonstrated in 1999 by the launch of the National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association’s (NIAAA) Label of Authenticity, and the release of Our Culture: Our Future – The Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights by Terri Janke. The work of NIAAA and Janke came in response to the increasing level of appropriation of Aboriginal culture and voice … (Heiss, 2010, p. 1).
Heiss strongly emphasises the importance of Janke’s Our culture: Our future:

*So important are protecting these rights and developing policies and legislation related to such protection, that lawyer Terri Janke’s report is generating much public discussion and debate nationally and stands as the most definitive legal and cultural foundation for determining policy on the issues* (Heiss, 2010, p. 1).

Another publication, *Our culture: Our future* by Terrie Janke (1999), was produced for both the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC). The commentary on Australian Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights in this publication formed part of a process to develop practical reform proposals for the improved recognition and protection of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. It is a significant document in the context of this research because of its broad scope and comprehensive findings and recommendations. It is a comprehensive document that touches on related issues from a wide variety of Indigenous perspectives. Janke acknowledges that this research was motivated by a federal government paper published in 1994 titled *Stopping the rip-offs: Intellectual property protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. This paper called for interested parties to make submissions that highlighted the inadequacies of current intellectual property laws when applied to Indigenous arts and culture. It also sought recommendations on how these inadequacies might be overcome and identified potential application of moral law rights:

*Moral Rights: The Government has signalled its intention to amend the Copyright Act to; introduce moral rights for authors and artists of copyright works. The moral rights to be introduced will be the right to be named as author of a work (‘the right of attribution’) and the right to object to derogatory treatment, for example, mutilation of a work, that is prejudicial to the author or artist’s honour or reputation (‘the right of integrity’). These will be important rights to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators, especially those who create artistic works* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, p. 12).

Kathy Bowery asserts that academic discussion on the politics of custom is only of value if there is a possibility of a legal space for dialogue that is sensitive to the realities of Indigenous difference and of the need for self-determination (Bowery, 2006). She argues the potential to establish private law at the community level and points out that lawyers need to be positioned with a pragmatic recognition of Australian institutional racism, and with a view to working past the impasse of reforms that seek to constitute Indigenous
people at large or within Australia, as one collectivity (Bowery, 2006). Bowery suggests that non-legal, ‘voluntary’ codes of ethical practice should be asserted as a form and source of ‘private’ law, articulated and negotiated in regard to practical detail within a community (Bowery, 2006). She credits her inspiration for this idea to recent ‘private law’ developments in intellectual property law – from copyleft:

Copyleft initiatives generally seek to engender the free circulation of works, subject to copyright. Copyleft both creates legal rights and is a social movement. It seeks to shift the legal focus from the protection of exclusive private property rights, where law creates restrictions, to law facilitating the interests of the community at large and open flows of information. In this sense copyleft uses the tools and powers of private law to advance communal, rather than individual, interests. Copyleft is dialogic, in that individuals and communities establish the terms of ownership and engagement with works produced under such licences. These agreements are legally enforceable in the courts, but because of the social movement aspirations of copyleft, and for want of resources, there is greater reliance on education as to community norms, peer pressure and shaming. These seem to work quite successfully (Bowery, 2006).

Legal terminologies vary as to the circumstantial variations and nuances of this discussion. It is interesting to note the uses of the term ‘arts and cultural expression’ to describe the particular kinds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage under discussion. It is also evident that definitive terminology was still being established: ‘The term is intended to encompass all forms of artistic expression which are based on custom and tradition derived from communities which are continually evolving. We would welcome suggestions for other terms that may be more appropriate’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, p. 9). Design was referred to in the context of copyright law as both two- and three-dimensional. The examples highlighted (T-shirts and didgeridoo) referred to the reproduction of traditional artwork and artefacts and was clearly targeted towards the tourism and souvenir industry. It did talk to the communication design profession and omitted to cite examples of branding or new collaborative or co-created graphical expressions:

Design: Some instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander design would be protected under the Copyright Act as artistic works as well as through registration that may be obtainable under the Designs Act 1906. Copyright law protects two-dimensional
artistic works that are reproduced as designs in a two-dimensional way. For example, the reproduction of an artistic design on a T-shirt may have both copyright and designs protection. The law is more complex when a work is reproduced as a three-dimensional item for commercial purposes, for example, when a drawing of the design of a didgeridoo is realised as the didgeridoo itself and marketed in quantity. Where this is done with the permission of the copyright owner, it is necessary to obtain registration under the Designs Act to be able to prevent others making such three-dimensional reproductions of the work. Copyright law ceases to protect artistic works that are commercially reproduced in a three-dimensional form against further unauthorised reproduction of that kind. The only way they can be protected is by registration under the Designs Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, p. 12).

The issue of Indigenous representation and the need for guidance for relevant stakeholders has been identified in some creative industries. Janke and Company have written and produced a series of Indigenous protocol guides published by the Australia Council’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board. The guidelines claim to reflect the complexity of Indigenous Australian culture and provide information and advice on respecting Indigenous cultural heritage. The guides address cultural protocols specific to Indigenous art forms including: song cultures, writing cultures, performing cultures (drama/dance) and visual cultures, (visual arts and new media). Although all relevant, they have not produced a publication that specifically focuses on the profession of communication design/graphic design. This is interesting but not surprising given Janke’s publications were all commissioned by the Australian Council for the Arts. One might suggest that a protocol document for producing Indigenous Australian communication design should be initiated by its own professional representative bodies, ideally with government support.

Janke’s new media protocol document produced in 2002 is titled New media cultures: Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian new media (Janke, 2002). It is of particular relevance to this research because it has been developed as a first point of reference for new media practitioners. Its aim is to help practitioners in using Indigenous cultural material and in planning their engagement with Indigenous people/communities and knowledge. It recommends that specific advice on the cultural issues pertaining to particular groups requires practitioners to speak to people in authority, or engage an Indigenous cultural consultant with relevant knowledge and experience.
In 2007, Janke compiled and edited, *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts for the Australia Council for the Arts*. This document provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and protocols for the use of Indigenous visual arts. Protocols differ from legal obligations but artist and designers need to be able to work with them as well as the current copyright law framework. Culturally appropriate working practices are encouraged, as is effective communication between all stakeholders who have an interest in Indigenous visual arts. Although not specifically targeted at the communication design/graphic design profession, Janke strongly directs caution to graphic designers (communication designers) about appropriation and inappropriate use of imagery:

> Indigenous people are concerned that such practices undermine the cultural authenticity of Indigenous visual arts, and also rob Indigenous artists and their communities of potential income streams and graphic designers, for example, copying sacred symbols from rock art books for commercial logos (Janke, 2007, p. 14).

This publication provides a checklist of key points to consider when developing protocols for visual arts projects or arts practice, which is equally relevant to design practice. Other protocol guide publications produced by Janke & Company and published by the Australian Council for the Arts include:

- **Performing arts**: *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian performing arts* (2008)
- **Media arts**: *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian media arts* (2008)
- **Writing**: *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian writing* (2008)

The protocol guide on writing was envisaged to help Australians better understand the use of Indigenous cultural material. Janke argues that European intellectual property law does not protect orally based cultures, but actually allows and encourages the opposite. Western law regards the written word as the currency of copyright. This in turn threatens the ability to protect communities whose intellectual property is based on an oral history. The foundations of copyright are built on the invention of the printing press and that copyright enables authors to own their stories, and control the way they are reproduced, used or adapted. Janke (2009) argues that this paradigm does not always work in the context of Indigenous knowledge. Hence, the need and challenge of how to stop the unauthorised use of Indigenous knowledge is contested (an important point in relation to the profession of communication design.)
Protocol documents, such as those produced by Janke, provide a guide for all stakeholders including governments and professional bodies where they can be informed on processes, customs and legal considerations involving Indigenous representation and its relationship with Western law. On the other hand, consensus on content for such protocols can be difficult to achieve. Anderson (2005) questions the constituted suggestion that this problem can be solved by, and managed through, the legal domain. The way Indigenous knowledge has been made into a category of intellectual property law and consequently how law has sought to define and manage the boundaries of Indigenous knowledge is questioned. Anderson argues that laws and customs do not fit neatly into the pre-existing categories of the Western systems. Hunter (2006) also challenges philosophical arguments for the legal recognition of Indigenous intellectual ‘property’, claiming that such opinions assume that the value of Indigenous intellectual property is determinable on external criteria such as labour. (The true value is far more difficult to determine when one considers the co-creation of artworks by communities over generations) (Hunter, 2006). Comparisons can be made between the intellectual ownership of cultural objects and artistic forms, and native title policy. Hunter argues for the need to exclusively protect the tribe’s self presentation as a mechanism to maintain cultural continuity.

In Alaska the maintenance of cultural continuity has been addressed with the development of guidelines to respecting cultural knowledge. The guide produced by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Anchorage, USA (1999) was created to address issues of concern in the documentation, representation and utilisation of traditional cultural knowledge. The resource is designed to help elders, authors, curriculum developers, classroom teachers, publishers and researchers integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices in schools throughout Alaska. The primary focus is to incorporate traditional knowledge and teaching practices into schools by minimising the potential for misuse and misunderstanding in the process. It aims to facilitate the coming together of the many cultural traditions that coexist in Alaska in constructive, respectful and mutually beneficial ways.

Governments and policy makers around the world have identified the need to focus on local communities and respect the diversity of culture. In 2003, Design Victoria, the Victorian State Government’s design promotion entity, implemented a revised design policy. Its 2009 report: Five years on: Victoria’s design sector 2003–2008, made the
following observation: ‘The most frequently mentioned social benefit of design projects was ‘Benefits to local communities’, in terms of greater cohesion, communication or participation’ (Victorian Government, 2008, p. 61). The chapter titled ‘Design for Social Benefit’ stated: ‘Design is vital in dealing with many of the challenges that modern societies face in the 21st century such as empowering communities.’ (Victorian Government, 2008, p. 113). This document, like most design policy reports focuses on the tangible, economic benefits of innovation through design. Although it connects design to community, it falls short in making a connection with design and the cultural identity of Victoria, including the design role in the representation of multiculturalism and Indigenous culture. The structure and purpose of the Victorian Government’s design policy between 2003 and 2008 (Design Victoria) was informed by countries with similar size, population and economies such as Denmark and New Zealand. This approach of a shared approach to competing in a globalised world is valid, but sometimes policy can benefit from an ‘Indigenous’ focus with an emphasis on uniqueness and diversity with culture providing a point of difference and driver of innovation. This line of thinking was explored by the City of Melbourne in 2010 when they hosted an event titled Practices, Processes and Politics of Indigenous Place-making: A Symposium. The dedicated aim of the symposium was to initiate dialogue regarding a proposed major Indigenous cultural knowledge and education precinct for Melbourne. The proposition was to absorb and centralise Aboriginal cultural activities in the City of Melbourne to make it more visible, accessible and inclusive. This proposal was in line with thinking that emerged from the federal government 2020 Summit in 2008. The proposal would also potentially provide opportunities for design practitioners to engage in co-creation and research. Associate Professor Chris Healy, a speaker at the symposium from the University of Melbourne suggested that referring to Australia’s Indigenous history as unsettled and unfinished opens up a whole range of potentially productive ways of thinking about Indigenous identity, ways that might forge more expansive regional links to Oceania and beyond, and ways that might engage global processes to help shape Indigenous identities free of the exclusivist confines of national politics. (Healy, 2010) In his book Forgetting Aborigines, Healy and Indigenous academic Marcia Langton propose that Aboriginality is, ‘a space of social engagement rather than racial or cultural demarcation: Aboriginality is no more about actual Aboriginal people than it is about actual non-Aboriginal people …’ (Healy, 2008, p. 7).
The requirement for Indigenous representation and recognition is a global phenomenon. In 2004, the Canadian Government acknowledged the role of Indigenous knowledge in problem solving as part of their innovation strategy titled *Achieving excellence: Investing in people, knowledge and opportunity – Canada’s innovation strategy*. The strategy document acclaims that:

*The Aurora Research Institute, headquartered in Inuvik, works to improve the quality of life in the Northwest Territories by applying scientific, technological and Indigenous knowledge to solve northern problems and advance social and economic goals* (Government of Canada, 2004, p. 25).

The report refers to ‘innovation’ as both the creative process of applying knowledge and the outcome of that process (Government of Canada, 2004, p. 4). Social innovation is a relatively new area of design practice, but in the future a growing number of important roles will be played by local ventures that will foster new behaviours and new ways of thinking: ‘These grass-roots innovations in everyday life are promoted and managed by creative and enterprising groups of people in the framework of a wide, emerging wave of social innovation’ (Manzini, 2010, p. 3). The Kenyan Government, for example, has declared a commitment to creating and implementing a science, technology and innovation policy framework. The aim of this policy is to facilitate the use of design as an important tool for economic development. A relevant point made by Amollo and Osanjo (2010, pp. 1–2) was that the Kenyan government is working with NGOs and universities to carry out further research into the Indigenous design knowledge of the Kenyan people in order to draft appropriate policies and strategies for design. Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in government innovation policy is rare, which makes these examples useful references for this research. The mantra of the policy espoused by the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien was that ‘In the 21st century, our economic and social goals must be pursued hand-in-hand. Let the world see in Canada a society marked by innovation and inclusion, by excellence and justice.’ (Chrétien, 2010).

As highlighted earlier with the Creative Australia policy, support for policy action at a prime ministerial or head of state level is vital. The address by President Thabo of at the Unveiling of the Coat of Arms at Kwaggafontein (South Africa) in 2000 is an emotional example of design that matters and one that resonates because of the position he holds in government. The value of respectful acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge in
communication design is highly valued and the benefits clearly understood in some countries. After the end of Apartheid, South Africa went through a dramatic readjustment of its national identity to incorporate Indigenous representation and knowledge, which included the renaming of provinces and changing of state motives such as the national flag, and the redesign of heraldic symbols like the national coat of arms. The global agenda is firmly focused on the potential of culture to drive economic growth and with that the subsequent latent possibility of exploitation and misrepresentation. The United Nations Creative economy report 2008 was the first study of this kind undertaken by the United Nations and includes contributions from five associated United Nations bodies: UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, WIPO and ITC. The report states:

In the contemporary world, a new development paradigm is emerging that links the economy and culture, embracing economic, cultural, technological and social aspects of development at both the macro and micro levels. Central to the new paradigm is the fact that creativity, knowledge and access to information are increasingly recognized as powerful engines driving economic growth and promoting development in a globalizing world (UNCER, 2008, p. 152).

In the chapter titled ‘Indigenous communities and new technologies’, the report noted that expressions of traditional creativity and innovation can serve as springboards for new cultural expression, especially in the digital world:

Digitized traditional music, designs and art can reach new audiences in niche markets for distinctive, diverse and ‘local’ cultural goods and services and, in so doing, promote community and rural economic and cultural development. However, the digitization and dissemination of traditional cultural expressions can lead to their misappropriation and misuse. In some cases, safeguarding efforts have unwittingly led to the unauthorized disclosure or commercial exploitation of culturally sensitive material (UNCER, 2008, p. 152).

The United Nations Creative economy report also announced the development of the WIPO Creative Heritage Project (WIPO, 2009). This project responds to request by Indigenous organisations, museums archives and researchers for guidance on intellectual property issues and options arising from digitising and dissemination of culturally sensitive material. The 2010, the United Nations Creative economy report followed on from the inaugural report in 2008. The report provided an update on the WIPO Creative Heritage Project but also made the following relevant comments highlighting the value of
Indigenous knowledge under the heading of ‘Creativity and biodiversity: A win-win solution’:

*Creative industries built on cultural capital and heritage often have deep roots in the natural environment. The traditional knowledge that makes the creative industries so unique evolved over centuries through observation and use of the natural environment. ‘Indigenous knowledge’ of the natural environment has created lucrative markets for visual arts, eco-fashion and ecotourism (UNCER, 2010, p. 210).*

However, I disagree with the UNCER statement that creative industries tend to have low environmental impacts:

*By using traditional production methods that capitalise on human creativity and skills, creative industries tend to have low environmental impacts, thus contributing to sustainability and biodiversity goals. Moreover, protecting the environment and culture is in these industries’ interest since biodiversity and traditional knowledge are drivers of success in businesses such as natural health, cosmetics and eco-fashion, and ecotourism. Forward-thinking governments and industries are stepping up to this task ...(UNCER, 2010, p. 210).*

The UNCER statement does not refer to communication and industrial design, which both have environmental impacts and which need to addressed through education and sustainability-led practices. It is imperative that international leadership be carried on at a national level.

Of significance to the Australian design environment, the Australian Design Alliance (ADA) Launch event report officially documents the establishment of the Australian Design Alliance at a meeting that took place at the Sydney Opera House on 3 September 2010. It is an important document in the context of this research in that it represents the start of an industry push to develop a national design policy for Australia. The report suggests that an Australian Design Policy would provide the national leadership, direction and voice that is currently lacking at a federal government level. The report includes the transcripts of speeches that took place on the day. The speeches were themed around headings such as design policy, design research, design as competitive advantage, design education, design culture, innovation, design as a city, public engagement, design as a solution to sustainability, and design as media. His Excellency, Michael Bryce, AM, AE made an insightful speech on ‘design thinking’ and the value of design to the nation’s
economy. He also made the point that design can help form national identity, which was interesting in the context of this research:

> National identities have been shaped by the reputation of countries with high sensitivity indicators of design. In some cases, like Sweden and Finland, reputation for sensible aesthetic design solutions has come from a history of craftsmanship and use of Indigenous material (Bryce, 2010).

Hael Kobayashi, an executive consultant and strategist in the area of digital media, made a valid point in his speech that design policies need to reflect a greater degree of social engagement. He also urged Australia to embrace the potential of design to work with large scale social issues including those identified in the United Nations Millennium Goals Act in 2000. He cited Denmark’s design policy and programs as understanding the broader value of design to society and the role it plays in the Danish identity. ‘The Danes look at design as being an integral part of their life, and they are very involved with social issues on a daily basis’ (Kobayashi, 2010).

The link between craft, design, materials and culture are key elements for exploration in this research. Although Bryce’s comment (above) referred to Indigenous materials, not Indigenous peoples, I suggest that there might be a natural extension of the thinking similar to that expressed by Charles and Ray Eames in The India report in 1958. This landmark report for the Indian Government recommended a program of training in design that would stimulate small industries and encourage improvements in the production and quality of manufactured consumer goods. The India report made a significant contribution to the development of design in India through a strategic approach of combining traditional handicrafts with designed outcomes and improved manufacturing processes. Charles and Ray Eames toured throughout India, making a careful study of the many centres of design, handicrafts and general manufacture. Their report outlines process and methods that involved considerable consultation with stakeholders in the field of small and large industry, design and architecture and in education. Their report represented the result of their study and discussions. The findings suggested that solutions needed to explore the evolving symbols of India in both theory and through actual prototyping. The India report is an inspired document and valuable reference especially in relationship to pragmatic but sensitive considerations relating to traditional cultures engaging with a changing globalised landscape. The following quote from that report expressed thoughts that are pertinent to this current study:
The nature of a communication-oriented society is different by kind – not by degree. All decisions must be conscious decisions evaluating changing factors. In order to even approach the quality and values of a traditional society, a conscious effort must be made to relate every factor that might possibly have an effect (Eames & Eames, 1958, p. 7).

The point of traditional craft inspiring contemporary design provides interesting clues on how Indigenous knowledge can be embedded. This organic, connective and reflective approach to design is evident in the findings of the Eames’s recommendations. Culture is experiential; it interacts and influences its surroundings and those who engage with it. Ward H. Goodenough wrote: ‘Perhaps the most important contribution to public understanding and social policy has come from the demonstration, with increasing sophistication that cultural differences are accounted for by history and ecology rather than biology’ (Goodenough, 2002, p. 435). The interconnected impact of culture is important, however, Indigenous culture often stands in isolation. Is this right or should Indigenous knowledge connect and interact with the environment that surrounds it? The Scandinavians and Indians have taken a home-grown approach to design policy and we now see other countries including New Zealand, South Africa and others adopting this methodology.

In the United Kingdom The Cox review of creativity in business: Building on the UK’s strengths, by Sir George Cox (2005) is regarded as a benchmark document. This report investigated the potential contribution that creativity could have on the UK’s long-term economic success. The report focused on the use of creative skills by smaller businesses but also had a particular emphasis on manufacturing. There are many similar national design policy documents produced by governments around the world. An interesting feature of the Cox Review from the point of view of this research is the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships program (formerly known as the Teaching Companies Scheme), which takes recent graduates into companies for one to three years. The program works to both provide expertise to the graduate but also ensures that the graduate’s university-based knowledge is transferred into the company. Such programs provide opportunities for the input of new knowledge and innovative thinking into companies that could also extend to the consideration of other policy innovations including corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice. The Cox Review identified that the current links with academia are largely confined to engineering and science schools and faculties but he
believed that there was significant potential for similar links to be established between design schools and big business:

This would be beneficial to both parties, and there would be a two-fold benefit that would cascade down the business chain: more business would understand design and more designers would understand the business world (Cox, 2005, p. 30).

Although aiming to connect business imperatives with cultural representation, this study openly acknowledges that the dynamics of commerce and culture do not always mix and that efforts and systems need to be put in place to ensure ethical and respectful practice is maintained. For communication design practice to be able to achieve the standard proposed in this study it would need to establish a rigorous and ethical research culture within the profession. Although primarily established for academia, Guidelines for ethical research in Australian Indigenous studies (2013) does not provide information that would help inform the development of communication design protocols. However, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), a Commonwealth statutory authority within the Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio, does provide clear direction on how to undertake research that relates to Indigenous issues. The guidelines include a statement of the principles of ethical research in Indigenous studies (AIATSIS, 2013, p. 14).

In addition, government leadership is required to facilitate segues between policy and practice. In 2013, the Australian Labor Government announced a cultural policy entitled, Creative Australia: The National Cultural Policy. Number 1 on a list of five equal priority goals was: ‘Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The need to authenticate Australian history is primary to the thesis of this dissertation.

We embrace and celebrate the indelible heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the legacy of British settlement, the excitement and trauma of establishing a new nationhood a century ago, the cacophony of a settler society, the determined assertion of independence and the growing confidence that comes from being at ease in the world (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 27).

A significant aspect of the Creative Australia policy document is that it has divided cultural identity into pre- and post-colonisation, punctuated by the arrival of the First
Fleet, which had previously been the reference point for the beginning of Australian history:

_The Australian story is uniquely grounded in around 60,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ traditions and practices. The history and living culture of Australia’s nearly 548,370 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples inform the shape and texture of modern Australian life. They also produce some of the most vibrant and distinctive contemporary arts – in writing, visual arts, music, dance, performance, screen production, fashion and design. Even before it became a nation, Australia was a settler society. Since the First Fleet, people have come from the four corners of the earth to make their home here. Waves of migrants have added new layers and enriched established cultural, political and civic traditions. Since the middle of the last century, millions of people have arrived and added new music, language, food, cultural expectations, international links and new businesses to the Australian way of life. They brought, and continue to bring, stories of courage, hope, alienation, loss, discovery and success to shape a narrative for modern Australia. Their energy and generosity has profoundly changed this country, and broadened and deepened the cultural heritage we now share_ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, pp. 27–28).

Although guidelines specifically for communication design practice do not exist in Australia, there has been considerable attention to the issue made by other creative industries. The Australia Council for the Arts has produced five guides that clearly outline the legal as well as the ethical and moral considerations for the use of Indigenous cultural material. The five guides in the suite are in the areas of media arts, music, performing arts, visual arts and writing. They are aimed at anyone working in or with the Indigenous arts sector, including:

- Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists
- people working within related fields of Indigenous art form practice
- federal and state/territory government agencies
- industry agencies and peak organisations
- galleries, museums and arts centres
- educational and training institutions
- Indigenous and targeted mainstream media.

Communication design sits within the mainstream media. The media arts and the visual arts protocol documents are the most relevant to designers; however, they do not speak specifically to, or with the voice of professional communication design practice. The
document titled *Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts* (Janke, 2007), produced by the Australia Council for the Arts, was compiled and edited by Aboriginal lawyer Terri Janke. The publication outlines protocols for producing Indigenous visual arts. It explains how protocols differ from legal obligations by outlining the current copyright law framework. It also encourages culturally appropriate working practices, and promotes communication between all stakeholders/Australians with an interest in Indigenous visual arts. The document refers to ‘Indigenous visual arts’ in the Australian context as art created primarily by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or based on the cultural expression of Indigenous Australian people. Indigenous visual arts cover a range of genres including painting, printmaking (including etching and other intaglio processes, screen print, linocut), craft (including fibre and textile arts, ceramics, glass, wood, bead and shell work), photography, sculpture, multimedia and media. Although many of the protocols are relevant to communication design, a distinction between art and design is not made. A distinction is not essential as the words art and design can be interchangeable. However, the professional practices dynamics are dissimilar.

Although Janke’s publication is not targeted specifically at the design industry, it does make a relevant point when referring to appropriation of Indigenous visual culture:

> Indigenous people are concerned that such practices undermine the cultural authenticity of Indigenous visual arts, and also rob Indigenous artists and their communities of potential income streams and graphic designers, for example, copying sacred symbols from rock art books for commercial logos

Janke’s document importantly highlights the diversity of Aboriginal art and that it is not solely ‘traditional’ in the anthropological or ethnographic sense. Contemporary expressions produced by Indigenous artists living in urban areas are also acknowledged. The publication also highlights issues surrounding the stylisation of Indigenous imagery by non-Indigenous artists. This directly relates to the practice of communication design and branding:

> There have been a number of reports concerning fakes and frauds. Some instances have involved non-Indigenous artists passing off their works as ‘Indigenous art’ or ‘stylised Indigenous art’. It is important to clarify that the artist is an Indigenous Australian if there is any cause for doubt (Janke, 2007, p. 5).
These points are highly relevant to the communication design profession, but they lack resonance because the document speaks across a broad field and lacks a specific focus for the design industry to grasp. It has a strong emphasis on reproducing Indigenous art but minimal guidance for creating new expressions in a commercial context. On the other hand, it provides a valuable checklist of key points to consider for visual arts projects or arts practice that are also relevant to design practice. The checklist points are:

1. Respect
2. Indigenous control
3. Communication, consultation and consent
4. Interpretation, integrity and authenticity
5. Secrecy and confidentiality
6. Attribution and copyright
7. Proper returns and royalties
8. Continuing cultures

Nevertheless, professional bodies have been slow to incorporate cultural considerations and professional responsibilities into their practice codes. In 2011, Icograda, the International Council of Communication Design, amended its code of conduct document at its general assembly in Taipei, Taiwan. The amended publication was titled *Best practice paper: Model code of professional conduct for communication design*. The original version was co-published in 1983 by Icograda, International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda’s former name), Icsid, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, and IFI, the International Federation of Interior Architects/Interior Designers. These three organisations now form the International Design Alliance (IDA). The Design Institute of Australia (DIA) and the Australian Graphic Design Association base their respective guides to professional conduct on this international document. Like most codes of conduct they need to be constantly updated. Icograda’s original code of conduct was adopted in 1983 but has been subsequently amended in 1987, 1997 and 2011. The latest iteration states under the sub-heading: ‘A Designer’s Responsibility’ that ‘a designer accepts a professional obligation to further the social and aesthetic standards of the community’ (Icograda, 2011). In 2010, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid) revised its governing
statement to specifically state designers’ responsibility to the development and representation of cultural identity:

*Enrich Cultural Identity: Industrial designers acknowledge that the environments, objects and services created as a result of the design process both reflect and help to define the cultural identity of their nations and distinct societies within nations. Designers shall strive to embody and further the cultural traditions of their national societies while incorporating the best characteristics of international design principles and standards* (Icsid, 2010, p. 3).

Paul Nini (2004) in his article titled *In search of ethics in graphic design* argues for a new ethical focus:

*The client’s desire for profits, and our desire for visual sophistication (and peer recognition) should come after the needs of our audiences and users have been met. By putting our ‘constituents’ first – and ourselves last – we might be able to create a more significant ethical model for our profession to pursue. Further efforts to promote environmental responsibility and to employ graphic design as a means of social change are certainly desirable, but so are more effective everyday messages that the majority of us create* (Nini, 2004, p. 1).

### 2.5 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This study supports the thesis that a new ethical focus is required. The literature search reinforced the responsibility the creative industries have in retaining cultural identity for Indigenous peoples. The search clearly identified a gap in knowledge relating to methods and systems required for an ethical, workable interface between Indigenous knowledge and communication design practice. The survey highlighted the need for cultural identity considerations and a best practice frame for the design profession to engage positively with Indigenous visual culture. The three groupings of Indigenous knowledge, representation and professional practice provided valuable secondary data for the study. The themes inform each other and the methodology required to engage and respect the needs of all relevant stakeholders. Understanding the balanced interplay between these themes is integral to the theoretical framework of this study and to the success of its findings.
Chapter 3: Research Design

In this chapter, firstly, the research methodology and theoretical framework are described. Secondly, the investigation methods and instruments used to collect data are described explained. Finally, the methods used to analyse data are described and detailed.

The methodological approach undertaken for this research involved the gathering of data from the specified individuals who are regarded as relevant stakeholders in the field of Australian communication design practice and/or related areas of Indigenous leadership. This research takes a qualitative approach to data gathering, while also incorporating some additional focus group techniques for specific issue analysis. The project aims to present a manifestation of stakeholder opinions that bring together rather than pull apart. The theories employed in this study aim to respect self-determination but also explore processes that align the aims and objectives of all associated parties. The data obtained will be used to develop processes and suggestions to help ensure cultural authenticity and respectful engagement with Indigenous knowledge by practising communication designers. Secondary data, stakeholder interviews and focus group workshop results will be analysed to arrive at a more complete understanding of how communication design practitioners (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) can engage appropriately and ethically with Indigenous knowledge when representing culture, place and identity in their practice.

The qualitative frame is a suitable fit for this research, as it accommodates the diverse cultural demographics of stakeholders and recognises the dramatic power imbalance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. This dissertation acknowledges this cultural, professional and power imbalance as intrinsic to the research question and assertion. It was important for this research to have visible Indigenous support and leadership representation. The Koorie Heritage Trust agreed to host the focus group/workshop on 17 June 2013 in the boardroom of their headquarters in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. The session was also supported by the National Aboriginal Design Agency and co-facilitated by its Creative Director Alison Page. The focus group included 10 key representatives and spokespeople (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) from the communication design profession and broader design industry.
This small but select focus group involved a diverse but influential gathering of highly respected stakeholders who are regarded as leaders in their fields and who work in the Indigenous cultural design and/or related fields. The invited participants were to include a co-founder of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), a Lifetime Fellow of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA), a DIA Hall of Fame inductee, an Indigenous Commonwealth Government constitutional adviser and three Indigenous design company CEOs from the Freshwater Arts Alliance, Deadly Design and Marcus Lee Design.

A qualitative evaluation of both the interviews and focus group was undertaken. The analysed data was then used to inform a draft proposal for a communication design and Indigenous knowledge professional practice document. It was proposed that the draft professional practice document, aimed at the communication design profession, would be the final outcome of this research.

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The epistemological structure of this research is positioned within the frames of interpretivism, stakeholder theories and Indigenous theories. This qualitative approach locates this study within both a sociological and business context that recognises Australia as being home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. This historical paradigm shift and formal acknowledgement evokes many identities and stakeholder constructs within it. The professional dynamics and cultural sensibilities signal the need for combination of social sciences and business perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders across Australia. This dissertation utilises empirical collection tools to evaluate data in relation to the theoretical framework.

This dissertation also asserts that the purpose of a business (communication design practice) should be to respect the interests of all its stakeholders, including Indigenous custodians, communication designers, their clients and their client’s customers. Based an ethical business paradigm, stakeholder theory proclaims that in order to achieve sustainable success over time, companies must keep the interests of customers, suppliers, employees, communities and shareholders allied and moving in the same direction. To have all stakeholders sharing a united vision is deemed more ethical and productive in the long term than the historical strategy of responding to price rather than working together to build productive and interconnected sustainable business relationships. This emerging business theory is highly applicable for this research given its professional practice position of success based on
mutual respect. Traditionally, stakeholders in the cultural and design fields have worked in isolation of each other’s interests, either deliberately or through ignorance. An aligned stakeholder approach can be of mutual benefit to all constituents. It also has the potential to ultimately lead to a more ethical, respectful and visible acknowledgement, and authentic representation of national identity in the future.

Interpretivism or constructivist theory approaches research from within the group of phenomena that is informed by affected people (stakeholders) and related issues (Walsham, 2006). It is qualitatively based research that seeks authenticity from the voices of the participants. A perfect solution is not expected. However, it does aim to start a journey to a solution by proposing action as facilitator of problem solving. ‘Most post-positivists are constructivists who believe that we each construct our view of the world based on our perceptions of it. Because perception and observation is fallible, our constructions must be imperfect’ (Trochim, 2006, p. 1). This framework fits well with this research because it acknowledges the political agendas and diversity of opinion associated with this field. It is for this reason that the framework is clearly positioned from the communication design practice perspective and aligned with a proposal to establish industry standards for the communication design profession. The hypothesis asserts that these standards would include protocols and professional codes of practice for use on projects that require the graphical representation of Indigenous knowledge.

This dissertation aims to address an identified shortcoming of communication design practice. Although balanced analysis is fundamental, this study is based on clear and open assertions (interpretivist), which are positioned from within a professional practice frame. Although located in communication design practice, this research recognises the unavoidable but essential overlaps into other fields of study as well as the imperative to consider all affected participants (stakeholders), hence the need for both social science and business theory perspectives.

‘Respect’ and ‘innovation’ are words that are used throughout this study. The word ‘innovation’ can be used in a broad sense to cover a number of mental constructs. However, in this dissertation ‘innovation’ refers mainly to new and original thinking in communication design that has the inherent consequence of attracting new audiences or influencing new attitudes, behaviours and actions in society through its professional practice. In this context innovation is connected to design and manifested in both the process of creation and the uniqueness and effectiveness of the final outcome. ‘Respect’ is the other key word that is at
the essence of stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Sennett champions the low-cost, high-yield benefits of ‘Respect’ when stating: ‘Unlike food, respect costs nothing. Why, then, should it be in short supply?’ (Sennett, 2003, p. 2). Most designers understand their responsibility to help create a better future and improve our daily lives and the environment we live in. Sennett argues that mutual respect can be used to cross the boundaries of inequality (Sennett, 2003) but the challenge remains for designers to find ways to encourage their clients to also change the way they think and behave. Achieving an optimal outcome involves thinking differently, blending responsibility with innovation, and the respectful consideration of all stakeholders, including clients.

Establishing practices and protocols to assist designers to represent Indigenous culture appropriately is the aim of this dissertation. This qualitative exploration does not aim to provide the answers to appropriate Indigenous representation but it does attempt to provide processes for designers to find the answers. Miles and Huberman defended the pragmatic aspects of qualitative research and its associated methods when they argue that, ‘epistemological purity doesn’t get research done’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21).

As mentioned, this research will be framed from an interpretivist and stakeholder view. The interpretivism model of scientific inquiry (Schwandt, 2000, p. 189) combined with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984, p. 52), a construct for ethical business practice, provides a balanced frame for this research. This open, transparent approach, acknowledges bias, varied politically based opinion, commercial influences and diversity of culture associated with this dynamic field:

*Scientists are responsible for putting aside their biases and beliefs and seeing the world as it ‘really’ is. Post-positivists reject the idea that any individual can see the world perfectly as it really is. We are all biased and all of our observations are affected (theory-laden). Our best hope for achieving objectivity is to triangulate across multiple fallible perspectives! Thus, objectivity is not the characteristic of an individual, it is inherently a social phenomenon (Trochim, 2006, p. 1).*

According to Robson:

*Positivists believe that the researcher and the researched person are independent of each other whereas post-positivists accept that theories, background, knowledge and values of the researcher can influence what is observed and that they pursue objectivity by recognising the possible effects of biases (Robson, 2002, p. 624).*
The interpretivist view claims that it is impossible to be truly independent and factual because power-free knowledge cannot exist. This is unlike Augustine Conte’s positivist theory, which makes distinctions between facts and opinions and is usually associated with quantitative data collection methods and statistical analysis. On the other hand, interpretivists (post-positivists) claim that discourse is fundamental to reality. They also accept that one’s own background, theories, knowledge and personal value systems can influence what is observed:

*All fieldwork is context-dependent and requires difficult choices to be made. My aim is to provide some criteria for choice and some evaluation of these criteria from my own perspective. However, the individual researcher or research team must make their own choices in the light of their own context, preferences, opportunities and constraints* (Walsham, 2006, p. 321).

The ‘outside researcher’, detached from the field, may claim to be neutral but will still be biased:

*At one end of the spectrum is the ‘neutral’ observer, but this does not mean unbiased. We are all biased by our own background, knowledge and prejudices to see things in certain ways and not others. I mean by neutral that the people in the field situation do not perceive the researcher as being aligned with a particular individual or group within the organization, or being concerned with making money as consultants are for example, or having strong prior views of specific people, systems or processes based on previous work in the organization. At the other end of the involvement spectrum is the full action researcher, trying consciously and explicitly to change things in the way that they feel best* (Walsham, 2006, p. 321).

Walsham argues that interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors (Walsham, 2006).

*Our theories concerning reality are ways of making sense of the world, and shared meanings are a form of inter-subjectivity rather than objectivity. I have similar epistemological views now, although I am happy to accept the plausibility of the ontological position of the critical realist (Mingers, 2004) that there is an objective reality* (Walsham, 2006, p. 320).

‘I see critical realism as one possible philosophical position underpinning interpretive research …’ (Walsham, 2006, p. 320). Interpretivists pursue ‘critical realism’ by recognising the possible effects of biases and argue that it is impossible for the research person to separate one’s self from the researcher. For example, how does a researcher distance themself from their original motivation to address what is regarded by many as a ‘wicked problem’. For
example, a belief that inappropriate representation perpetuates oppression has led me to suggest that active leadership needs to be demonstrated and practice methods reviewed by the design profession:

*Research as exposé and as advocacy for the powerless becomes indivisible. Critical social research would not, however, claim any one direct political affiliation. Rather, it is committed to delving beyond surface appearances in order to reveal oppressive and discriminatory social processes and structures and thereby suggests ways in which the oppressive can be challenged through praxis* (Harvey, 1990, p. 52)

The bespoke combination of interpretivism and stakeholder theory complements the need to respect cultural sensibilities and also gain broad-based constituent support and acceptance. This methodology is rooted in an overriding epistemological frame of respect. This frame is located within a particular social, cultural, and historical context that recognises Australia as home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. The interpretivism framework accommodates the social and stakeholder constructs within these contexts and identities.

The interpretivist/post-positivist assertion acknowledges Australia’s whole history, not only its colonial past; which has the potential to impact power bases, change the way history is taught and eventually authenticate a ‘true’ national identity. New Zealand academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her text *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* highlights the failure of positivist objectivity in research: ‘Most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene. This is related to positivism and notions of objectivity and neutrality’ (Smith, 1999, p. 137). Feminism is an example of this shift away from positivism in some fields. Smith argues that feminist research and other more critical approaches have made subjective methodologies more acceptable in qualitative research (Smith, 1999, p. 137). In general terms, structural and positivist theory is centred on observing the environment in which people act, while interpretive theory focuses on the actor’s definition of their environment and its cultural, commercial and historical context.

This dissertation supports the view that human behaviour is the outcome of the subjective interpretation of the environment. Interpretivism and constructivism contrast with structural theories that claim to remove the subjectivity of the actor and the researcher, which is problematic in this area because opinions and dogmas are so deeply entrenched. Interpretivist theory suits the diversity of stakeholder participation in this study because it views human behaviour as the outcome of the subjective interpretation of the environment and seeks
reciprocal inter-subjective understanding of subjects. In other words, structural theory focuses on the situation in which people act, while interpretivism focuses on the actor’s definition of the situation.

The post-positivist or interpretivist frame requires an empirically based approach to data gathering and analysis. Measuring reality can only be achieved by acknowledging the researcher’s motivations (bias), the use of appropriate measurement methods and recognising the historical context of the research topic. These considerations are imperative to this dissertation given the power dynamics and post-colonial component of Australia’s history. Smith rejects post-colonialism as a research framework, which I concur with. She argues strongly that colonialism continues to have an impact on Indigenous people and that the term ‘post-colonialism’ is misleading because it implies that colonialism is finished business (Smith, 1999, p. 29).

Interpretivism is a framework used to decipher and understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. Emerging from critiques of positivism, interpretivists reject the notions of theory-neutral observations. The methods and empirical tools used in this research are derived from the premise that knowledge consists of constructions that are based on relative consensus. This dissertation involves many viewpoints by stakeholders from diverse backgrounds but with aligned objectives. Guba and Lincoln argue that all opinions are relevant:

Knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is a relative consensus (or at least some movement towards consensus) among those competent (and in the case of more arcane material, trusted) to interpret the substance of the construction. Multiple ‘knowledges’ can coexist when equally competent (or trusted) interpreters disagree (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113).

Herbert Simon describes design as a meeting place or interface between the inner environment of the artefact and the outer environment in which it performs, both of which operate in accordance with natural laws: ‘Engineering, medicine, business, architecture and painting are concerned not with the necessary but with the contingent – not with how things are but with how they might be – in short, with design’ (Simon, 1996, p. xii).

Simon’s comment, which refers to a focus on, ‘not with how things are but with how they might be’, resonates as a motivation for improved representation of Indigenous culture by communication designers. Linda Tuhuiwai Smith also writes about the insider/outsider
approaches to Indigenous research and issues related to being a non-Indigenous researcher working in this field. She describes the New Zealand experience, which can be compared to Australia:

Years of research have frequently failed to improve the conditions of the people who are researched. This has led to many Maori people to believe the researchers are simply intent on taking or ‘stealing knowledge’ in a non-reciprocal and often underhanded way (Smith, 1999, p. 176).

Although Smith openly expresses scepticism of non-Indigenous researchers, she understands the necessity and has recommending ways to improve research engagement in the future. Smith lists five strategies that characterise the shifts made by non-Indigenous researchers in New Zealand towards becoming more culturally sensitive:

1) the strategy of avoidance whereby the researcher avoids dealing with the issues or with Maori;
2) the strategy of ‘personal development’ whereby the researchers prepare themselves by learning Maori language, attending hui and becoming more knowledgeable about Maori concerns;
3) the strategy of consultation with Maori where efforts are made to seek support and consent;
4) the strategy of ‘making space’ where research organisations have recognized and attempted to bring more Maori researchers and ‘voices’ into their own organisation (Smith, 1999, pp. 176–177).

Smith points out that these strategies have various consequences, positive and negative, for the researcher and the researched but she also acknowledges that non-Indigenous researchers need to be involved in the field, ‘They all involve different ways of making changes, although the first strategy of avoidance may not be helpful to anyone’ (Smith, 1999, p. 177).

In 1992, associate New Zealand academic, Graeme Smith, proposed four models by which culturally appropriate research can be undertaken by non-Indigenous researchers:

1) Mentoring Model (tiaki) – Authoritative Maori people guide and sponsor research.
2) Adoption Model (whangai) – Researchers are incorporated into the daily life of Maori people. And build a life-long relationship which extends beyond the research activity.
3) Power Sharing Model – Researchers seek assistance from the community to support the establishment of a research enterprise.
4) Empowering Outcomes Model – Research which demonstrates a beneficial outcomes that addresses issues and questions from Maori people (p. 177).
This dissertation aligns most closely with Smith’s Mentoring Model (tiaki). This is congruent with the support obtained for this study from Indigenous entities such as the Koorie Heritage Trust, Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at the Melbourne Museum and the National Aboriginal Design Agency. Walsham also argues for this approach: ‘Whatever the style of involvement, interpretive researchers need to gain and maintain good access to appropriate organisations for their fieldwork’ (Walsham, 2005).

The Maori experience is similar in many ways to that of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders but there are also many differences that relate to cultural diversity and proportional population representation. The diversity of cultures over a vast continent involves complex logistic and cultural engagement considerations.

Positioned from a professional practice/design industry perspective, this research involves both non-Indigenous and Indigenous designers. Although located on a design practice platform, this study involves many stakeholder considerations. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) has been adopted in conjunction with the interpretivist view to frame the research approach. As defined by Edward Freeman (1984, p. vi): ‘A stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation’s purpose’.

Traditional business practice is based around a competitive culture resulting in winners and losers, however stakeholder theory aims to build a culture of mutual benefit. Freeman and fellow stakeholder theorist, William Evans defined stakeholders as those groups who have a stake in or claim on the firm, specifically including suppliers, customers, employees, stockholders and the local community, as well as management in its role as agent for these groups (Evan & Freeman, 1988). Stakeholder theory is a frame of organisational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing organisations. This emerging and innovation business theory is highly applicable for this dissertation because it acknowledges the forces at play in business and addresses the strategies required to establish and maintain an ethical practice that is considerate of all participants. This dissertation recognises that firms are now applying this theory to their corporate governance in the form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) planning. By considering stakeholders in a societal context, organisations are able to establish corporate social responsibility (CSR) systems and regulations that align with company codes and business principles. Stakeholder theory advocates putting stakeholders’ needs at the beginning of any action. In a corporate context this might involve governmental bodies, political groups, trade associations, trade unions, communities, financiers, suppliers, employees, customers and even competitors in some
cases. Stakeholder theory is a CSR process of organisational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organisation:

*We need to understand the complex interconnections between economic and social forces.*

Isolating ‘social issues’ as separate from the economic impact, which they have, and conversely isolating economic issues as if they had no social effect, misses the mark both managerially and intellectually. Actions aimed at one side will not address the concerns of the other. Processes, techniques and theories that do not consider all of these forces will fail to describe and predict the business world as it really is (Freeman, 1984, p. 32).

Stakeholder theory suggests that the firm should be managed for the benefit of its participants and that management has a fiduciary obligation to stakeholders to act as its agent. This philosophy may be true of some companies. However, there are many forces at play that can be regarded as obstacles. For example, if a strong financial return is the primary motivation of investors, how does one convince them of the value of broader stakeholder considerations? Bruce Langtry (1994) highlights the real-life dynamics and motives of business by identifying the pressures often imposed by one powerful set of stakeholders, that being the stockholder (shareholder):

*I seek to clarify the theory by discussing the concept of a stakeholder and by distinguishing stakeholder theory from two varieties of stockholder theory – I call them ‘pure’ and ‘tinged’. I argue that the distinctive claims of stakeholder theory, as contrasted with tinged stockholder theories, have been inadequately supported by argument* (Langtry, 1994, p. 431).

Shareholder, investors and managers need to appreciate and understand that stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR) systems are not indulgent, moral constraints or benevolent distraction to core business: ‘The “social responsibility” of business, properly understood, is not an odd number of extraneous obligations of the businesses and corporations. It is the very point of their existence’ (Solomon, 1992, p. 180). Edward Weber and Anne Khademian (2008) also highlight the importance of stakeholder theory, ‘... if all stakeholders do not stay constructively engaged, it is unlikely that the capacity to solve wicked problems can be maintained for the long term’ (p. 343).

By definition *wicked problems* can result in the creation of *wicked* or *trouble knowledge*. The overlaps involved with larger problems mean that proposed solutions can impact to the detriment of associated stakeholders and by doing so create a bigger or additional problem. Stakeholder theory can be applied to wicked problems and the networks that develop in the process of addressing them:
... the distinction that we see is the challenge associated with knowledge sharing among diverse participants in order to achieve network effectiveness in a wicked problem setting. We define effectiveness as collaborative capacity (i.e., long- and short-term problem-solving capacity), improved policy performance, and the maintenance of accountability for public action. Knowledge sharing and integration are key to building collaborative capacity, and we draw on studies that examine knowledge as inseparable from the practices of participants to explore this challenge. We focus on efforts to send knowledge to other network participants, to ensure the receipt or comprehension of that knowledge, and to integrate knowledge in order to create a usable new knowledge base for effective problem solving. These tasks are particularly acute for networks built around wicked problems, where the differences between participants are deep and the barriers to knowledge transfer, receipt, and integration are distinct. It is a recognition of democratically defined rules that place necessary boundaries on permissible actions, combined with an openness to new ideas expressed within the network that could help to build new competencies for the long-term management of wicked problems (Weber & Khademian, 2008, p. 343).

This dissertation is based on a hypothesis that identifies a wicked problem and asserts the need to apply CSR principles to address it. These principles include a professional code of ethics, protocols and Indigenous engagement guide for communication design practitioners. This assertion is also set against a proposed historical paradigm of authenticity; one that embraces the ‘truth’ of Australia being the home of the world’s continuous living culture(s). So what is ‘truth’? American philosopher, Hilary Putnam argued that a belief is true if it is ideally justified in epistemic terms:

Truth cannot simply be rational acceptability for one fundamental reason; truth is supposed to be a property of a statement that cannot be lost, whereas justification can be lost. The statement ‘The earth is flat’ was, very likely, rationally acceptable 3,000 years ago; but it is not rationally acceptable today. Yet it would be wrong to say that ‘the earth is flat’ was true 3,000 years ago; for that would mean that the earth has changed its shape (Putnam, 1981, p. 55).

Structure and conceptual frameworks are imposed by the human mind in the context of reason, truth, and history. Putnam (1990, p. 44) termed truth as ‘idealized rational acceptability’. The cognitive understanding of the history of Australia varies significantly between stakeholder groups. This is why a premise of Australia being the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture(s) is significant to this discourse. It is important to position this research within theoretical frameworks that acknowledge the unavoidable
political dogmas and the diversity of stakeholder interests associated with this field. This field has many stakeholders with diverse agendas. For example, both policy and commentary emanating from the Australian Government and the design profession in recent years have motivated this study. Authentic representation of Indigenous culture within the Australian national identity is clearly on the political agenda at a time when the design industry, under the banner of the Australian Design Alliance (ADA), is lobbying for a national design policy. A framework combining both interpretive and stakeholder theories adopted for this research acknowledges the diversity of agendas and opinions and treats them as components of a ‘true’ reality. As mentioned, there are a number of theoretical positions that could have been applied to this research. Karl Popper (1972) made the following comment when arguing for inclusion of more than one theoretical position: ‘Whenever a theory appears to you as the only possible one, take this as a sign that you have neither understood the theory nor the problem, which it was intended to solve’ (Popper, 1972).

3.2 INVESTIGATION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

This research used a qualitative approach to data collection, which included some additional techniques for specific qualitative analysis. This inquiry-based process used both primary data and secondary data generated from stakeholder interviews and a specialised focus group that incorporated two participatory tasks. This data was coded and analysed.

The analysed data was then used to inform the development of a draft document, which has a primary aim to help ensure respectful engagement with Indigenous knowledge by practising designers. This draft document represents a deliverable outcome of this research.

This methodological approach was deemed suitable for addressing issues involving multiple contextual factors. The aim was to collect data from stakeholders who are immersed in everyday life of the setting in which the study is framed. The dissertation attempts to create a demographic microcosm of both communication design practice and Indigenous stakeholders. A diverse group of over 40 designers and Indigenous representatives were selected to be interviewed and participate in the focus group. The aim was to have a balance of gender and an even representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

Although this research has a qualitative (interpretivism) focus, it does include data gathered from the participatory tasks undertaken from the focus group. John Creswell and Plano Clark describe the importance of more than one method of data collection:
Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5)

It was initially envisaged that the final outcome of this research could be tested within the scope of this study. The original aim was for reactions to the draft protocol document to be surveyed in a quantitative manner among a diverse group of community, corporate and government stakeholders. It was identified early in the development of this project that accurate quantitative investigation into the broader acceptance of the research outcome could not be achieved within the scope of this study. The scope of this study does not enable the extensive community engagement demanded of the AIATSIS guidelines (below). However, it is worthy of note that the revised parameters and qualitative approach of this research as outlined in this chapter do fit within these AIATSIS standards.

The methodological aim of this research is to use empirical methods to develop an informed prototype document that presents a solid epistemological foundation for further testing. This document can then be used as a foundation for further research. It is important to note that this investigation is framed from a professional practice perspective (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). It is also acknowledged that a broad-based research phase involving nation-wide Indigenous community consultation is required as an extension of this study. The results of this study have the potential to be used as an instrument for broader, government-funded, post-doctoral research. This separate phase would also include professional bodies, governments (local, state and federal) and Indigenous groups right across Australia. Increased scale and reach of such a project would enable a greater use of quantitative instruments to establish patterns and variance that may occur through demographic and cultural diversity.

The primary data for this research was collected using empirical methods, including stakeholder interviews and focus group techniques.
SECONDARY DATA: The secondary data for this research was acquired as an outcome of the literature review process (see Chapter 2). Relevant case studies have been used in this study to frame arguments that support the proposed thesis. These case studies have been documented in the Chapter 5 titled ‘Analysis of Data’.

The secondary data also identifies Australian Government policies and actions that are relevant to this study and may have influenced public attitudes related to this field of knowledge. Although the primary focus is on Australia, this chapter also includes relevant international examples of both inappropriate and appropriate graphical representation of Indigenous culture. International case studies including Fiji Airlines, Urban Outfitters and the South African national identity have also been utilised to illustrate the global dimension of the Indigenous cultural identity issue.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS: A diverse group of 40 designers and related stakeholders were interviewed. The selection criteria required participants to be art/design practitioners and/or have an understanding of the communication design profession. The aim was to have even gender balance and 50/50 representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in and attempts to reflect the diverse demographics of communication designers and of Aboriginal Australia. This was achieved. Interview participants were asked to disclose their age, sex and occupation. They were also asked specifically if they were a professional designer (designer, creative director or design advocate) or an Indigenous/Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander advocate (community leader, public servant, academic, or design commentator) or both.

All interviewees signed consent forms in which they agreed to have their names documented in this research (see following list of participants). It is important for them to be listed because it demonstrates the geographic, professional and community diversity required of this study. All citations of interviewees have been approved for publication in this dissertation. Traditional grouping names have been included in brackets to identify Indigenous participants.

The interview component of this research was titled ‘Investigating Methods to Encourage Aboriginal Authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice’. Participants were advised that the interview phase aimed to gain insights into processes that might help designers engage responsibly with Indigenous culture in their professional practice. It was explained that
knowledge obtained from the interviews would be used to establish methods to help practising designers to appropriately engage with Indigenous knowledge on projects involving national authenticity and the specific representation of ‘place’, especially those that require the respectful and ethical representation of culture through design and graphical representation.

Participants were advised of the specific objectives of the interview, which were to:

1) confirm or reject the proposition to develop processes to assist designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who engage with Indigenous knowledge
2) hear concerns relating to the engagement of communication designers with Indigenous knowledge
3) identify existing, in-house methodologies that have been developed independently by designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and their companies
4) to discover both positive and negative examples of past practice.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: The questions were deliberately framed in a way to test the hypothesis, identify obstacles and unearth potential engagement methods. The questions also allowed for open-ended conversation if required by the interviewee. The average time for each interview was one hour. All interviews were recorded and transcribed as hard copies.

Q1) What are the key issues to consider when representing Indigenous culture in commercial design practice?

Q2) What is an appropriate example of Indigenous representation in Australian communication design practice (1900–2013)?

Q3) What is an inappropriate example of Indigenous representation in Australian communication design practice (1900–2013)?

Q4) What are your thoughts on the suggestion that designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) need assistance to appropriately engage with Indigenous knowledge?

Q5) What are your processes and methodologies (formal or informal) that specifically relate to engagement between Indigenous knowledge and design practice?

Q6) How would you describe the effectiveness of your practice methods and processes?
Q7) Should design practices employ or engage the services of social or design anthropologists when working on projects involving Indigenous knowledge?

Q8) Should non-Indigenous design practices employ or engage the services of Indigenous consultants when working on projects involving Indigenous knowledge?

Q9) How should design practitioners facilitate participation/co-creation with Indigenous communities and their representatives?

Q10) How do you (your practice) communicate, consult and gain permissions from the community(s) being represented?

Q11) How do you (your practice) ensure a sensitive approach to issues of interpretation, integrity, authenticity and issues of secrecy and confidentiality?

Q12) How do you (your practice) deal with issues of attribution, copyright, procurement, returns and royalties?

Q13) How do you (your practice) promote contemporary expressions of Indigenous knowledge in design?

Q14) How would you (your practice) describe the general attitude of designers towards Indigenous and knowledge and the need for appropriate representation?

Q15) How do you (your practice) acknowledge and deal with the multicultural diversity of Indigenous Australia in your work?

Q16) Does your practice consider the connection between Indigenous cultures and ‘place’ when designing for projects involving location identity?

Q17) If guidelines were created to help designers engage with Indigenous knowledge, would they be of strategic advantage to their business and their clients businesses?

Q18) How do you think the introduction of Indigenous knowledge design protocols would benefit the social, cultural, spiritual, and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal communities if at all?

Q19) How do you think guidelines will help communication designers including branding agencies engage with Indigenous knowledge?

Q20) How do you think guidelines to help communication designers engage with Indigenous knowledge could extend to other disciplines such as industrial design, fashion, expanded media and design built environment?
Q21) How do you think constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians will change the way Australia views itself as a nation?

Q22) How do you think acknowledgement of Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture will change the way Australian history is taught in schools?

Q23) How do you think acknowledgement of Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures will change the way Australia represents its national identity?

Q24) How enthusiastically do you think the design community would embrace guidelines for appropriate graphical representation of Indigenous culture?

NOTE: Following is a list of interviewees. All participants agreed to be identified as contributing to this research. Their community/language groups were highlighted to represent regional diversity. Some interviewees preferred to be specifically referred to as a descendant of a community/language group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Indigenous community</th>
<th>Organisation and title</th>
<th>Australian state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Adjei</td>
<td>Torres Strait</td>
<td>Copyright Agency – Indigenous Legal Officer</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Alnutt</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Nutshell Graphics – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clive Atkinson</td>
<td>Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Clive Atkinson Design – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Atkinson</td>
<td>Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce – Managing Director</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Cato</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Cato Purnell and Partners Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Cornhill</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Studio Binocular – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicki Couzens</td>
<td>Gunditjmara</td>
<td>Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum – Artist/Designer</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimmo Cozzolino</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td><em>Symbols of Australia</em> book – Artist/Designer/Author</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maree Clarke</td>
<td>Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung, Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Freelance – Artist/Designer</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Fran Edmonds</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Melbourne University – Researcher</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Finn</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Open Manifesto Design – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Gertsakis</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Melbourne University – Researcher</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh Harris</td>
<td>Kanalu</td>
<td>Ingeous Studios – Creative Director</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Henderson</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>R-Co – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon Kombumerri</td>
<td>Yugemeir</td>
<td>NSW Government Aboriginal Architect</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Lancashire</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>David Lancashire Design – Designer/CEO</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne Lancashire</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>David Lancashire Design – Project Manager/researcher</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Indigenous Status</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Andrew Lane</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology – Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Marcus Lee</td>
<td>Karajarri (descendant)</td>
<td>Marcus Lee Design – Designer/CEO (Member of Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Justin Mansfield</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Tank Branding – Operations Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Colin McKinnon-Dodd</td>
<td>Yamatji</td>
<td>Mia Mia Gallery – Curator/CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sally McNeil</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>FutureBrand – CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tom Mosby</td>
<td>Torres Strait</td>
<td>Koorie Heritage Trust – CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kimberly Moulton</td>
<td>Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum – Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ros Moriarty</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Jumbana Group – Designer/CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Kevin Murray</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>RMIT University – Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Alison Page</td>
<td>Waibanga–Wadi</td>
<td>National Aboriginal Design Agency – Creative Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Dean Parkin</td>
<td>Quandamoka</td>
<td>Second Road – Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>John Patten</td>
<td>Bundjalung–Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum – Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Jeffrey Pratt</td>
<td>Jaara (descendant)</td>
<td>Upatree Productions – CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Joanne Pritchard</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum – Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mark Rose</td>
<td>Gunditjmara</td>
<td>LaTrobe University – Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Lynette Russell</td>
<td>Wotabaluk (descendant)</td>
<td>Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, Monash University – Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Craig Small</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Deadly Design – Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Barrie Tucker</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Barrie Tucker Design – Designer/CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Jonathan Wallace</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Alter Design – Designer/CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Natalie Walker</td>
<td>Kuku–Yalanji</td>
<td>Supply Nation – CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>David Williams</td>
<td>Wakka Wakka</td>
<td>Gilimbba Artist/Designer/CEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOCUS GROUP/WORKSHOP: Hosted by the Koorie Heritage Trust, a focus group titled Visible Steps was held on 17 June 2013 at the headquarters boardroom in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. The institutional mentorship role offered by the KHT was crucial to the perceived and real credibility of the focus group activity, as was the support Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at the Melbourne Museum and the National Aboriginal Design Agency. Professional endorsement of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) and Design Institute of Australia also helped to establish credibility and key stakeholder participation. Participants were identified through the network of Indigenous mentor institutions and professional representative bodies.

As previously mentioned the focus group was made up of highly respected stakeholders, many of whom are regarded as leaders in their field (communication design). The group included 12 participants (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) from the communication design profession and broader design industry. It was important to note that two of the participants described themselves as Indigenous but not from Australia (Zimbabwe and Uganda). (This research uses the United Nations definition of the word ‘Indigenous’; see Glossary). This dynamic created an opportunity for another level of perspectives, which was identified for consideration in the analysis. The invited participants included a co-founder of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), a Lifetime Fellow of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA), a DIA Hall of Fame inductee, an Indigenous constitutional adviser for the Commonwealth Government of Australia and three Indigenous design company CEOs from the National Aboriginal Design Agency, Deadly Design and Marcus Lee Design.

The aim of the focus group was to address the following four points:

1) Reaffirm the need for a professional practice guide for Indigenous representation in communication design.
2) Identify the end-users (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and the level of engagement required by stakeholders.
3) Identify and prioritise key content and themes for the proposed guide.
4) Recommend an author’s voice and writing style for the proposed guide (language and tone).

The focus group was co-chaired by myself, Russell Kennedy and Ms Alison Page, a Walbanga–Wadi Wadi woman and Creative Director of the National Aboriginal Design Agency. The focus group discussed key issues related to this dissertation. Participants were advised that the data gathered, including the key themes that emerged from the preceding interview phase of this research, had been analysed and used to inform the framework of the focus group. Although described as a focus group, members of this forum also took part in two participatory workshop tasks.

Task 1. The focus group participated in a survey to identify combinations and rank stakeholder value levels of a proposed professional practice guide for ethical and appropriate engagement with Indigenous knowledge/culture by communication designers.

Task 2. The focus group participated in a word association exercise designed to inform content of the proposed guide by aligning key issues, concerns and considerations with the core themes resulting from interview analysis phase.

The agenda of the focus group included the following discussion points:

- Welcome introductions, including the recognition that the focus group was meeting on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri and Kulin Nation and acknowledgement of its custodians past and present;
- A presentation providing an overview of the research activity to date;
- A round-table discussion on the need for professional practice assistance for the representation of Indigenous culture and knowledge in communication design;
- A round-table discussion to identify the end-users of such a guide for Indigenous cultural representation in communication design;
- A survey to be completed by individual participants that asks them to identify stakeholder dynamics and rank potential end-user combinations;
- A participatory exercise where attendees were asked to identify key words, categorise them and then prioritise content themes for the proposed professional practice guide;
- A round-table discussion to establish the author’s voice of the proposed document and the ‘language’, style and tone to be used;
- Summary discussion and conclusion.
Table 3.2.2 Focus Group Attendees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group participants</th>
<th>Indigenous community</th>
<th>Organisation and title</th>
<th>Australian state</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 David Lancashire</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>David Lancashire Design – Designer/CEO (DIA Hall of Fame inductee)</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Marcus Lee</td>
<td>Karajarri (descendant)</td>
<td>Marcus Lee Design – Designer/CEO (Member of Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce)</td>
<td>Northern Territory &amp; Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Alison Page</td>
<td>Walbanga–Wadi Wadi</td>
<td>National Aboriginal Design Agency – Creative Director</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Marc Williams</td>
<td>Yorta Yorta</td>
<td>Deadly Design – Production Manager (Member of Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce)</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Narah Naarden</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Bates Smart Architects – Associate Director</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Derek Hooper</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Consultant – Exhibition Designer (DIA Lifetime Fellow)</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Charles daCosta</td>
<td>Indigenous African (Zimbabwe)</td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology – Film and Television Lecturer</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Rosemary Simons</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Rosemary Simons Design – Designer CEO (DIA Fellow)</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 David Okotel</td>
<td>Indigenous African (Uganda)</td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology – Film and Television student</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Nicholas Teo</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology – PhD student</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Francis Flood</td>
<td>Not Indigenous</td>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology – Film and Television student</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus group agenda included discussion themes. The themes were framed as questions, which referred to the proposed Indigenous design professional practice guide:

1) Is it needed?
2) Who should it speak to?
3) How should it be used?
4) What should it say?
5) How should it speak?

Is it needed? A round-table discussion on the need for a professional practice guide for the representation of Indigenous culture and knowledge in communication design.

Who should it speak to? A round-table discussion on who would be the end-users of the proposed guide.

How should it be used? Focus group attendees were set a task (1) to identify stakeholder dynamics and rank potential end-user combinations.

What should it say? Focus group attendees were set a task (2) to identify and prioritise key content for the proposed professional practice guide.

How should it speak? Focus group attendees discussed the author’s voice of this document and the ‘language’ and tone to be used.

Table 3.2.3 Methods Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Interviews</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Groupings</th>
<th>Participatory Focus Group</th>
<th>User Combinations</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Language &amp; Tone</th>
<th>Indigenous Design Professional Practice Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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3.3 ANALYSIS

This study adopted a conventional approach to content analysis. The data gathering was structured sequentially, with each phase informing the next. For example, the secondary data gained from the literature review and historical case studies helped with the formation of questions for the interview phase. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews in turn helped to inform the structure of the focus group, including discussion topics and participatory tasks that provided an opportunity to collect measurable quantitative data. The combination of methods aimed to combine individual opinions and group discussion inclusive of the participating cultural and professional stakeholders.

Conventional content analysis was chosen because of its compatibility with study design models that describe phenomenon (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 5). The phenomenon in this case is the inappropriate representation of Australian Indigenous culture in communication design practice. Conventional content analysis was also deemed appropriate when existing theory or research literature is limited. This study was unable to source literature that spoke specifically to the communication design profession regarding applied practice policy in this field. Like many qualitative methods, ‘conventional’ content analysis enables themes and category names to emerge from the data rather than rely on preconceived categories that may not be suitable.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS METHOD: The conventional method was used to analyse the interviews by first highlighting words from the text that captured key thoughts or concepts. Key words were then collated into thematic codes. Codes were then sorted into categories based on how different the codes related and linked to each other. These emergent categories were then grouped into meaningful clusters as demonstrated in the analysis chapter (following).

FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS METHOD: The conventional method was also used to analyse the focus group data. One of the two workshop tasks (Task 1) included in focus groups was designed for quantitative analysis. Task 1 was a survey assessed quantitatively. Task 2 was a participatory work association exercise designed to help establish key themes, categories and chapters for the proposed professional practice document. This data was analysed using the conventional method.

The entire duration (3 hrs) of the focus group was digitally recorded in sound and vision. Permission to record the event in this manner was obtained by all participants. The use of the
recording complied with Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) requirements.

**TASK 1:** Focus group participants were asked to rank potential engagement combinations (brief/designer/client) from lowest (1) to highest (7). The objective was to determine the level of *additional* cultural knowledge and engagement assistance required from the various scenarios listed below. Focus group members also had the opportunity to add additional combinations if required.

**Table 3.3.1 User Engagement Combinations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief</th>
<th>Designer/Co.</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>1–7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous, Corp.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous – Gov., NFP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous – Gov., NFP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous – other community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous – home community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the survey task (1) involved the ranking order from highest to lowest of the totalled scores of each combination. The aim of this survey was to determine the value of the proposed research outcome to beneficiaries and end-users of this research by ranking the level of additional cultural knowledge and engagement required by different stakeholder combinations. Individual scoring was interpreted as follows:

6–7 – Extra high level of *additional* cultural knowledge and engagement required.

4–5 – High level of *additional* cultural engagement required.

2–3 – Moderate level of *additional* cultural engagement required.

1–2 – Minimal level of *additional* cultural engagement required.

0–1 – Low level of *additional* cultural engagement required.
3.4 HUMAN ETHICS

Ethical practice is a key theme of this thesis. This research had to satisfy an extensive Human Ethics Review by the Swinburne University of Technology application process. The research also pledged to adhere to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human research (2007) and the AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies.

The proposed research methods for this study gained approval from the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) on October 2012.

- Project ID: 2012/186
- Researchers: Mr Russell Kennedy (PhD Candidate)
- Associate Professor, Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall (Principal Supervisor)

The Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee confirmed they were satisfied that this study, involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, was of low risk due partly to an alliance that had been established with the Koorie Heritage Trust, a Victorian-based Aboriginal representative organisation. The relationship with the Koorie Heritage Trust was formalised in a letter of support attached to the SUHREC application. The letter detailed how they would oversee the face-to-face data gathering aspect of this research study and work with work closely with all researchers on selection and recruitment of research participants for the interview and participatory focus group phases of the research.

The SUHREC was also satisfied that the research would comply with the AIATSIS guidelines (below) in dealing with the sensitive information/issues related to the involvement of Indigenous peoples.

Principle 1: Recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of peoples, as well as of individuals, is essential.

Principle 2: The rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination must be recognised.

Principle 3: The rights of Indigenous peoples to their intangible heritage must be recognised.

Principle 4: Rights in the traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of Indigenous peoples must be respected, protected and maintained.

Principle 5: Indigenous knowledge, practices and innovations must be respected, protected and maintained.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Principle 6: Consultation, negotiation and free, prior and informed consent are the foundations for research with or about Indigenous peoples.

Principle 7: Responsibility for consultation and negotiation is ongoing.

Principle 8: Consultation and negotiation should achieve mutual understanding about the proposed.

Principle 9: Negotiation should result in a formal agreement for the conduct of a research project.

Principle 10: Indigenous people have the right to full participation appropriate to their skills and experiences in research projects and processes.

Principle 11: Indigenous people involved in research, or who may be affected by research, should benefit from, and not be disadvantaged by, the research project.

Principle 12: Research outcomes should include specific results that respond to the needs and interests of Indigenous people.

Principle 13: Plans should be agreed for managing use of, and access to, research results.

Principle 14: Research projects should include appropriate mechanisms and procedures for reporting on ethical aspects of the research and complying with these guidelines.

CREDITING INTERVIEW CITATIONS

The inclusion of real names and Indigenous heritage identification has been strategically considered. It was deemed important to contextualise the comments with those who made them.

The demographic breakdown of the responses was not intended to provide quantitative data, but was instead a qualitative consideration that aimed to give the reader a post-positivist context to the comments.

In addition to signing the original interview consent form, all participants were asked to review a transcript of their interview quotes that had been selected for inclusion in the dissertation. They were given an opportunity to edit or rewrite their quotes and then grant their permission for them to be published. Most interviewees wanted to be documented as a contributor to the process and openly expressed a desire to be recognised in the dissertation.
Chapter 4: Identity, Context, Timing

This study responds to a call from the design profession for guidance to improve the standard of graphical representation of Australian Indigenous culture in regard communication design, including place branding. The context of this research aligns with changing attitudes to national identity and the timing in anticipation of forecasted government-led nation-building policy incorporating constitutional change to recognise the pre-colonial occupation and history of Australia.

Figure 4.1 MIX06 Poster. Indigenous-inspired statement on contemporary Australian national identity. Chanthra Pumarini (Designer), Lynette Russell (Collaborator), Mimmo Cozzolino (Photographer). Exhibition; One Step Back, Two Steps Forward. Slipe Gallery, Hartford Connecticut, USA.

Australia is on the eve of change that will have an impact on its national identity. The potential for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples highlights a renewed interest in the area of Indigenous recognition and identity. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the issue of an inclusive national identity that embraces Indigeneity has gathered progressive momentum from an event that took place on February 13, 2008
where the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said sorry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for past wrongs of successive Australian governments. The symbolism of this event was highly significant from a perspective of cultural and national identity. Two months later, in April 2008, 1,000 Australians assembled in Canberra to be a part of the Australia 2020 Summit with an aim to shape a vision for the nation’s future and explore new ideas on dealing with the challenges ahead. Strengthening and preserving Indigenous culture and heritage was identified as a key imperative.

Two years earlier in October 13, 2006, Australia, under the Howard Liberal Government was one of three countries in the world, including the United States and New Zealand that voted against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Point two of a five-point list of UN recommendations, drafted in 2005, relates directly to the need for effective participation in maintaining cultural integrity. In 2009, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States all reversed their positions to endorse the declaration. This reversal was a significant indicator of change influenced directly by the Australian Government’s national apology.

Changes to policy involving rights and recognition have always affected the way Indigenous culture is represented by the media, governments and the corporate sector. Commercial design practice has also responded positively to changing attitudes and policy leadership. However, in 2014, the appropriate engagement of Indigenous knowledge by the broader design community remains a challenge. Proposed constitutional change, including Indigenous recognition, will certainly have an impact on the way we think and act.

As identified earlier in the dissertation, there remains a lack of information, guidance and leadership from the design profession that is specifically related to the depiction of Indigenous visual culture in communication design practice. The literature review did discover Indigenous protocols developed for related areas such as visual art, media art and new media arts, but no protocols were identified that referred specifically to communication design practice. The review identified a knowledge gap between Indigenous knowledge and communication design practice that has created a significant research need. The existing literature also suggested that there is a requirement and demand for research in this area. As a step, the federal government’s 2020 summit findings recommended the establishment of an Indigenous cultural education and knowledge centre. In Victoria there has also been the suggestion of an Indigenous cultural knowledge and education precinct for Melbourne. Both
initiatives indicate a desire to elevate the profile and visibility of Indigenous knowledge and culture within the broader population.

The literature survey did, however, identify an existing protocol document for creative Indigenous knowledge engagement in the area of visual arts. This is an excellent resource published in 2012 but, although referring mainly to the visual arts, it does briefly note its relevance to graphic design practice. This document could provide a solid reference base for a future document specifically targeted towards the design profession. The editor of this visual arts protocol document, Terri Janke, is regarded as a leader in the field of Indigenous copyright law, protocols and cultural protection.

At an international level the United Nations agency, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), through the Creative Heritage Project commissioned a number of academic researchers around the world to develop best practice policy and guideline documents for appropriate use of traditional cultural intellectual property. These documents are framed as guidelines and are mainly aimed at museums and anthropologists or cultural centres and visual arts practices. There does not appear to be any evidence of a strategic approach by WIPO that specifically targets the communication design profession.

A knowledge gap was also identified within Australian Government policy. Although the Creative Nation policy, released in 2012, clearly identifies a need for Indigenous culture to be more visible within the Australian identity, it has not specifically identified the role that the communication design profession could undertake in the achievement of that aim.

This dissertation aimed to confirm the assertion that communication design practitioners need guidance in dealing with Indigenous knowledge in their practice. The research also aimed to develop content that could be used to develop a practice document or professional charter that includes protocols and ethical practice codes. Potential end-user combinations and delivery of information methods would also be explored as part of this study.

Janke (1998), in her paper *Our culture: Our future* declares that ‘Appropriate measures should be taken towards educating the broader Australia community about Indigenous value systems, laws and cultural processes, where sharing this knowledge is appropriate’ (p. 48). The ability to take the concept of sharing culture took a step closer with the National Apology to the Stolen Generations by Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd which took place on 13 February 2008. There have been a number of events that have followed, including the recommendations from the 2020 Summit, which stated: ‘Indigenous culture is a critical part
of Australia’s identity and strengthening it is a core element of sustaining a strong and healthy Indigenous community’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

As highlighted earlier in this dissertation, in 2012, a Report of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians was presented to government. It included a recommendation for a referendum to be held on recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution. In 2013, the Commonwealth of Australia launched the Creative Australia policy, which highlighted the need to respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.

These events and discussions clearly indicate that momentum is steadily building towards the development of an authentic Australian identity. The stakeholders involved in this rebuild of national identity, based on the authentication of Australian history, are from three main platforms:

- Cultural – Australian Indigenous leadership
- Professional – The arts, including design
- Government – Federal, state, local policy (design policy)

The thesis of this dissertation is aligned with the spirit of five major cultural, identity and design-related policy initiatives:

1) 2008 – National Apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples
2) 2009 – Recommendations – from the 2020 Summit
3) 2010 – Formation – Australian Design Alliance – National Design Policy
5) 2013 Launch – Creative Australia – The National Cultural Policy

1) 2008 – National Apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples

In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, made a formal apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples. In his speech he identified the need to honestly, openly and authentically re-adjust the telling of Australian history. ‘We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians’ (Rudd, 2008). Rudd also highlighted the climate of respect and responsibility required to deliver what is being asserted by this dissertation. He calls for ‘a future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility’ (Rudd, 2008).
2) 2009 – The Australia 2020 Summit (Response & Recommendations)

The Australia 2020 Summit was held on 19 and 20 April 2008 at Parliament House in Canberra. The 2009 government report, titled Responding to the Australia 2020 Summit, stated that the event brought together 1,000 participants from across Australia and generated more than 900 ideas, which were summarised in an official report published in 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

The summit was intended to harness fresh thinking and ideas that would help prepare Australia for the challenges of the 21st century. Among many ideas, the 2020 Summit Report responded by stating that Indigenous culture is a critical part of Australia’s identity and strengthening it is a core element of sustaining a strong and healthy Indigenous community. The Commonwealth Government agreed that a National Indigenous knowledge and cultural centre should be established. The report stated:

> As the first step in the establishment of a centre, the community will be consulted on its form. We are therefore initiating a comprehensive feasibility study to engage the Indigenous and wider communities and existing institutions to develop options for the most effective way to strengthen and support Indigenous culture (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 185).

The summit also recommended two other related issues. One, the need to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution, the other, the need to develop a national cultural and design strategy and policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, pp. 187, 198).

In the chapter titled ‘Towards a Creative Australia’, the government acknowledged that fostering creativity is not merely fundamental to a healthy arts industry, but is critical to capturing innovation and strengthening a unique Australian identity that is recognised around the world (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, pp. 187, 198).

Fundamentally, the 2020 summit identified a need, a key national objective to expand the audience for Indigenous culture and to focus on Indigenous culture as the core of Australian culture (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 192).

3) 2010 – National Design Policy – Australian Design Alliance

The Australian Design Alliance (ADA) is a strategic partnership of Australia’s peak design bodies across a range of disciplines, including design, architecture, urban planning, craft and the arts. The ADA was launched in 2010 at the Sydney Opera House. One hundred key
Australian designers were present to discuss the value of design and its impact on government policy, research, the economy, culture, education, innovation and the media. One of the key objectives was to develop a whole-of-government approach to the arts, culture, design and the creative economy across all sectors. Another identified objective was to develop a centrality statement through a National Cultural Strategy. The formation of the ADA was stimulated by the perceived need for governments to recognise design as a means of realising policy relating to digital technological innovation, education, health, crime prevention, construction, environmental sustainability and transport.

The Australian Design Alliance was established to promote the ability to generate creative capital through innovative ideas, product differentiation and systems effectiveness. The alliance has identified the need to develop a culture of design in Australia to strengthen economic competitiveness, innovation and sustainability. The brief was to facilitate increased levels of Australian design advocacy, research, policy development, resources and collaboration. The combined national membership of the ADA is in excess of 20,000 and represents a constituency of almost 80,000 design practitioners. This disciplinary diversity prompts the question: Should there be an Indigenous design policy that works across all disciplines? The ADA currently has 12 member associations, including:

- Australian Craft and Design Centres
- Australian Graphic Design Association
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects
- Australian Network for Art and Technology
- Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Science
- Council of Textile and Fashion Industries of Australia
- Craft Australia
- Design Institute of Australia
- National Association for the Visual Arts
- Planning Institute of Australia
- Standards Australia

4) 2012 – Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution – Report of the Expert Panel

Indigenous recognition in the Constitution is a key issue for consideration by the Commonwealth Government. Consecutive governments have committed to consulting with
the community on a range of proposed constitutional reforms. Multi-party support has created a historic opportunity to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia, to affirm their full and equal citizenship, and to remove the last vestiges of racial discrimination from the Constitution (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). Established in 2010, the Expert Panel co-chaired by Patrick Dodson and Mark Leibler AC was tasked to report to the Commonwealth Government on possible options for constitutional change to give effect to Indigenous constitutional recognition, including advice as to the level of support from Indigenous people. Julia Gillard, the Australian prime minister at the time, was presented with the Expert Panel’s report on 16 January, 2012. The current government is now considering a timetable for this consultation and a subsequent national referendum.

5) 2013 – Creative Australia – The National Cultural Policy

Creative Australia – The National Cultural Policy was launched in 2013, making a clear statement of the need to respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity. The policy announced plans to work across government to develop a policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s traditional cultural expressions (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). This suggests that both the context and need are warranted for this dissertation.

Figure 4.2 Historical timeline (Indigenous Australia)
The context for change is based on an identified need for cultural and national identity realignment. The timing of this re-evaluation responds to a potential impact of constitutional change that will formally acknowledge a history of human occupation in Australia that extends back for thousands of years. The anticipated referendum for constitutional recognition of Australia’s Indigenous peoples is expected to take place in 2017.
Chapter 5: Analysis of Data

The analysis of the quantitative data took place sequentially. Each phase gathered data that informed the next step of the process. The secondary data sourced from the literature review and case studies helped frame questions for the interview phase. The data obtained from the interviews in turn helped to structure discussion themes and workshop tasks for the focus group. This qualitative approach achieved its aim to combine individual opinions and group discussion involving relevant cultural and professional stakeholders. A qualitative analysis of both the interviews and focus group was managed both manually and by utilising NVivo software. The analysed data was then used to inform a draft proposal for a professional practice document relating to Indigenous design.

A group of 40 designers and culturally related stakeholders from across Australia were interviewed. The process achieved its aim to have an equal representation of both gender and Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

A purposeful approach to selecting interviewees was taken in an attempt to achieve trustworthy data in the form of opinions and responses to open questions. The qualitative interview approach involved people with specific knowledge of the associated cultural and professional fields of communication design and Indigenous cultural advocacy. Sequentially, the results of the interview process were used to inform the structure and content of the focus group, which provided an additional source of data for comparative analysis and evaluation.

The interview data was transcribed from audio recordings into hard copy. This data was then systematically coded and organised into themes. The initial review established 106 codes, which were refined down to 40. These codes were then grouped into 19 categories. Note that some codes overlap with the summarised categories and some categories were also listed as codes.
5.1 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS – CODES

Following is the refined list of 40 thematic code groupings.

Table 5.1.1 Interview Analysis Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Code Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appropriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Contact and introductions</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Copyright law and IP</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cultural ownership</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Community development (employment &amp; training)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Designers’ fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Education – K12, and tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Education – designers and their clients</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Good examples of Indigenous representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Inappropriate examples of Indigenous representation</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Health benefits of respectful Indigenous representation</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Help for designers</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Indigenous consideration in all design</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Indigenous knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Is there an issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Land and country</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>National identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Permissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Place branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Professional Code of Ethics/Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Professional Practice Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Professional practice protocols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Reconciliation policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sharing knowledge and culture
The design community perspective
The Indigenous perspective
The key spokes people
Use of language and style
Why is it needed?

5.2 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS – SUMMARISED CATEGORIES

The following list represents code groupings and summarised categories that emerged from a second review of the data. This grouping process proved valuable in identifying recurring themes and issues. All questions and answers were logged and grouped under the following summarised categories.

Table 5.2.1 Interview Analysis Categories

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | **Authenticity** – accurate, respectful representation, national identity  
   Codes: 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 27, 35, 40 |
| 2 | **Historical Context** – issues, needs, benefits, obstacles  
   Codes: 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 27, 35, 40 |
| 3 | **Collaboration** – consultation, co-creation, learning, understanding  
   Codes: 4, 5, 34, 35, 38 |
| 4 | **Contact** – introductions, communities, representatives  
   Codes: 7, 15, 24, 38, 29 |
| 5 | **Ownership** – appropriation, intellectual property, copyright law, agreements, contracts, procurement  
   Codes: 1, 8, 9, 15, 24, 29 |
| 6 | **Community Development** – employment and training opportunities  
   Codes: 10, 25, 28, 33, 34 |
| 7 | **Education** – schools (K12, tertiary, post graduate), industry (communication designers and their clients)  
   Codes: 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 25, 27, |
| 8 | **Permissions** – Elders, the right spokes people  
   Codes: 14, 9, 8, 7, 24, 29 |
| 9 | **Positive Representation** – examples of Indigenous representation  
   Codes: 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16 |
| 10 | **Negative Representation** – examples of Indigenous representation  
   Codes: 8, 9, 12, 17, 20, 25 |
| 11 | **Indigenous Design Practice** – Indigenous-owned and run design businesses  
   Codes: 3, 19, 20, 11, 24, 20 |
Wellness – Positive impact on general health through an elevated profile and respectful representation of Indigenous culture (pride, self-esteem)
Codes: 3, 18, 24, 28, 3334

Indigenous Knowledge – Traditional ways of knowing, Indigenous control, contemporary expressions of an evolving culture
Codes: 20,21,23, 24

Land and Country – Diversity of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures across Australia
Codes: 23, 24, 27

Strategic – Processes and methods used by designers, anxieties expressed by designers and their clients, motivations (strategic or CSR)
Codes: 11, 19, 24, 27, 29, 40,31, 40, 35

Industry Practice Standards – Professional codes of ethics/conduct, protocols and guidelines
Codes: 30, 31, 32

Reconciliation – Acknowledgement of the past, sharing of knowledge and culture.
Codes: 13,14, 28, 33, 35,37, 40

Respect – Trust, visible recognition, Indigenous considerations in all design projects
Codes: 21, 24, 28, 34, 35,39

Communicating – Use of language and communication style
Codes: 16, 17, 22, 25, 34, 36, 37, 39

5.3 TESTIMONIALS

The following testimonials represent significant statements from the stakeholder interviews. These quotes are categorised under thematic headings (Table 6.2). Both the interviewees and their respective stakeholder groups have been identified in this dissertation (Section 3.2 Investigation of Methods and Instruments). Indigenous community/language groups have been included in the citation credits. This identification is deliberate so that indigeneity and rationality can be taken into consideration when reading. Permission to publish interviewees’ names and community/language groups has been granted; in fact most participants insisted on their name being published and attached to their comments.

The testimonials all relate to the research questions (Section 1.2 Research Question) which are the foundation of this dissertation. They are presented in this form is to provide context and authenticity to the data. Presenting themed comments in this way helps to illustrate the issues firsthand to those unfamiliar with the professional practice discourse on the topic. The testimonials have been selected and published, not only for their empirical value to this dissertation but also for the benefit of future researchers who may wish access the data to use as evidence of attitudes and opinions of the time.
The interview citations help contextualise the specificity of the Australian communication design case. The comments demonstrate why the visual arts model is not a perfect fit for the communication design. They also help identify and why customised guidance is required for the profession. Most testimonials address the primary research question by unearthing what people in the field (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) regard as being appropriate professional practice protocols.

1. **Authenticity**: This section groups interview responses that refer specifically to the need for accurate and respectful representation of Indigenous culture in the mainstream media. The authenticity grouping also incorporates comments relating to the relationship of Indigenous culture to national identity. The term ‘authentic’ varied in meaning with interviewees depending on context. Authentic Indigenous representation was conflicted by discourse surrounding unified or diverse and contemporary or traditional representation. The role of Indigenous culture within the search for a unique/authentic Australian style also provides some insightful commentary on what is seen by some as conflicting representation.

Patricia Adjei, legal officer and Indigenous communications coordinator for the Copyright Agency highlights the complexities that currently exist regarding creative authenticity:

> There was always grey area for graphic designers, you know, whether they were actually creating a new work or adapting a work, which is a derivative. Graphic design is always a grey area for us (P. Adjei [Torres Strait Islander], personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Alison Page, Indigenous designer and constitutional adviser to the Commonwealth Government of Australia made the following comment in regard to the positioning of Indigenous culture within the national identity. She also describes the connection to land as a potential link between cultures:

> My number one goal with constitutional reform is to remove racism from our constitution. Number two is for Aboriginal culture to be absolutely central to the Australian identity. I think farmers understand more about the connection to country than anyone has ever pointed out to them. I think their connection to land is on a deep spiritual level too? That’s the kind of conversation this country needs to have moving forward. And that’s the sort of nation building that I hope will come from constitutional recognition. They are the milestones along the road to becoming a modern Australia (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi], personal communication, February 14, 2009).
Page, whom I would describe as an expansionist, also spoke about her belief that Aboriginal design will one day inform a unique ‘Australian style’:

*I think Aboriginal culture will finally take its rightful place as central to the national identity. That should extend to the Aboriginal art and storytelling being central to the Australian style. The Aboriginal design story is created from this land and its people but if Australian style doesn’t talk about this land and its people, then what is the Australian style? Is it just borrowed from Europe and wherever else? The Australian identity is something that’s very badly drawn, very badly defined* (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Justin Mansfield, Operations Manager of Tank Branding highlights the potential for miscommunication and supports the need for professionally based research culture within design practice:

*Whenever you’re asking someone to interpret on behalf of another person or community you’re probably going to get mixed responses. Scholarly inquiry and deep professional understanding should never be discounted and is always to be encouraged* (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

Joanne Pritchard, lead graphic designer on the First Peoples exhibition project at the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at the Melbourne Museum, made the following observation, which points to a broader pedagogical issue regarding the Indigenous representation:

*The problem emanates from the way we teach Australian history in schools because we currently consider the Aboriginal people as the ‘other’. When I went to New Zealand last year, my first trip, I felt generally that Maori culture to be more overt and integral into ‘being’* (J. Pritchard, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Jeffrey Pratt, designer and businessman with Jaara heritage, commented on the authentic representation of Indigenous Australian culture by design practitioners. Pratt also supports the thesis of this dissertation by suggesting the need for education and modified work methods:

*Authentic representation has been pretty limited. I think it’s lacked a lot of consultation. People are designing what they think Indigenous people expect or what the general public expects an Indigenous entity to look like, rather than getting down to the nitty-gritties. If there were better consultation methods, and slightly extended deadlines to allow for respectful process, then you’d get a much better result and something more indicative of the people* (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant], personal communication, March 14, 2013).
Craig Small, the non-Indigenous sales manager of Aboriginal design company, Deadly Designs commented on the difficulty of achieving both authenticity and respecting diversity, especially when required to make a national Indigenous statement:

> It’s a matter of talking to the client about the intended use of the design work and whether that is going to be as national or a localised design. If it’s localised we identify points of difference if its national we look for common ground. We also discuss whether the design requires a traditional or contemporary interpretation (C. Small, personal communication, January 22, 2013).

RMIT research academic, Kevin Murray points out that these complexities and sensibilities are also entwined within a broader discussion on national representation and the creation of an authentic Australian identity:

> Constitutional recognition of Indigenous history will help redefine the Australian identity but I think we’re heading in that direction already. There is no question that’s an integral part of our culture and we’re now seeing filmmakers, musicians, writers, and artists, dancers who are Indigenous. What would make more of a difference is a constitutional referendum for Australia to become a republic. That would give us more of a feeling for our country and our Indigenous history. The redesign of our flag would also be the key to that (K. Murray, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Many statements referred to authenticity as a key word. This affirmed the assumptions expressed in the research question of this dissertation that designers currently rely on stereotype and clichés and that cross-cultural representation in a design requires more scholarly inquiry. It was also stated by those interviewed that design practitioners need to be aware that authentic representation varies according to the intended statement, the community being represented and the receiver of the message (local, national, international). These comments (above) have significance in terms of the appropriate use of Indigenous visual culture in Australian communication design because they emphasise the responsibility designers have in shaping culture as well as highlighting the need for guidance to help designers deliver more authentic and credible outcomes.

The comments also reinforced the importance of Aboriginal culture to inform an inclusive but unique Australian style. Statements indicated that an authentic Australian identity is also dependent on a number of symbolic changes including constitutional recognition of Indigenous people, Australia becoming a republic, and changing the national flag.
Interviewees highlighted New Zealand as an example of how increased visibility of Indigenous culture has resulted in a more authentic national identity.

2. **Historical Context:** The following comments highlight the need for designers to be aware of the unique sensibilities associated with Indigenous representation. Issues, needs, benefits, obstacles and politics were often raised in a historical context. The damage caused by inappropriate, insensitive representation of Indigenous culture since European settlement has created a climate of cynicism within Aboriginal Australia. This mistrust has resulted in the custodial protection of and restricted access to Indigenous knowledge and visual culture.

   Elizabeth Gersakis, former Senior Curator of the National Philatelic Design Collection at Australia Post put the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous design into a historical and political context:

   "Over the last 30 years, there’s been an enormous acceleration of art and design produced by Indigenous communities. We know, Namatjira, Lin Onus, we know, artists who either trained or who became artists that engaged with Western mainstream because of the Aboriginal mission and reserve placements with religious organisations. However it wasn’t really until the 1970s when questions of minorities became important, including Indigenous Australians. During that period there was a push for the acknowledgement of Aboriginal land rights and ownership but it also ran parallel with the different kinds of engagement between the white and Indigenous communities (E. Gersakis, personal communication, February 4, 2013).

   Di Lancashire, a social anthropologist spoke about changing attitudes within anthropology. Her comments relate directly to the primary research question of this dissertation and highlight the associated ethical complexities surrounding access to and ownership of Indigenous knowledge:

   "I do think there is a place for anthropologists, however there’s a history of some strained relationships. I did experience an attitude on occasion in remote communities where the perception was that anthropologists came, did their research and left with ownership of the knowledge. I also found this was a much discussed issue in academic anthropology at the time I studied. For me, I found writing and gaining knowledge quite challenging from a moral and ethical position. It was a great relief for me to be out working on projects where I could bring some expertise but where there was no doubt about the ownership of the end result. I think in general today, linguists, anthropologists and other so-called experts, are very aware of who owns that knowledge. I don’t think this is such a problem these days. To the contrary, I think anthropologists can add a lot to a project (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013)."
Jeffrey Pratt adds comment to the role of anthropologists, applied research and the need for designers to learn about the historical context of the work. In line with this research, Pratt emphasises the need for integrity based on primary sourced knowledge and deep understanding:

> It’s about finding out what’s going to work for a particular client but designers also need to determine how well-informed they are as well. Besides the initial brief, if you’re a good designer, you do your research, you read outside the normal reading list, and you seek information from everybody you can locate from the area. For example, an anthropologist that visiting an area is going to bring something completely different to the table as compared to an elder or group sitting with you and telling their family stories and legends. You must learn their history, explore their land and identify the local colours and textures. The difficulty with a lot of Aboriginal cultures is that not a lot is documented in the Western sense. You’ve got to really dig deep, because more often than not, it’s someone else’s view and bias on the culture. For example, we often look at Tahitian culture through an artist’s eyes from literature and paintings from the 1800s. The idea of a ‘Noble Savage’ at one with their environment, represented the Indigenous islanders in a totally different perspective to that of the local gendarmes and the French government. An even more radical and dismissive interpretation of the culture came through the writings of frustrated missionaries at odds with local customs and practices (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant] personal communication, March 14, 2013).

The suggestion that practitioners need to be actively rigorous in their research is reinforced by Di Lancashire who made a salient point calling on designers to enquire about Indigenous history in all projects. She explained that David Lancashire Design always ask their clients if there is an Indigenous story in the brief. Di Lancashire refers to a specific case study in Tasmania:

> The original brief required no Indigenous input or viewpoint. The client wanted us to include history of exploration in Northern Tasmania but only referred to white European history. We eventually were able to convince them to include stories about Indigenous history and they were pleasantly surprised to find that there was a lot of knowledge available. I think most people are generally willing to incorporate it into their projects but they just don’t know how to go about it. A protocol document would at least provide guidelines. We want Indigenous people to be involved in these projects but it’s a matter of finding out how they can participate. Maybe they have knowledge about plants and food collecting. You might also find out that Indigenous cultures are not so different to non-Indigenous cultures. An important
point to highlight in any guideline is that if you are working on a project you cannot expect one person to give you all the expertise on their history and culture ... I don’t know my culture in depth. I couldn’t speak for Melbourne’s history. I think the assumption is that one Aboriginal person can speak for an entire culture and they can’t, just as we can’t (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Architect, Dillon Kombumerri also believes there should be Indigenous considerations in all projects:

*Designers should also be encouraged to build Aboriginal stories into all their work, not just Aboriginal cultural projects. For example Aboriginal history and culture should be considered in regard to every proposed architectural site* (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Kombumerri and D. Lancashire’s sentiment regarding the need for Indigenous narratives in design supports the premise behind this dissertation. Elizabeth Gersakis points out that Indigenous Australian themes started to emerge on stamp design around the time of federation 1890 to 1900. Gersakis questions the context and appropriateness of the representations although acknowledges that they were arguably in line with government and community (non-Indigenous) values of the time:

*Australian stamps started to feature native flowers and native animals and of course that’s just the same as featuring Aboriginals, because they were regarded as part of the decorative landscape. Aboriginals were featured, not as the subject but as the decorative frame. That tells us a lot about Australia and what it wanted to be at that time. This approach continued for some time including the Art Deco period where ‘primitive’ elements often appeared in design* (E. Gersakis, personal communication, February 4, 2013).

As described in Chapter 5.2 Australian history holds many examples of insensitive and inappropriate representations of Indigenous culture (Figs 5.10, 5.11, 5.13) by non-Indigenous designers. The ignorant design practices of the past combined with the rise of Indigenous political activity in Australia over the last 40 years has created a climate of cynicism within Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities. Collin McKinnon-Dodd spoke about the complexities political and realities that often form obstacles:

*We’re coming out of a period in history where everything Aboriginal has been politicised. I think the reason no one has touched this area of research before is because it’s a minefield. It is vitally important that your research stays within the area of design and culture because I*
find that clients steer right away if things are made too political. If your objective is simply to promote collaboration, co-creation and respectful design, then you will get buy-in and participation (C. McKinnon-Dodd [Yamatji], personal communication, March 5, 2013).

Cynicism towards representation emanates from the fact that historically Indigenous visual culture has to be placed in a non-Indigenous context for it to be accepted by the broader community. Swinburne University design academic, Andrew Lane reinforced this point when he said:

*One of the interesting things about the 60s and 70s period is that the art forms that people once linked to Aboriginal culture (principally figurative styles from Northern Australia) quite suddenly lost their appeal. People became ambivalent and stopped using them. There are arguably political reasons for this, but I think there was also a change in fashionable taste. People made a link between the Western Desert style and abstract expressionism, which implied contemporary sophistication* (A. Lane, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Di Lancashire made the following comment when asked about the potential impact of constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians may have on communication design practice. Her comment reinforce the need for professional practice guidance:

*I think we do have an obligation and a responsibility to seek an understanding of how people have been sidelined and how there’s such a rich hidden history there, but it’s not easy. If designers have some knowledge of the history and processes in place, then I think the client would be more willing to go ahead. It’s not that there's no goodwill, often it’s just that clients just don’t know how to deal with the issues* (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

The importance of understanding the historical context was pointed out by many of those interviewed. Their statements reinforcing the responsibility designers and their clients have to research the Indigenous history of a project. It was even suggested that designers should enquire to whether there is an Indigenous story to tell in every project they undertake.

Appreciating the *historical context* in terms of the appropriate use of Indigenous visual culture in Australian communication design was highlighted as highly important due to the inappropriate representation of Indigenous Australians in the past. Interviewees also commented on misrepresentation due to the inappropriate referencing of dot painting by designers. This practice was attributed to the global popularity of Western Desert art in the
1960s and 1970s and exacerbated by comparisons made with New York abstract expressionism of the period.

It was stated by interviewees that historical parallels could be made between improved representation of Indigenous culture and political activism. On the other hand it was mentioned that the politicising of Indigenous Australia had been an obstacle to developing an inclusive national identity. Statements also emphasised the need to investigate both anthropological history and oral history directly from members of the community being represented rather than third-party sources.

3. Collaboration: Consultation, co-creation, listening and learning were words that reoccurred during the interview process. The following comments infer Indigenous-led imperatives and provide clues to achieving respectful engagement and shared knowledge and understanding:

Someone described collaboration like a filter for gathering cultural knowledge. Our company does not begin by putting forward a design or our mark on the project. We begin by finding ways that the people, Indigenous people, can own the project because it is their project. This requires, not just sitting down and having a chat with people, it requires you trying to find what skills people can bring to the project. They might not be able to draw for instance, but there might be other things they can do. In some cases we have painted with people, or people have made objects. It is trying to find ways for people to speak with integrity, which may be with their voice or through other expressions. As a consultant, one begins quite transparently from a place of ignorance, then over time the project develops with the knowledge and skills that people slowly are prepared to share. This way you build up something that is owned by the people who should own it and of which they can be proud. I think that approach is critical to all community-based projects – Indigenous or non-Indigenous. It’s very time consuming but extremely valuable. Unfortunately most clients don’t allow money for that because it does take a lot of time (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Jeffrey Pratt spoke about his collaborative design experiences and highlight the need to learn and understand the specific cultural sensibilities of the community to obtain the best results. Pratt’s comments respond to additional research questions 3 and 4, which relate to the voice, language and tone of potential protocols and professional practice guidelines:

You have to sit down with people, it’s always a question of trust. Often they’re trying to achieve something that’s outside their artistic capabilities and they’re coming to you as an expert in your field. They are expecting you to visually create a design within the parameters
of what they are thinking. A good design will exceed those parameters if you are empathising with the culture. If you are just giving lip service, you only give the client what they asked for and fail to capture their vision on their behalf. On the other hand, if you are in tune with the client, you can then bring your expertise to play and give them back something that is beyond what they had imagined or envisaged and better communicates their dreaming (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant], personal communication, March 14, 2013)

In response to the primary research question regarding appropriate protocols, Di Lancashire commented on the need to find the appropriate channels for collaboration:

You need to do a lot of background research. It is easier in Victoria now with the Aboriginal Tribal Land Council because the channels of communication have been agreed upon by the different Aboriginal groups but we have worked with communities in other states of Australia who were represented by only a half a dozen people, so the consultation process does vary. The other critical thing is that a lot of people think that Indigenous Australia/Aboriginal Australia is one group of people and that’s a long way from the truth. Many people are completely mistaken about this. Aboriginal Australians might have the same desire to be recognised, but in terms of cultural differences, these are vast and diverse. That should be recognised as well. You can’t speak to one Aboriginal person and expect them to speak for all…I think that’s a bit of a struggling point for a lot of non-Indigenous Australians. If they don’t know Aboriginal Australia, they tend to think they’re all the same (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Fran Edmonds, a collaborative/social researcher from Melbourne University also supported the need for consultation based cultural guidance:

Just consult, consult, and consult. Never think you’ve got it right because someone will always tell you that you haven’t, especially as a non-Indigenous researcher where research is shrouded in lots of the negatives. It is all in the consulting, it’s making sure that you’re on the right footings at the outset. Whenever I’m working with communities or anything to do with Indigenous practice I always get the consent and try to involve all those people who are connected to whatever I might be working on at the time. It takes a long time and you’ve got to really make an effort to write to and talk to as many different groups as possible. If you don’t, you’re likely to find someone who hasn’t been informed and is offended. It may not ever happen but you are just better off trying to at least tick off that box (F. Edmonds, personal communication, January 22, 2013).
Mason Atkinson, Manager of the Aboriginal Business Advisor Program at the Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry placed a similar emphasis on engagement processes:

*Consultation, consultation, consultation! It’s very important that if you are using something that belongs to a traditional owner group from a particular area, that you involve those traditional owners in the process. You make sure that you’re ethically using their culture. After all it’s their intellectual property. You need to make sure that you’re using it appropriately with their permission, with their endorsement and full support. Respectful processes are important in terms of making sure that you have the support of the community. There has been occasions in the past where we didn’t consult as widely as we needed to, which opened us up to criticism and potential conflict with the community. Having said that, the approach and level of consultation varies from location to location. There is no, one-size fits all approach to these types of things. Sometimes there can be some specific issues that affect the way you consult but there are some general principles that you can follow. For example it is very important to get the involvement of any community elders. It’s also important to investigate if there are any traditional owner groups that are active or exist in that area. You also need to be aware of any registered Aboriginal parties as well, which can differ from traditional owners. The RAPs are traditional owner organisations or groups that have the government mandate over a particular area, however there may be other traditional owners (groups and/or individuals) with ties to that same area that don’t have RAP status. Parts of Melbourne including the CBD is a good example, where there are a couple of traditional owner groups with claims but there is no registered Aboriginal party because those particular owner groups have a disagreement over boundaries. Whereas if you go to the Western district of Victoria, Portland, you will find that the Gunditj–Mirring group down there is registered with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. They are the official representatives of that particular area, which means they are mandated to work with the other traditional owners groups in the region (M. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta–Dja Dja Wurrung], personal communication, February 12, 2013).*

Joanne Pritchard outlined the consultation process for the development of the First Peoples exhibition at the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum:

*Our exhibition represents 38 nations but our community reference group does not have all the clans represented. It does, however, have representatives from all parts of Victoria, the southwest, northern, Woiwurrung regions, wherever. I think we accept that we had to be practical and that to go and speak to every clan group would mean that we would never get the project up and running. We had to streamline the process as best as we could by*
identifying individuals who would be appropriate representatives of the regions. We tried our best to represent a cross section from the different parts of Victoria when selecting imagery. Some things become a consideration like iconic imagery such as Bunjil’s feathers, which had been photographed and then manipulated. Bunjil is not a moiety of all 38 clans but we felt that it was OK because the museum sits on Boonwurrung land. We think it’s appropriate to use Bunjil to carry our message but we are also aware that Bunjil is not necessarily recognised by all because each clan has their own moiety (J. Pritchard, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Melbourne designer, Ken Cato from Cato Partners supported the need for extensive collaboration but places it in a broader cultural context:

*Designers would be foolhardy not to consult. They do so at your own peril. We believe it is vitally important for designers to consult on cross-cultural projects. We have worked on over 100 cross-cultural projects over the years and always try to work with research consultants and cultural experts. We aim for all our cross-cultural projects to make contemporary expressions of traditional culture. We have worked on projects in Indonesia, China, India, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Uruguay. We believe that it is important to tell old stories as if they are new but sometimes, for example in China we find they just want to copy styles from Europe and the States and occasionally from Australia. They sit on thousands of years of culture which is actually quite different but they want to present them self as the same. It is an interesting conversation in the context of Indigenous culture here in Australia. We believe that there are no new stories and we generally encourage our clients to draw from their own history to find a point of difference (K. Cato, March 12, 2013).*

Ros Moriarty from Jumbana, an Aboriginal-owned design company spoke about working with international branding companies:

*We have worked on collaborations with some major agencies. For instance, we worked with Future Brand on the 2015 International Cricket Council World Cup that’s being held in both Australia and New Zealand. The design connects with the Indigenous cultures of both countries and I think it was a good example of best practice collaboration. I believe collaboration is really the mechanism whereby designers can incorporate the Indigenous standpoint into a mainstream market (R. Moriarty 2013, personal communication, April 4, 2013).*

The statements about collaboration further affirm the need for protocols and guidelines for designers practising in this field of cultural representation. The above comments also
challenge any suggestion of finding a simple system or process of engagement. Having said that the statements were significant in terms of informing the appropriate use of Indigenous visual culture in Australian communication design because they do help identify potential processes and methodologies. For example the need for designers and their clients to be patient, to find time to sitting down with people and building trust were common themes. Acknowledging and respecting diversity and finding the right channels for collaboration was also mentioned, as was the need to understand that the collaboration may vary for each project. The statements advise designers to consult often and widely and to develop community reference groups for larger projects. Interviewees also recommended respectful co-creation and the exploration of contemporary expressions of traditional themes when appropriate. Comments also emphasised the importance of openly discussing the commercial and cultural implications of incorporating an Indigenous stand point within a mainstream market.

4. Contact: This category grouped opinions and comments highlighting the importance of obtaining appropriate introductions/referrals to communities and their authorised representatives:

First of all you have got to find the right people to talk to. If you don’t, then you might as well forget it. In my experience if you start talking to the wrong people it can all blow up and go sideways very quickly (D. N. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Mason Atkinson refers to the importance of acknowledging all contributions:

The process for gaining permissions can be formal involving consent in writing, contracts an exchange of letters or sometimes it can be a simple, informal approach. I think it’s absolutely important to acknowledge whoever it is you have consulted with. People need know whom you have been dealing with and that they had been entrusted with the authority to advise you on issues of integrity, authenticity, secrecy and confidentiality. These are things that need to be respected (M. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 12, 2013).

Irish born Kevin Finn, the founder, editor and designer of Open Manifesto and former Creative Director of Saatchi Design describes his approach to Indigenous projects:

There are probably two things. The first one would be consultation. I know it’s a no-brainer but it’s great if we speak directly to either the Indigenous community themselves, the Indigenous culture advisers or the representative organisations to get a sense the cultural pitfalls and opportunities. Cross-cultural is the other thing that I include in all the work. For
me a cross-cultural is of strategic importance. I say to my Indigenous clients that I’m not particularly interested in dot paintings, the usual kind of visual aesthetic that we see. I’m not interested in that. I believe that if you do that, you’re preaching to a pre-converted audience. I try and see how we can leverage a wider audience for what they’re doing and by that I mean, if we can present Indigenous culture in a new contemporary way with traditional values, people will respond to it. A cross-cultural approach connects with people who otherwise may not be interested in Indigenous issues. This is the entry point, in my view. It has to be cross-cultural to get that wider open space. Otherwise, if dot paintings or Aboriginal painting is not their thing they don’t connect and then they miss all the other amazing stuff that they could be learning from. For me there are two things, consultation and a cross-cultural mindset (K. Finn, personal communication, January 23, 2013).

Colin McKinnon-Dodd provided advice for design practitioners:

Designers really just need to take a deep breath, leave all your preconceived thoughts and ideas at the door and just come in with a blank canvas, sit down, listen and learn. Then you will discover the best way to go about it (C. McKinnon-Dodd [Yamatji], personal communication, March 5, 2013).

Statements relating to the designer’s point of contact are significant in terms of respecting ownership and custodianship. Finding the right people (elders or cultural representatives) to deal with was regarded as crucial by those interviewed. It was clearly pointed out that designers need to gain an appropriate introduction to the community/representative and that this contact must have the authority to grant permissions or facilitate the permission process. The overwhelming message from interviewees to designers was to be respectful, be open and build trust.

5. Ownership: One of the key opinion threads involved cultural ownership and the related issues of appropriation, trust, intellectual property, copyright law, licensing agreements, contracts, and procurement. Defining ownership is some time very difficult, when designers are asked to make a national statement/brand mark that reflects Australians’ Indigenous heritage. It is especially challenging when it creates a symbol of unity that also aims to respect notions of Indigenous diversity.

Joanne Pritchard talks of the need to establish a community reference group to help navigate these complexities:
Appropriation is a really hard one to navigate. We were lucky with the First Peoples project because we had a community reference group to consult and collaborate with to provide advice, gain permissions and to tell us when it was okay and when we’d crossed that line. At the moment, I guess designers don’t have a body or someone they could go to (J. Pritchard, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Pritchard’s suggestion addresses the primary research question, what are the appropriate protocols to assist practising communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the respectful use of Australian Indigenous knowledge and representation of visual culture?

Natalie Walker comments on the application of legal processes that relate to knowledge/protocols required by communication design practitioners:

Law is law and we only have one law in this country. I would want protocols to be codified in legislation in some way but then again there is already protection within the Copyright Act and the Paintings Act. There are all sort of other legislation including the Trade Practices Act, which also embed this issue (N. Walker [Kuku-Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Richard Henderson, Melbourne designer and Design Director of the Sydney 2000 Olympics made the following comment regarding ownership and the scepticism of traditional custodians to share their knowledge because of the damage created by the past treatment of Aboriginal Australians:

My experience attempting to design something, which is an interpretation of, or influenced by Aboriginal art is usually treated with suspicion. ‘Ripped-off’ is not the right word but the suggestion has been made that you’re trying to take something which is not yours and pass it off as yours. I always find that a bit difficult because Indigenous art is so authentic to Australia and it should be part of our broader identity, we just need to find a way to make it happen more often. When we did the Olympics, it was quite confrontational in that some people were asking: ‘Why are we using Aboriginal culture? Why do we have to use it? Why is the white man developing something with which we had no right to?’ I think that attitude probably comes back to feeling, as I said, ripped-off. I think someone said, you know, Desmond Tutu said, ‘When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said ‘Let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.’ It’s that sense of being disenfranchised (ripped-off) because no one really fully explained to you what they’re going to do with it (R. Henderson, personal communication, March 15, 2013).
Alison Page argues that there needs to be some common sense applied to the ownership claims within the Aboriginal communities:

> There is this whole argument about whether people in New South Wales should be using dots or not. As a designer with design training I know that the dot is one of the seven elements of design and I don’t think anyone has the right to tell me which elements I can and can’t use. I can use line and I can use dots however I like as long as I’m not plagiarising a community or someone else’s work. There is this real movement to stop Aboriginal people in New South Wales from using dots because dots weren’t a traditional practice here. I just think that’s preposterous (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

Vicki Couzens claims that the current legal system can work for the interests of Indigenous designers:

> My advice to Aboriginal artist and designers is, never assign your copyright… never! You can negotiate an exclusive license if you like, but never sign away your ownership. Aboriginal artists need to understand that their work is an asset and that the legal process can work really well for them (V. Couzens [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 19, 2009).

Professor Lynette Russell, Director, Faculty of Arts Monash Indigenous Centre, Monash University has Aboriginal heritage and is a descendant of the Wotjobaluk. Russell said:

> I’m currently working on a research project which is looking at incorporating Indigenous design elements, particularly those that come out of rock art tradition into jewellery and contemporary wearable art. I’m doing a self-comparative look at what is happening elsewhere in the world. I think there are real economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and this area, which hasn’t really been fully explored (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).

One interviewee anonymously referred to an international case study that highlighted issues surrounding Indigenous cultural ownership:

> The Fijian community recently contacted me because Fiji Airlines had decided to trademark or a design, which featured a Kesakesa cultural motif. It’s actually a beautiful, beautiful project although there has been a big issue with it which relates to protocols and copyright. Fiji Airlines have insisted that the designers assign copyright to them but the problem is that the designs feature historical cultural motifs. I personally don’t think any Indigenous iconography should be assigned. It should be licensed rather than assigned. There are lessons to be learned here. It’s a shame because most Indigenous Fijians would enjoy seeing Fiji
Airways utilise and promote the design as a corporate logo. However, to allow any corporation, own exclusive rights to a cultural symbol and to control its use and reproduction is to allow them to possess and control culture (Anonymous), personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Andrew Lane highlights some obstacles that relate to permissions and the sharing of knowledge in a commercial design context:

Ownership and permissions can be complex. For example: an Indigenous artist may be granted permission by a community to use particular motifs and forms in specific cultural contexts. If the artist then enters a commercial agreement for use of an artwork created using those same motifs and forms, that use may conflict with some community members’ wishes.

A separate issue is that of non-Indigenous people using motifs and forms that mimic or reference those of Indigenous art. Practice of this kind spans a spectrum from the respectful homage to the deliberate counterfeit. While the extremes of this spectrum are identifiable, there is a point in the middle where debate can ensue around the appropriateness of particular visual approaches (A. Lane personal communication, February 22, 2013).

Ownership statements both affirm and challenge assumptions made in the research question of this dissertation. The need for guidance in copyright and intellectual property law is supported in statements by those interviewed. Statements also challenge the assumption of Indigenous preparedness to share cultural knowledge. Interviewees warned of community scepticism towards non-Indigenous people having access to their culture and pointed out a reluctance to share knowledge by some Indigenous custodians. Statements also called for a common sense approach between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups but also conceded that there will always be imperfect negotiation when commercial use of culture is involved. The statement advising Indigenous designers to never assign copyright and to only license intellectual property was as a pragmatic but insightful solution. Framed within a paradigm of Western law the advice included personal creations but also referred to the application of imagery not owned by individuals but communities past present and future. The clear thread of commentary by all those interviewed as part of this research was that that ownership must be acknowledge and respected at all times.

6. Community Development: There were many comments that related to a need to provide opportunities for employment and training on projects that involve the commercial sharing of culture. Interviewees mentioned professional experience for aspiring Indigenous designers as
a potential outcome of a shared knowledge practice methodology. Di Lancashire makes the point that some projects can provide a level of employment and training. She explained how they often have community members working on their projects:

“Yes, we’ve always paid for artwork and always paid for time. Sometimes it involves us recording someone’s conversation, painting or making something or we have paid for travel time if they need to drive long distances in order to help us. In non-Indigenous culture that happens, if you employ a historian on a project, the historian gets paid for his or her knowledge and time (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Fran Edmonds adds comment to Indigenous employment on projects:

“It is a good idea to engage the services of someone from the community you are working with because they know the people who will have the connections. If a design anthropologist is Indigenous, that would be great, but generally having an Indigenous designer or Indigenous person employed in the organisation is really important, I think. It’s really that capacity building, so Aboriginal people are actually learning about what’s happening from the design organisation and business point of view. It is also important that the design company is also getting the firsthand knowledge of people who are directly connected to community and who will be able to steer them in the right direction (F. Edmonds, personal communication, January 22, 2013).

Ros Moriarty from the Jumbana Group describes their commitment to community development:

“We’ve been employing Aboriginal members for 30 years. We go about that in a similar way to other recruitments. We also currently have a number of remote region staff associated with our not-for-profit programs. We have established long-term networks with a number of communities and have developed direct relationships with all the artists we work with (R. Moriarty 2013, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Patricia Adjei says:

Community development is an important way for the design community to become involved. There are several Indigenous designers already out there who have their own design businesses but need more mentorship or training programs that are available for young emerging Indigenous designers. This is where non-Indigenous design companies can help (P. Adjei [Torres Strait Islander], personal communication, April 4, 2013).
Kevin Murray commented on permissions required for branding projects:

*Brand development and design is about winning trust. When you have trust you see people go a little bit further than they need to in terms of supporting relationships. When design companies are seeking permissions it might help to put community development on the table. For example a branding agency might invite a young aspiring designer from the community to work on the project as a paid intern. These things that are not necessary but can create an important back story and I think that there’s a lot to be gained in that, not in the short term, but for the long term* (K. Murray, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Comments from those interviewed suggest that *community development* could be a positive outcome of improved professional practice by designers in the area of Indigenous representation. Statements above highlight the potential of dedicated design practice guidelines to present opportunities for employment and training of Indigenous community members. Paid internships for young aspiring designers and two-way mentorship between mainstream companies and Indigenous design companies were also mentioned as a potential benefit of respectful representation policy.

7. Education: Design pedagogy and professional training was a multifaceted theme from those interviewed. The need for Indigenous design education was a consistently expressed sentiment. Comments suggested a need at all levels of schooling (K12, tertiary, postgraduate) but also the design profession (communication designers and their clients) and associated industries. Much of the data gathered referred to the need for cultural education that aims to build an understanding of the cultural diversity within Indigenous Australia. Many of those interviewed found the over generalisation and mono-cultural representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies to be highly disrespectful:

*Most designers think that all Indigenous art is about dots. It’s only when you actually get involved more into the cross-cultural area that you understand how dots are only one small part of it but you still see it a lot in modern graphics. When designers, graphic designers, want to portray an Indigenous feeling they automatically go for dots as a way out. We have always been a research-based design company, I think designers have got to do more research and get involved with the actual truth of what Indigenous image-making actually is* (D. N. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).
Fran Edmonds spoke about Aboriginal diversity and negative impact on regional communities cause by the generalisation of the Australian Aboriginal identity:

*One problem is that Victorian Aboriginal art and design has been sidelined in a lot of ways. People don’t acknowledge that there are Victorian Aboriginal designs because there’s that whole idea that there is no authentic Victorian Aboriginal practice. You know, you see that iconography (dot paintings) and people automatically think top end or central desert, whereas people here are continually struggling to voice their authenticity, to show that they are actually still practising. There is a real danger of people just collapsing Aboriginality into one basket* (F. Edmonds, personal communication, January 22, 2013).

Natalie Walker argues the need to teach pre-colonial history in schools. Walker believes that an inclusive understanding of Australian history would help designers deal with the issues surrounding Indigenous representation and national identity:

*It is really important for curriculum in schools to show that Australian history didn’t start with Captain Cook, which is how I was taught and it is still how we are being taught today. There was a whole lot of great stuff happening here before then. Acknowledgement of this is important. It would be a real catalyst for all Australians to be proud of their pre-colonial culture and history* (N. Walker [Kuku-Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Dillon Kombumerri also supports the argument for acknowledging and teaching Australian history in its entirety:

*We really do need to consider the way we teach Australian history. Australia has had many waves of visitors, the Chinese, Macassans (Malaysia), Dutch, Portuguese all visited Australia many years before Cook (the British). If we understand this, including the fact that our people have the oldest continuous history in the world, then Australia will have a much better sense of self* (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Clive Atkinson points out the shortage of Indigenous people trained in design, which implies the need for more pathway opportunities in design education:

*Our design studio had a lot of non-Indigenous people working for us because unfortunately it was hard to find Indigenous people with same qualifications. It was hard then and I still find it very hard today* (C. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 20, 2013).
Sally McNeil, CEO of FutureBrand Australia makes a similar point about design education:

*It has to start earlier in the process. Design Universities and Graphic Communication courses or even all levels of school should teach a better understanding of Aboriginal cultures. It should start from the beginning, so that by the time you start working in the graphic design or for a branding agency, it’s not so foreign to you. I think that’s where it has to be grounded* (S. McNeil, 2013, personal communication, April 3, 2013).

McNeil, also highlighted the need for more Indigenous design practitioners and Indigenous-owned businesses:

*I know there are a lot of Aboriginal artists but don’t get the impression there’s many Indigenous design groups here. We need to ask what is the education process. How are design schools and agencies teaching cultural knowledge and are they involving Indigenous people in the study of graphic design/communication design. It should not just be from the art side. Maybe the education process needs to consider Indigenous culture, maybe that’s where the gap is* (S. McNeil 2013, personal communication, April 3, 2013).

South Australian communication designer, Barrie Tucker agrees that there needs to be a shift in focus in education. Tucker argues that we would not need Indigenous design guidelines if our education system focused on teaching about the segues and relationship between design, Indigenous culture and history and identity:

*The biggest problem is that designers are not educated in the knowledge of Indigenous culture and art. It’s about understanding the culture but unfortunately there’s a total lack of knowledge by most white Australian designers; there’s absolute ignorance because of a lack of knowledge. Design schools and universities place too much emphasis in the European art and it’s the same with history. There’s obviously a lack of respect and a lack of awareness within the educational institution. I think there’s a lot of that needs to be brought into play. I don’t think we need a set of guidelines, I just think our education system and educators need to make connections between design practice and Indigenous culture, history and identity. As I said, lack of knowledge leads to ignorance* (B. Tucker, personal communication, April 6, 2013).

Alison Page points out the lack of educational content relating to Australian Aboriginal design history:

*There’s a massive gap regarding the representation of Aboriginal design in museums, cultural institutions and in the whole sector for that matter. There needs to be more research*
done on our ancestral designers. There were some awesome industrial designers back then, producing incredibly sophisticated designs like the boomerang for example. We may never know about the individuals but it’s never really been written about in a way that celebrates the achievements. We need a resource that pays homage to our traditional design practices because we do have ‘traditional’ Aboriginal design in Australia. I know a lot of the Aboriginal curators but most of them focus on art not design and yet, we have this incredible design history, which includes some really amazing work done in the traditional architecture area as well. Paul Memmott produced a really beautiful publication that maps traditional structures all the way through to contemporary architecture. At Merrima, we worked on contemporary projects for Aboriginal people but there needs to be more research undertaken that looks at Indigenous design, from a broader design perspective which takes into account industrial design, graphic design and the built environment. We need to write a publication on Aboriginal design for high school students or even university level students. A book like this would be really interesting because we could actually put it in the context of an Australian style (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

Clive Atkinson agrees with Page that there is a void in the teaching of Aboriginal design history:

Fortunately, over the years, I have been able to bring Aboriginal imagery into my design practice. I have learned how to do this myself because there is no such thing as a curriculum for Aboriginal graphic design. What Aboriginal kids have to do is go through the mainstream system to learn how graphic design is based around marketing and advertising. I am one of the very few recognised Aboriginal graphic designers. Unfortunately there has not been many following on. There are a lot of two-dimensional artist or fine artists but not many that have gone through design school and learned the skills and philosophy of graphic design. It is pretty sad really, because there is a lot of talent out there (C. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 20, 2013).

David Williams CEO of Gilimbaa, an Indigenous-owned creative agency expressed his thoughts on the impact that constitutional recognition might have on the way history is taught and subsequently how Australians might change the perception of themselves:

The first question we need to ask ourselves is how are we going to change the way we teach history. There’s already a big push to teach Australian people the full history which formally recognises Aboriginal people and the first nations of this country. I think constitutional recognition of Indigenous people be a good thing and will help push this along. The younger
generation will get it but I think it will also be a good way to point out to older generations that there really is a pre-colonial history and that there’s no denying it. It will formally recognise our place in this nation, this country and mean that Australian history is ours too. I think for a lot of people will come to understand that this is the make-up of our nation. It might not be the way we were taught, and it might not be what we see in the media, but it is actually written in our constitution. If this change goes ahead, it hopefully challenges designers to rethink the way they represent Australia as a nation (D. Williams [Wakka Wakka], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Mark Rose agrees that education is crucial and is optimistic that an Indigenous referenced national identity will eventually emerge in Australia:

I look at this country and I see a real disconnect with identity. You know, we don’t know who we are. We’re such an immature nation that worries about progress and wanting to be the richest country in the world. We think this is the foundation of an identity because non-Indigenous people own this identity. There is a shift in our identity but it needs to be supported through education and the recognition of Aboriginal issues in a national curriculum. A new framework will require teachers to demonstrate in an understanding of Aboriginal culture. Other special issues like disability and equal rights for woman took a number of years to become accepted in the society and I’m sure this will be accepted too. It just needs a good framework. Acceptance will bring about shift in design because there will come a time when this is just a norm (M. Rose [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 11, 2013).

Maree Clark agrees that changes to Australia’s identity will eventually take place once people build an understanding of history and contemporary context:

Most people want to do the right thing but often don’t know how to go about it. Protocols will help designers but they will also help designers to educate their clients. Cultural awareness programs should be introduced at all levels of education including design school curriculums. People need to be taught how to engage appropriately. People need to respect and understand the Indigenous ways of knowing. This will not happen overnight but it needs to start to be taught in schools now (M. Clarke [Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung, Yorta Yorta], personal communication, March 31, 2013).

Indigenous representation involves all systems including education. What we know is what we are taught. If the inclusive history of Australia starts being taught now, it will probably take a generation for that thinking to start coming through. Hopefully the next generation will be taught in a manner that recognises the pre-colonial history of Indigenous people as part of
Andrew Wood of Latitude Group speaks about the importance of historical context in design. His comments come from a non-Indigenous, design practitioners perspective but they act to summarise the other argument for the need for improved education in the areas of Australian pre-colonial history, Indigenous culture and design:

*I think education is a good place to start with in terms of what we teach and how we teach it. For me the story of culture of Indigenous Australians was introduced during secondary education. This included a broad overview of the culture and but would have been nice to learn more to make more of it more accessible. We all need to know more about our Indigenous past, the present and the future. I mean it is amazing when we consider it being the oldest continuous culture in the world, it suddenly draws new meaning. We spend a lot of time learning about the early cultures outside of Australia but that’s less relevant to our daily lives* (A. Wood, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

The comments listed above affirm the ability of Indigenous design practice guidelines to educate. Statements suggested that Indigenous focused cultural education is necessary for designers and their clients. Those interview also called for Indigenous cultural education at all level of schooling. The restructuring of Australian history pedagogy to include Indigenous history was also suggested. Interviewees argued that better education at schools would reduce the need to address the issue of appropriate representation with practising designers because promote understanding and respect within the broader community. Comments implied the need for a broader celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander design history in Australian education.

8. Permissions: The majority of those interviewed highlighted the importance of gaining permissions for the use or adaptation of Indigenous visual culture. It was identified that this varies on a case-by-case basis. Permissions may be granted by community elders and/or individual artists, or in some cases designated representatives such as cultural centres. Aboriginal academic from La Trobe University, Professor Mark Rose made this point about permissions:

*I think permissions are best promoted through natural relationships. That’s a fundamental Aboriginal principle. It’s respect; everything is related back to respect. The first thing a designer needs is to understand is the difference between transition and relationship. Create*
a relationship with people or elders in a community. Once you work out the relationship then the permission will go ahead (M. Rose [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

A recurring point insists that designers make sure they are dealing with the right spokespeople and that those people have the authority to represent the community and its members. It was also repeatedly pointed out that the commercial contexts of any project needs to be clearly outlined and fair remuneration negotiated with individuals and/or the representative organisations. This common theme was reinforced by many of those interviewed:

The main issue is to first of all identify the group of people and the Indigenous community you are working with. You must understand whom the right people are to talk to. Then you need to make sure that everything you do goes through a particular process of approval and corporation with that group. I have done quite a bit of work with Indigenous communities and it’s always been a process of working with my client who’s normally a government authority or department who is then working directly with the local Indigenous representatives. In these projects everything is passed by the Indigenous community, there is always somebody on a board who is responsible for getting that approval. In some cases I may not necessarily even meet the Indigenous people involved, often I do but sometimes I don’t (S. Alnutt, personal communication, January 21, 2013).

Natalie Walker, CEO of Supply Nation and former Deputy Chair of the National Indigenous Television Network (NITV) commented on permission processes and cultural governance:

I can only work on the model that I used to work within NITV, which was having a Cultural Advisory Board that advised. This was separate from the board of NITV, which I was the Deputy Chair. The Cultural Advisory Board also advised the Content Director on all new acquisitions and the development of content for the channel. I think is really the key. NITV Cultural Advisory Board would also give guidance as to how to obtain permissions and whom to obtain them from. For example, if there’s a particular art work from a particular region that was to be depicted, then the permissions needed to be sought from the group that owned that artwork. Having a group that is easily accessible reduces some of the barrier or hurdles that a design firm might encounter if they’re trying to operate on a project-by-project basis. The principal issue is that design firms really do need to be conscious of all these things. It’s not just about saying, ‘Oh, that artwork is really pretty. I want to use that in my next design.’ They should be thinking about the implication and what’s behind that. And that it’s not just about taking a great design that looks good and is really colourful. Designers need to
understand that there are people, stories and communities behind these images. They have to be respectful of that (N. Walker [Kuku–Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Walker’s comment addresses additional research question (1), which asks: what methods do communication designers currently use when representing Indigenous knowledge? Marcus Lee also talks about his engagement processes and methods:

Really you’ve got to go to the captains of the communities and make your introduction and explain your intentions that way, because the elders then have a big influence on the community and either allow or disallow projects. Over the last couple of years we have been working on My Moola, an Indigenous educational workshop program developed by the First Nations Foundation and the ANZ. The aim was to assist Indigenous Australians and their families from remote communities to get ahead financially by understanding how to manage money. What’s interesting is that the client and I had to basically drive to the regional communities in the Northern Territory and basically just wait for the opportunity to approach community elders for permission to run research/information sessions with families about financial issues and their banking requirements. As long as the elder allowed it, then the gates were open (M. Lee [Karajarri descendant], personal communication, January 23, 2013).

Justin Mansfield talks of the legal and language complexities related to gaining cultural consent and permissions:

When designers are operating within such realms they need to be mindful of the governance those communities exercise upon themselves. Designers need to look for the decision makers within those communities. They should seek them out just as we would the CEO of the company or a Minister of a government department when looking for consent on matters that involve them. How that consent is then documented and codified is a real interesting question. I mean, you could certainly do it in writing but then you’ve got the question as to how it is drafted. Is it in accordance with Western legal techniques or is it done in such a way that is in accord with the traditional beliefs. A very interesting question, maybe you could have a mixture of both. I guess if you look at New Zealand when they drafted the Treaty of Waitangi that was written in both English and Maori language but although the two texts quite similar there are still different interpretations because of the stresses put on the languages to make translations work (J. Mansfield, 2013).
Vicki Couzens comments on the importance of building trust:

Building relationships and trust are very important to obtaining permissions but a lot depends on the nature of the project, what you are doing with the knowledge and what is being included in the design. The process and expectation are what needs to be negotiated (V. Couzens [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 19, 2013).

Lynette Russell highlights the difficulty in identifying the appropriate authority to deal with regarding the granting of permissions:

Permissions, needs to go back to whoever the recognised Aboriginal party is. If you’re working here in Victoria and you’ve got a registered Aboriginal party, then you would go to them. That’s actually legislated through the state government’s Heritage Act. There is no national system; each state seems to have its own, slightly peculiar way of doing things. Here in Victoria, it’s registered Aboriginal parties but elsewhere it may involve land councils or community centres. In Queensland, it’s really problematic because there are actually very few authoritative bodies. There are lots of incorporated bodies but they have no power within the state government system, so it’s quite different in each place (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).

Sally McNeil, Colin McKinnon-Dodd and Dean Parkin also comment on permission granting complexities:

I might quite rightly say that gaining permissions can be very tricky and delicate. A lot depends on if we have worked with that group in the past. Sometimes we deal with an artist via an agent, other times we take on a direct relationship with the artist. It really depends what our role is and how much responsibility the client wants us to take. In some cases this includes the commercial legal, which might involve us negotiating contracts between artist and the client. We often find ourselves in the middle this but it really depends on the individual situation (S. McNeil 2013, personal communication, April 3, 2013).

There are processes where permission needs to be given by key members of that community, keepers of that story, the imagery that has been passed on down for generations. Again, that’s going to be up to the family elder or chosen representative who’s still using that imagery. It’s imperative that you respect the community protocols and you go to the elders. Then it’s up to you to basically negotiate with that person. That negotiation process might also be overseen by an advisory group which might compare your project to past instances where accesses have been given for similar projects and imagery that used the same skills (C. McKinnon-Dodd [Yamatji], personal communication, March 5, 2013).
Designers need to realise that even if you think you have the right protocol and are in the right frame of mind, it is not always going to work. The big thing is to be aware of that. Learn and be prepared to persevere. Every time you walk into a different community you’re prototyping protocols for the first time. You are going to fail sometimes but try to fail small if you can. It is vitally important that you don’t come in as somebody that knows it all. Don’t assume that what might have worked for one community in the past is going to apply in this community. Never assume that what you are bringing to the table is what people need. It’s the worst thing to do; it is not the way to start working with that community. People just don’t like that approach even if you are. you may turn out to be right. You build trust and you build a rapport first. The only way you can learn that is by listening and observing, and that’s why I try to take as much time as I can. Once you have their trust you can then start to move forward. People will see that you’re making an effort to do the right thing. They will appreciate that far more than you walking in with the big idea (D. Parkin [Quandamoka], personal communication, March 5, 2013).

Interviewees all emphasised the importance of appropriately gaining permissions. This universal opinion affirms the assumptions embedded in the primary research question of this dissertation. Interviewees championed the need for permissions to be granted by community elders, representatives or community advisory boards. Some comments suggested that designers engage me with community advisory boards or if required assist elders to establish new advisor y forums. It was pointed out by some of those interviewed that permissions are best obtained in writing but not always. Comments indicated that circumstances could differ in that some permissions will be with an individual; others will be with the community. Some interviewees commented that in some cases permissions need to be granted by a legally registered Aboriginal party or representative cultural centre. Statements were consistent in advising designers to be respectful and show patience. All agreed that if you build trust first, permissions would follow. Identify and comply with community protocols, customs and codes. Comments clearly indicated that designers listen, learn, consult, and co-create. Statements from those interviewed warned designers to not assume preconceived ideas will gain permission. It was argued strongly that permissions should never be granted to projects requiring the assignation of copyright, especially if involving community owned intellectual property. Licensing agreements were suggested as a preferred contractual option for the commercial use of imagery.
9. **Positive Representation:** Interviewees highlighted examples of visual representation they believed reflected positively on Indigenous peoples. The grouping of these responses provides valuable data about what has and has not worked appropriately in the past. When asked about the representation of Indigenous culture within the broader community, Diane Lancashire said: ‘It’s almost non-existent except in the museum cultural space’ (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Natalie Walker comments on the general lack of Indigenous control over their own culture but highlights NITV as a positive example of Indigenous representation:

> My initial impression of the current representation of Indigenous culture is that in the main there is not a lot of Indigenous control. National Indigenous Television (NITV) is probably the best example that I can think of. NITV has at the core of its business, Indigenous editorial control. That’s about making sure that Indigenous people are telling the stories that they want to tell, in the way that they want to tell them, and that they are culturally appropriate to the particular group. I think the best examples of the representation of Indigenous Australia is through design and art (N. Walker [Kuku–Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Dillon Kombumerri talks about positive Indigenous representation created in the visual arts. By comparison he highlights the difficulty architecture has in achieving the same profile. He argues that this is due to the small number of practitioners.

> The Aboriginal Arts area is a good example of where it works because it is totally unique. Aboriginal Painting, in particular, demonstrates authenticity in a cultural context. Architecture is a more difficult area to define. It is important to realise that the technical expertise in architecture is not there yet in the community, not like fine art. Australia only has a handful of architects. We have not got the critical mass in design that Medicine and Law has, but we are getting there (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Kombumerri’s comments are also relevant for communication design. Although the number of Indigenous communication designers is growing, there is still very little representation of Aboriginal visual culture in mainstream media. When it does appear, it is likely to have been created by a non-Indigenous design with minimal to no cultural research undertaken. Joanne Pritchard’s observations support this point although Alison Page identifies the Balarinji
Group as a leading example of an Aboriginal-owned design company producing work that positively represents Australian Indigenous culture:

*Representation is unpredictable and not necessarily authentic, although that’s hard to assess at times. I mean I also find it scarce, I don’t see a lot of it* (J. Pritchard, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

*The Balarinji designed Qantas aircraft is a positive and example and it’s really visible. I think it is appropriate because Aboriginals designed it. It’s authentic work* (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

Ken Cato spoke about the importance of Indigenous representation in national branding. He highlighted the historical significance of the Balarinji Qantas design and the relevance of Indigenous design knowledge in the search for an Australian style:

*Stylistically, I think most designers are conscious of dot painting but we’re conscious from an art world, not so much a design world. I recall Michael Brice inviting an Aboriginal artist to paint the dot art used on the Olympic bid logo. I doubt if anyone would’ve been able to tell that the dots were executed by an Aboriginal person, but by incorporating them and involving an Indigenous artist made a positive statement of some kind. I would also like to think that Indigenous people would be honoured and take pride in their culture being recognised so prominently. The Qantas plane by John Moriarty is another expression of Indigenous culture in communication design. It’s amazing the noise that it makes when something is produced like the Qantas plane. It is an aircraft painted in an Aboriginal style and it was very noticeable because of that. I doubt it would’ve raised an eyebrow if it had some other artistic style. Was it a good example of Indigenous representation? I don’t think there's any question of that and it did seem to foster other design in the same vein, particularly from the same group of people. I think it was a good thing that it happened and I think it bought Indigenous culture to the forefront and that probably propagated the acceptance of Aboriginal style a bit more* (K. Cato, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Barrie Tucker commented on designers who have worked in the commercial Indigenous design space:

*As an Englishman, David Lancashire has done pretty well with the Indigenous-related business, and the representation of art in that sense. David’s wife is an anthropologist, which complements their practice. There are two other people, Dr. John Moriarty and his wife Ros. They did the Jumbana brand and a lot of other products here in South Australia. John being an Aboriginal added legitimacy to their work. They also designed that Iconic plane for Qantas. It was quite a plane* (B. Tucker, personal communication, April 6, 2013).
Those interviewed highlighted examples of positive representation of Indigenous design. Individuals, organisations and design artefacts were identified including National Aboriginal Television (NITV), Architect, Greg Burgess Architect, the Belarinji Designed Qantas 747 aircraft, 2000 Sydney Olympic bid logo, Kinaway logo, 2015 World Cup Cricket logo, 2000 Sydney Olympic ‘Peace Roo’ poster. Comments suggested that case studies like these would help support documented design practice guidelines.

10. Negative Representation: The responsibility of designers to understand the impact of actions was a common theme. Interviewees highlighted examples of visual representation that they believe exploits culture or reflect negatively on Indigenous peoples. The following comments refer to designers use of tokenism, clichés, stereotypes, over-simplification and insensitive generalisation.

*Generalisation is something that I’ve seen a lot of in terms of logos, designs. People haven’t had the opportunity to be educated on the subject so they tend to go straight to dot painting, Wanjina figures or hands painted on a wall. I find it inappropriate when designers think they are designing in an Aboriginal style but in reality they’re re-appropriating. They’re almost creating an Aboriginal style that looks ‘native’ for the wide audience. They think it looks authentic or primitive enough to represent Aboriginal culture but it isn’t. I don’t like those sorts of designers who use or re-appropriate Aboriginal patterns. It’s not theirs to do that; it’s cultural knowledge and it belongs to Aboriginal people. That really doesn’t sit well with me. It makes me quite uncomfortable* (K. Moulton [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 7, 2013).

*Sometimes Indigenous representation can be quite sensitive and appropriate and then other times, it can go to the other end of the scale. It can be quite tokenistic, inaccurate and basically inappropriate. In my previous role as manager of the Koori Court we engaged a Victorian artist to developed a logo for the Koori Court Program. We also consulted widely with the Koori Court elders and I think the result was quite good. The designs I don’t like are the typical sort of things you see on TV, the cliché or stereotype image, which gives the impression that all Aboriginal people live in the desert, have a big beard and stand with a spear* (M. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 12, 2013).

*We are a heterogeneous group where it’s not just based on skin colour. We come from all parts of the country; we’re fresh water people, saltwater people, desert people. There’s so much diversity within our community that it’s really important for Indigenous Australia, but also non-Indigenous Australia and the rest of the world, to see how diverse we are. It is*
important that people do not try to put us into one box, which is generally the tall, skinny, black man wearing a loincloth and standing on one leg with a spear in his hand (N. Walker [Kuku-Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

It’s easy for Indigenous motives to be appropriated in a very pastiche type fashion. The uses of artefacts such as the boomerang or stylised illustration methods to convey a sense of Aboriginality and to add a certain look and feel to a design is something that has been done a lot in the past. In my opinion, it’s something that’s being done by non-Indigenous designers without a great deal of consultation with Indigenous community (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

I’m not a fan of Paddy’s Market tea towels. I don’t like the way Aboriginal stories are crafted by others (non-Aboriginals) just so they can sell souvenirs to tourists. People are representing our culture that should not be (D. Kombumerri [Yugemir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

There are a lot of badly designed souvenirs like ties and scarfs but I’m also aware that there are few well designed souvenirs and outlets run by some visionary people (S. Alnutt, personal communication, January 21, 2013).

In terms of the sale of products and telling stories or in producing stories on video and radio, those types of things predominantly seem to be owned and controlled by non-Indigenous people rather than Indigenous people. You just have to walk down George Street in Sydney and look at the tourist shops that sell the boomerangs and didgeridoos made in China. The only exceptions to that in my mind are would be paintings that are actually painted by Indigenous artists or art works that are actually made by Indigenous artists (N. Walker [Kuku-Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

The following comment highlight how advertising strategies ignore multicultural representation and by doing so reinforce racial dominance:

I think this is part of the problem with the design community. Designers tend to generalise and simplify to communicate more effectively and efficiently. By doing so they aim to talk to the largest possible audience, which is probably the Anglo-Saxon audience. If you’re representing Australia, I think you need to actually show the diversity of Australians whether it is Indigenous or the refugee community, it should not just the European-Australian that gets represented. We don’t currently see a lot of non-Anglo-Saxon people represented in the media, advertising. I mean if you’re designing for tourism in Darwin, Northern Territory,
then of course you show the land but I think that needs to be placed into context in terms of its leverage on culture in the Northern Territory. If you’re looking at selling a car, you don’t necessarily connect to place and country, but designers do need to know that Indigenous people do actually buy cars too (Anonymous), personal communication, February 21, 2013).

It was suggested that Indigenous designers are also guilty of defaulting to stereotype and clichés such as the over referencing of the Australian Aboriginal flag:

Well, we all tend to go back to the old red, black, and yellow, and dot patterns. I’ve been guilty of it, I’ve done it on logos, and I’ve done it on designs because that’s what the client wanted. The client might have even been Indigenous, but they were still paying homage to what they expected the public would understand (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant], personal communication, March 14, 2013).

Mimmo Cozzolino comments on a shameful history of inappropriate and racist representation of minority cultures in Australia and around the world. The examples he highlighted were designed specifically for advertising and branding purposes:

If you have looked the book: Symbols of America by Hal Morgan, which came out four years after Symbols of Australia, you’ll see the same thing with the representation of American Indians. I’m not so sure if he’s got a section on African Americans but in the Symbols of Australia we had sections dedicated to Aboriginals and Negros, which reflected the attitudes of the time. They say that advertising is totally reflective of the society that produces it. Unfortunately, I think this is true in the case of these symbols. For instance, there was a brand of paint that had an advertising slogan, ‘We’ll keep Australia white’. The brand was White Way, and their logo featured a picture of a full-blood Aboriginal. It made the weirdest connection between Aboriginal and white. Why would you want to do that? There was another paint brand called ABO Sanitary White, which also featured an Aboriginal man in the company’s logo. The other inappropriate example was the Pelaco man, who was apparently a real character who lived in Jugiong, NSW and was somehow befriended by one of the commercial artist working on the Pelaco advertising account. He wore a white shirt with no pants, he was depicted as a kind of a clown, you know, making fun of the idea of an Aboriginal (black man) wearing a white shirt. The characterisation was used for 34 years, right up until the 60s. Another example was for a brand of soap. I think the idea was that you able to wash away the blackness. These racist examples are highly unsophisticated to say the least, but then when you think about it, Aboriginals only got counted in the census from 1967. What is even more amazing is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are to this day, still not recognised in the Australian Constitution (M. Cozzolino 2013, personal communication, January 24, 2013).
These case studies described by Cozzolino demonstrate the damage created in the past by the communication design practitioners. Justin Mansfield describes the impression these and other examples made on him as a young designer. It arguably illustrates why the profession needs to make a formal statement that lays a foundation on which to build trust going forward:

When I first started out in this industry one of the most prominent designers, and he’s still around, was Mimmo Cozzolino who with Fysh Rutherford put out that brilliant book Symbols of Australia, which I’ve still got at home. While I can’t bring any specific brand marks to mind in terms of the names of the products I can recall a number of examples of ‘black fellows’ with boomerangs, nets and wallabies. They were very caricature-like representations of Indigenous Australians and appeared to be referencing that noble savage/hunter gatherer type lifestyle. I guess it would’ve been a popular perception of Indigenous Australia in years past. The other one that particularly comes to mind was for was Pelaco Shirts. The brand mark and supporting advertising had an Indigenous character wearing a shirt but he first started out in this industry, one of the most prominent was quite conspicuously out of place. I guess it was arresting because of how out of the ordinary it was with him wandering the bush with a spear in hand wearing this crisp, starched white shirt. He was supposedly appropriating the ways of the new colonisers. More recently the Sydney 2000 Olympics logo is one that springs to mind. I actually did a little bit of work with FHA at the time as a freelancer, not directly with the brand mark but on the Sydney 2000 project generally. I’m not sure whether or not there was any Indigenous designer involvement or consultation with Indigenous communities or even Indigenous sports people for that matter in the development of that brand mark. In my opinion it was something that was designed to be a nice visual arrangement, which was representative of some ideal of Australia and Australian Indigenous culture that also represented athletic activity, the Olympics themselves and Sydney itself (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

The Olympic Games were often identified as a meeting point of cultural representation in the context of place branding and national identity. Alison Page made the following comment about the appropriation of Aboriginal imagery in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics:

You could probably look at the Melbourne Olympics in the 1956, where they used Aboriginal symbols such as boomerangs on tea towels and other souvenirs. It was a very stereotypical use of Aboriginal symbols but then again it really needs put in the context of the time. Especially considering that Aboriginal people weren’t even counted as human beings in the national census. They were not counted as part of the Australian population at the time and
yet they were spouted as part of the Australian identity. I think that’s really interesting, you
know. My dad was 25 in 1967 when he was counted as a citizen for the first time. He was
counted as a human being for the first time in 1967 but ironically, nine years earlier at the
Melbourne Olympics there was a lot of imagery that prominently referred to the Aboriginal

Kevin Finn, communication designer and Irish immigrant to Australia spoke about his
changing impression of Australian Aboriginal culture. He explained how his understanding
changed once he arrived in Australia and then again once he started working with Aboriginal
communities:

“We don’t see a lot of Indigenous work in the higher end of design. It’s there but we just don’t
see a lot it. And if we don’t see it then it’s not really on our radar. Broadly speaking, I think
any organisation that just goes directly to using dot painting represents a bad example of
process. Having said that, there is practical reason for that approach. The practical reason is
that dot painting is a high-profile contemporary form of art. It’s certainly not particularly
traditional and it provides a myopic and very specific view of Aboriginal culture through
painting. The problem is that there are lots of other forms of cultural expression that are
being ignored because of it. I admire it, but dot painting itself is specific to certain regions.
Before I came to Australia… and learning about Australia growing up, it was all about dot
painting, boomerangs, and Skippy, I assumed that dot painting was traditional, a very old
form of Aboriginal painting. When I got here I learned that it was a comparatively small
group that still painted in dots and that it was only introduced in the 70s. So I think anyone
who uses dot painting to represent Indigenous culture without consultation is designing
inappropriately. It might actually be appropriate but if they are doing it as a sort of a short
hand, I think that is inappropriate. Perhaps the word I should use is lazy. We see it a lot.
Though, when I first moved to Kununurra in East Kimberley, stood in front of nine traditional
professional owners, two independent trustees of this organisation and a number of people
from the mining sector. I stood in front of them, then sat down and told them that in my view
dot painting is a visual part for Aboriginal culture but to only use this means of
communicating is to ignore all of the other richness of the culture. Eight of those traditional
owners looked to me blankly. The mining executives were dropping their heads going ‘What
the hell is he saying?’ And the Aboriginal trustee sort of looked to me, not quite sure what the
response was going to be from the Aboriginal people. Out of them all, one lady was nodding,
all the way through. At the end of my presentation she said, ‘You’re right. Painting is only
one aspect of what we do.’ I later found out that this lady was the only painter in the entire
group and agreed with everything I was saying. My point is that if it is not appropriate to the

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Those interviewed highlighted Australia’s poor history of negative Indigenous representation and inappropriate commercial use of appropriated symbols. The racist use of Indigenous referencing in advertising and trademarks during the early part of the 20th century were identified as a reason for cynicism. Interviewees identified examples of negative Indigenous representation that reinforce the need for guidance for communication designers in the future. The use of cliché images were criticised by those interviewed such as the archetypal image of the Aboriginal man with beard, standing on one leg and holding a spear. The overuse of the Aboriginal flag was mentioned, as was the out of context use of the dot painting aesthetic. Inappropriate Australian souvenirs were also highlighted, as were some high-profile communication designs including 1956 Olympic merchandise and 2000 Sydney Olympic logo.

11. Indigenous Design Companies: A thread of commentary emerged that highlighted the specific dynamics relating to a growing number of Indigenous-owned and run design businesses. Interestingly, the comments (following) suggested that Indigenous designers also need assistance in this area, especially when working out of their country. This data prompted the development of a survey that set out to identify the demographic, and user combinations of a proposed guideline. This quantitative survey was conducted after the interviews as part of the focus group phase of the study. The analysis of the data is outlined under the heading of Focus Group Analysis (see Chapter 5).

Marc Williams described the approach of Deadly Designs, a Victorian-based, Indigenous-owned, design company:

_We are the only business that offers Indigenous graphic design, printing and promotion products; there’s no one else in Victoria like us. Part of our service is to advise clients about whether it’s appropriate to use particular artworks and if that artist would approve their artwork to be used for specific applications. Deadly Designs has its own protocols and we understand the responsibility we have as an Indigenous-owned company. We also try to explain our protocols to our clients so that they understand their responsibilities. Our clients appreciate that we are able to facilitate the approval and permission process for them. Establishing a broader protocol document would be a great step forward to making sure that designers were all on the same page. Ideally, it would take the form of a guideline document for ethical, authentic and respectful design practice, which would educate people about the_
diversity of Indigenous culture across Australia. It’s a resource, it’s a reference, it’s a port of call and it would provide another angle and level of support for Indigenous people. It would also show respect to non-Indigenous designers because it would welcome their participation by helping them deal appropriately with projects that include Indigenous themes (M. Williams [Yorta Yorta] personal communication, January 22, 2013).

Marcus Lee, Alison Page, Clive Atkinson spoke about their cultural engagement methods from their perspective as Indigenous communication design practitioners:

I’m a strong endorser of quality, and the quality of the design first and foremost. That’s the approach we take; it’s a big design solution and it’s also a good Indigenous design solution at the same time. We must consider the cultural sensibilities but still need great solutions with that. After 30 years or plus of being in the design industry I’ve got so many frames of reference, from the mainstream as well as Indigenous arena. I’m always searching, developing and evolving into the next version of who I am as a designer. People don’t come to me for a traditional solution; I try to seek contemporary solutions within that Indigenous space. I think the contemporary expression is what makes our solutions more unique and objective. It’s not about applying the same principles over and over or feeling the need to design with a semi-traditional process (M. Lee [Karajarri descendant], personal communication, January 23, 2013).

The National Aboriginal Design Agency has agreements between it and the artists. We are agents of the artists and we work in their best interest to have their artwork licensed onto a range of different products. These products might include carpets, textiles, lighting; it might be two-dimensional application or even a typographic font which is then used on products. We also have designs appearing on three-dimensional products such as light fittings, door handles and architectural hardware (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

When I had the studio in South Melbourne, we claimed that it was the first time an Indigenous and non-Indigenous person had come together to start a graphic design studio. Our client base was made up of advertising agencies but one day I got a phone call from Lois O’Donoghue who was looking for someone to design a corporate identity for ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission). She explained that they had just run a competition to develop a corporate image for ATSIC but were not happy with the results. I explained to her that you will never get the right result through a competition and that you need to speak to someone that has a graphic design background and has the Indigenous knowledge of how to bring together elements that speak for the organisation and shows its
personality. I then met with Lois and she showed me the results of the competition. I never knock other people’s work, but I could see that there was nothing there that spoke for what ATSIC represented. I then undertook quite a bit of research, which included an extensive meeting with Lois and the ATSIC commissioners. Once my research was completed I devised a number of representative elements. Each element had a meaning, which overlapped and come together to form a complete logo. To explain the development, I wrote a step-by-step rationale of the process, which explained how the symbol represented two different cultures, both the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples. The design was unanimously accepted by the commissioners (C. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 20, 2013).

Vicki Couzens spoke about the challenges facing an Aboriginal artist/designer who is asked to create work that represent an Aboriginal group that they are not part of. Couzens also emphasised her business practice of never assigning copy right to works she has created. This commentary is relevant to the all research questions (primary (1) additional (2,3,4,5)):

*Just because you are Aboriginal doesn't give the right to speak on behalf of other Aboriginals. When you’re working in someone else’s country, you can’t just bring your stories and just put them there. Marie Clarke and I work together a lot; we often work with traditional owners whether it’s a particular elder or an organisation, a group or whatever. We have to be sanctioned to do the work because we’re on their country. We are drawing on the knowledge in a country which isn’t ours, so we have to get sanctioned. For example, Marie and I worked on a project at Point Cook which involved us creating a design inspired by frog eggs. We wanted to reference the growling grassland frog, which is a frog from the swamplands of what used to be Bonerong Country at Point Cook. We ended up working quite closely with Carolyn Briggs, a Bonerong Elder, who was able to grant permission to use the growling grassland frog, which is part of the Bonerong creation dreamtime story. Making that connecting with Carolyn was significant and we kept her in the loop during the whole process. We try to make these connections and obtain permissions whenever possible. It is a respectful and authentic process when working in someone else’s country. For example, Marie and I could not come and tell a Gunditjmara story or a Mari-Mari stories on Bonerong country. There might be times when you can incorporate other people’s stories but it must always come back to the local story because you’re on someone else’s country. You have to get the permission and the authority (V. Couzens [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 19, 2013).

Many of the Aboriginal people interviewed highlighted examples demonstrating why guidelines would also be useful for Indigenous designers:
After we completed the Echuca Cemetery project, which was very successful, we were approached to design a similar project for the Ballarat Cemetery. I made it quite clear that we would have to go through certain protocols. I explained that I was not a member of the Wadawurrung community and that I would need to speak to the relevant people to get their blessing and support for this project to go ahead with us involved. That was done through the Native Title Services Victoria from that area. They facilitated discussions with direct descendants of the Wadawurrung people, to get their support. We thought it was going to take about 6 months and ended up taking 18 months because of the work involved in negotiating with the different people and the respected elders of that area. There were issues relating to imagery because their symbols were totally different from what we used in Echuca. It’s a different culture in that area and it was a different landscape, so we had to come up with designs that reflected that. After a lot of meetings with the elders we were able to get their support (C. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 20, 2013).

We come across affirmative action policy quite regularly, particularly when we work with mainstream agencies. We have often been invited onto projects as cultural consultants or expert in the field of Indigenous communication design. In these cases, we are asked to navigate the complexities and sensitivities of visually communicating Indigenous culture. Governments are now asking Indigenous businesses to tender for communication design jobs. It’s a fundamental interest of government departments to ensure that they have an ethical and credible outcome. Governments also need to have the right people working on these projects. They now realise that this knowledge can’t come from a non-Indigenous design company (D. Williams [Wakka Wakka], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Leigh Harris, Creative Director of Ingeous Studio commented on the collaborative methods of his company:

The first step we take as an Aboriginal designer and multimedia production agency is to look at the design brief and see how it places in our construction formats for design for our client and our communities. Our design works traverse location, national and sometimes international marketplaces and it’s important to keep the culturally integrity of our design works intact. We always ask our clients who the design elements are being constructed for? We use a contemporary, more modern Indigenous design approach. We don’t overload our designs with dots. That’s a more Central and Western Desert style of art or design, which is something the marketplace nationally and internationally has depicted as Indigenous. It’s not really true representation to the diversity of the art practice of our cultures, it’s something that some have chosen to follow because that is what the marketplace has demanded.
Many designers and artists have followed that approach with dot paintings and I believe that it is a misrepresentation of identity. To be a great designer you need to be true to yourself, but more importantly, true to your culture. It’s very important.

If our clients’ target audience is more regionally based, we design elements in consultation with people inherently from that region. These are for the most elders but sometimes artists from that region are brought into the fold. Sometimes I give them a brief, other times I use one of their existing artworks and adapt it, or an element of that work, into a concept design for the client.

Being based in far north Queensland I find myself working a lot with Torres Strait communities. I never touch Torres Strait cultural elements. I always consult with, or co-create with local artists on those projects because their culture and stories are so different to mine. I use this approach when I work on regional projects, but when I work on communication design projects for national campaigns or branding, it is different and I don’t use that regional method. When you work on a local level, it is easier to get those elements right because the elders sign off on the project. Projects that require a broad statement of representation are more difficult. One thing I tell my clients is that I will not produce a red, black and yellow design, nor will I use dots or x-ray art. I tend to take more of a contemporary or mainstream approach on nationally focused design projects (L. Harris [Kanolu], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

The interview comments above note a growing number of Indigenous design companies working directly with corporate and government clients. It was stated that some Indigenous design companies already consult and co-creating with mainstream design and branding companies and some act to represent selected Indigenous artists. It was stated that although most Indigenous design companies understand the diversity of culture and associated protocol issues they also have a need for guidelines, especially when working on Indigenous projects outside of their own country. Some statements also argued that Indigenous design companies should stand as preferred suppliers for government projects involving Indigenous representation. This point was expanded to suggest that an Indigenous design company or a mainstream design company who has engaged an Indigenous design company as a consultant or co-creator should undertake all projects involving design projects involving Indigenous representation.
12. Wellness: Many of the interviews expressed the belief that there would be a positive impact on general health through an elevated profile and respectful representation of Indigenous culture. Personal and collective pride and elevated self-esteem were identified as potential by-products of elevated visibility and respectful cultural representation:

> Everyone welcomes being recognised, particularly when you’re recognised as part a broader society that may have not appreciated you and your values in a particularly sophisticated way in the past. I can certainly imagine that there would be great health benefits to Indigenous people. One would expect that respectful and visible representation would have a positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals and communities (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

I look at the benefit for the Aboriginal communities, I think design can be a form of storytelling and that’s a very important part of our culture. We transfer traditional knowledge and law from generation to generation through stories. It is really important to ensure that there are protocols that maintain cultural integrity and I think there would be great benefits if they were introduced to Aboriginal communities. In a commercial sense, if we had design firms adhering to this standard there would be a flow back of commercial and economic benefit to Indigenous communities as well (N. Walker [Kuku–Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Visibility and positive representation can have a dramatic effect on the health of Aboriginal people. Self-respect leads to self-worth, self-image is important. We have done some work in health and hospitals and have found that design/architecture plays an important role in the wellbeing of patients and in helping their recovery (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are actually seeing Indigenous faces buying cars or purchasing and using Taubmans paint or whatever, it is actually showing that Indigenous people are the same as anybody else. They have jobs, they have families, they live in houses, they buy cars instead of coming from remote communities, sniffing petrol or imprisoned. Positive representation can go a long way to improving the confidence and self-esteem of individuals and communities. I think there needs to be a concerted effort by designers not to stereotype (Anonymous [Indigenous Australian], personal communication, February 21, 2013).

There are definitely potential health benefits from a more positive representation of Indigenous culture. Way too many Aboriginal people formulate their identity in an incredibly
negative way. A lot of it comes from being disadvantaged, impoverished, dispossessed, and dislocated. Positive representation is very important. I think if Aboriginal people were actually represented as part of the mainstream and that their contributions were welcomed, acknowledged and sought after, then that would have a huge impact on improved health. It’s about belonging. It’s about self-esteem (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

I look at something like the Sapphires movie, which is a very positive story but it’s just imitating viewer’s culture. There’s nothing that seems particularly Indigenous or Aboriginal or Australian about it. It does have an aspirational narrative of empowerment and creative content but it does not reflect any sense of Indigeneity. I guess it’s up to Indigenous people how they track its authenticity and positivity value (K Murray, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

A benefit to Indigenous wellness through appropriate, authentic representation was asserted by those interviewed. It was suggested that highly visible and respectful cultural representation in media and advertising would build self-esteem within the Indigenous population. The health benefit of highly visible, positive role models was highlighted by those interviewed. Some identified the opportunities for personal growth generated through community development and design industry mentorship.

13. Indigenous Knowledge: Access to traditional ways of knowing was a theme, which evoked opinions and thoughts surrounding issues of shared culture, Indigenous control and the balance between traditional history and the contemporary expressions of an evolving culture. The following testimonial talk about the importance of context and how Indigenous knowledge is embedded in the representation of visual culture:

*Design is really just a different language to tell a story. I would argue that if you’re not telling a story in your design, then it is not a good design. It may have an Aboriginal aesthetic but it will lack cultural integrity if is without a story? There are stories that relate to our cultural values, there are stories about the importance of family and the extended family. There are stories about the land and how to treat the river like it’s your grandmother. There are stories about being kind to one another. The stories are all about Aboriginal cultural values and how to live. As an Aboriginal woman living in a contemporary world I have design as my language. I’m not a dancer. I’m not a visual artist. I am a designer. This means that I can continue the practice or transfer cultural knowledge onto young people using the language of design. I take on that responsibility to make sure that the stories have integrity*
and are appropriate. I think integrity is probably the starting point in determining whether something is appropriate or not. Then it’s about understanding the story and asking yourself where does it belong and who does it belong to? (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

The following comments suggest that all designers, architects and urban planners would benefit from traditional Indigenous knowledge and expertise, which extends to sustainability and land conservation:

The conservation story of the Aborigines can be used to show us how to manage land and conserve energy, the way they’ve done for 75,000 years (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant], personal communication, March 14, 2013).

We have a lot to learn from the diversity of all groups, especially in the area of land and sea management, sustainability. We need to learn from the past, save more historical sites and respect Aboriginal history (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Lynette Russell expresses a sense of confusion about the term ‘Indigenous knowledge’, which can often be experienced by Aboriginal descendants of mixed heritage:

I’m not totally sure I understand what the term Indigenous knowledge means. I think it’s a profoundly problematic concept. I could spend all day trying to deconstruct the notion of Indigenous knowledge. If it’s a kind of epistemology, it’s a sort of Indigenous understandings of the world, then I don’t necessarily have Indigenous understandings of the world. I mean I was raised in the Western society. I just think it’s too easily exercised and it’s too easily made an object of some kind of veneration when I’m not entirely sure I understand what it means (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).

Justin Mansfield express his thoughts about a need to see more contemporary expressions Indigenous culture:

We need to stop considering Indigenous cultures as if they are embedded and frozen in some sort of absinthe. We continue to represent the same images and stories and traditions, which fails to recognise that their cultures are living breathing organisms, and they will always be subject to change and development as with any culture. There are many ways that Indigenous cultural expression has grown in recent years. One of the most prominent examples would be the dot painting that begun in the Western Desert, which is now perceived to be a very high art expression of Indigenous culture and Indigenous story telling but in reality this is a very
recent invention. Cuisine is another emerging example. Indigenous restaurants springing up here and there are a couple in Melbourne that I’m aware of. Chefs are a creative people and to have Indigenous people produce food with Indigenous ingredients is very interesting. It is a thoroughly modern and highly creative cross-cultural expression of Australia’s evolving national identity (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

Vicki Couzens questions people’s want to understand meanings, origins and expressions:

'It’s a fine line between the appeal of an aesthetic and the need to understand what designs or markings mean and that they actually belong to people. For example, do people know he meaning behind the paisley patterns from India? Paisley is an example of a cultural design that went global through fashion in the 70s. It is one of those iconic designs that have become homogenised. It is an example of how Indigenous designs and symbols can become normalised in a way that people don’t think about the cultural origins, their stories or the people behind the motifs (V. Couzens [Gunditjmara], personal communication, February 19, 2013).

The lack of undemanding and subsequent misuse of Indigenous design by non-Indigenous designers in Australia was alluded to by Kevin Murray, who commented that in New Zealand the Pakeha (non-Maori) are starting to embrace a connection to land through Maori culture. He added that New Zealand is well ahead of Australia in regard to the issue of shared knowledge and culture:

In New Zealand, there is a strong Pakeha feeling of connection to land that can be articulated and accepted and such. The non-Indigenous are starting to make a connection with the land, but through Maori culture. Part of the issue is learning from and being open to the influence of Indigenous culture without being seen to appropriate that culture. That’s a tricky one for Australia; we have not really worked on that yet. I don’t think we are ready at the moment but this is what we should be aiming for. We are a long way away from touching Indigenous culture but this where it can be quite useful. It gives people a pathway to feelings that they can engage with. It then helps us to become aware of what some of the issues are (K. Murray, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Comments suggest that sharing of Indigenous knowledge could help to build an authentic Australian identity. Processes and facilitation of knowledge sharing was seen as an important way to enable non-Indigenous designers to represent Indigenous culture appropriately through consultation and co-creation. It was stated that design could be used to reinforce
community values and to transfer some aspects of Indigenous knowledge. It was also pointed out that design already being used to keep Indigenous languages alive. The role of design to help Indigenous culture evolve and remain relevant was also repeatedly mentioned. As with land care and sustainability, it was suggested that the design profession could play an important role in appropriate cross-cultural knowledge exchange.

14. Land and Country: The interview process highlighted a connection to land represented in all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Australia. The diversity in both land and cultures reinforced the need for education and guidance for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous designers practising in this area:

When something is plotted up on a wall with no thought of the dreaming of the people of that area, then it’s going to be a bit off; it’s not going to hit the mark. You’ve got to get into the headspace of the people of the area before you can depict them or design around them or for them. For example, the creation stories vary from place to place. In Western Australia, the creator is the Rainbow Serpent. Here in Western and Central Victoria. it’s Bunjil the eagle. Down in Eastern Victoria/Gippsland, the creator is Booran the Pelican. I think this applies universally. I mean it wouldn’t matter whether you’re working with Inuit or Aborigine. I think that they all bring something to the table and unless you can have empathy to their style, their culture and their homeland environment, then how can you represent it? We tend to lump cultures into language groups, states or cities but Aboriginality doesn’t always work that way. It’s usually defined by natural barriers of mountains or rivers or changing country. Here in Victoria, some lived on the volcanic flats of the Western district, others along the rivers from the Great Dividing range, others lived and hunted up in the foothills of central Victoria and the mountains in the North-East, and over the mountains into the tall rain-forests of East Gippsland. It was horses for courses, depending on which area you lived in and which group you dealt with. The range of the Wathaurong people from near Geelong extended up past Ballarat so you had coastal influences and mountain legends within one ethnic group. But Indigenous people celebrated their differences. River people like the Yorta Yorta were totally different in their visual approach to other groups from the coast or the mountains or the plans. Colour is also very important. It is one thing that defines place in Aboriginal art. If you want something that’s evocative of that country, then you need to get those colours right. It’s not just selecting a PMS that’s reasonably close. Traditional artists mixed their colours from local ochre clays which came directly from their county. The colour diversity is amazing. The central desert has that red bull-dust soil, and then when you get up north to Arnhem Land it’s bright orange. Colour makes a direct visual connection to the land and the local people (J. Pratt [Jaara descendant], personal communication, March 14, 2013).
Place and land is very much bound into traditional identity. It’s a huge part of Aboriginal culture. On the other hand we have to be careful not to over-generalise or romanticise because you now see a lot of the younger generation becoming detached from traditional culture and getting very influenced by American culture in particular, clothing, music, and there’s a shift away from the traditional aspect of land and place. But I still think it’s very much embedded within the culture; particularly if we look at identity that is localised. If it’s a localised project, then you still tend to look at the landscape, the language and the cultural traditions for that particular group and the local geographic area. Then you ask: What within that can we use, whether it’s the natural cycles of the land, the stories that are attributed to certain places? Language group, community and place are the usual areas of inspiration. On the other hand if we’re talking about Aboriginal culture in general and we are targeting an international audience then it probably would be less reliant on specific places. I think land would probably be broadly understood and appropriate, but a specific place may not be (K. Finn, personal communication, January 23, 2013).

David Lancashire also comments on the use of colour as a visual communication method to connect people with the land:

*If Australian designers embrace the colour of the country, then it would be a different place. The visual graphics would be different. Even if we actually look at how strange and unique this country is and how it’s been put together. We also need to get a grasp on how ancient it is. John Olsen made this connection with Lake Eyre, you can see it in his painting. That to me represents the right approach to creating colour palettes and textures for this country. In my opinion this approach should be driving architecture and graphic design in this country, and with that there has to be with an Indigenous connection* (D. N. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Lynette Russell talks about her dual connection to place:

*I live in Melbourne, I was born in Melbourne, my parents and grandparents live and were in born in Melbourne but my country is actually out in the Western Victoria. I get to go there occasionally, but not very often. It plays a very important role in how I think of my Aboriginal heritage, but for me, it’s actually the country where I have lived that is my dream country. I think it is a consistent thing right across the country, people’s relationship to place is a foundational aspect of how they construct their identity* (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).
Alison Page pointed out the importance of place to any Indigenous referenced design:

*I would never use anything that was specific to a place if I was designing a broad statement about Aboriginal Australia. On the opposite end of the scale, if my client were the Dugong Beach Resort on Groote Island, then it would be remiss of me not to ground the design in that place. I think a design can be specific to an actual place because the Aboriginal connection to country is really deep. I also think it is important to tap the human connection into planet earth. I think design can be both. You can talk about freshwater people, you can talk about desert people and that becomes an Aboriginal thing. Or you can talk about how the river is your grandmother, which makes a general connection that could apply to anyone in the world. Wouldn’t it be great if everyone in the world treated their river like it’s their grandmother? I wish they did* (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

David Williams explains that specificity of place is more difficult to represent when making a national Indigenous statement:

*The challenge for us as designers is when we are asked to make a broader statement about Aboriginal Australia. For example if you’re creating a brand for a national organisation, it’s obviously more important to make a broader and inclusive representation of Aboriginal Australia rather than one that focuses on a region or locality. A broader representation is less likely to make a connection to land* (D. Williams [Wakka Wakka], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

These statements affirm then need for designers to respect and understand cultural sensibilities. The comments relating to land and country further reinforce the need for professional guidance. The comments have significance in terms of the appropriate use of Indigenous visual culture in Australian communication design because they highlight the need for designers to respectfully identify cultural linkages and reference points. Indigenous connection to land and country was recurring theme of those interviewed. The connection to the land was regarded as a highly important consideration for regional representation. By contrast some comments suggested that specific association to land (creating colour pallets, referencing topography vegetation and landmarks) could be more challenging for designers when asked to make broader statements of national representation. One interviewee referred to a dual connection between the land where one lives and the land where one is from.
15. Strategic: Many of those interviewed commented that applied knowledge in the area of appropriate cultural representation of Indigenous Australians could provide a strategic advantage to business. The processes and methods used by designers and their clients have the potential to enhance authenticity and appeal of their business. This commercial consideration would run parallel with corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. Elizabeth Gersakis made a statement that called for a maturation of practice methods and for designer practitioners to understand their responsibilities and act accordingly:

If you have 10 or 15 years of professional practice, you can’t pretend ignorance anymore. You either engage fully and properly, or you don’t engage at all (E. Gersakis, personal communication, February 4, 2013).

Mason Atkinson commented on how appropriate cultural methodologies can help design businesses to improve and to innovate:

To me, it depends on how interested the design community is in engaging with Aboriginal culture, using it and bringing Indigenous design into their day-to-day work. I actually think they would be interested because it is another way for those businesses to improve and to innovate. My knowledge of the design industry suggests that it is all about innovation and the continuous evolution of their practices and the way they do things. It’s just one of those things that will vary from business to business but you would think that industry would be fairly willing to embracing it (M. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 12, 2013).

Ken Cato expressed an opinion suggesting that the invisibility of Australian Indigenous culture has impeded Australia’s search for a unique and authentic identity:

If you’re a designer, the one thing you’re chasing is something different, and yet we ignore thousands of years of history because we feel we’ve got to fit in, while at the same time pretend to stand out. If you think about it, Australia could have adopted elements of Aboriginality that maybe would’ve seen Australian design have a personality on a world stage. I don’t think Australian design actually does have that stronger recognition factor, you know, for example, we recognise Swiss design but we don’t recognise Australian design (K. Cato, personal communication, March 12, 2013).
Richard Henderson commented on the intrinsic value of referencing Indigenous culture when working on national and regional place-branding projects:

*I think Indigenous culture ads authenticity to what you’re creating particularly, place-making, which is all about origin branding. Sometimes you need to go to an authentic source* (R. Henderson, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Ross Moriarty supports the need for design practice guidelines to help facilitate the appropriate and ethical sharing culture and knowledge:

*Cultural education and guidance would provide strategic opportunities for non-Indigenous companies. They would start to feel that there is a pathway where they can access some of this imagery and knowledge in a good way, and therefore create work that’s more uniquely Australian* (R. Moriarty 2013, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Justin Mansfield suggests that business would support working within Indigenous design guidelines. He points out that such a protocol charter would be respected within the context of existing corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies:

*Purely talking from a business point of view, it’s increasingly common for companies to have established CSR policies. These policies aim to help companies, particularly in manufacturing and mining sectors to strive to operate in an ethical way in areas such as corporate procurement or to have a very strongly developed environmental policy. For instance, I think the issue of appropriate representation of Indigenous culture would fit quite neatly within those types of policies* (J. Mansfield, personal communication, February 5, 2013).

Jonathan Wallace from Alter Design studio expressed support for increased practice base research and the establishment of guideline or protocols to help facilitate the process. He also warns that such research would add to the cost of the project. This suggests that both designers and their clients would need to be educated and convinced of the benefits to them, those whom they are representing and to society as a whole:

*I believe a lot of design companies would be happy to work on projects where, as part of the requirements, they would be given the time to conduct research and report on findings. Designers love doing things properly. Unfortunately, research is one of the areas that tends to get cut for budget, commercial and timing reasons* (J. Wallace, personal communication, March 7, 2013).
Cato also expressed concern regarding clients’ willingness to support a cost increase brought about by additional culturally based research:

_The problem is that clients will not pay for the extra research and consultation required to do this properly. That’s the reality_ (K. Cato, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Wallace added that a professional protocol charter or guide would help designers understand the issues, which would give them confidence to convince clients of the need for a culturally respectful methodology:

_I wouldn’t know where to begin, but it would help if there was some kind of roadmap. It would give designers some confidence when presenting to clients that they have employed an appropriate method of dealing with this issue. I think a lot of people, if given the opportunity, would be reasonably respectful but also that this issue is bigger than design. It’s a broader issue within Australian culture. It’s something that we tend to be a little bit ignorant of or apathetic about. That might be because of location, such as being Melbourne based. A Melbourne designer has a significantly different kind of engagement with Indigenous culture than a designer in top end of Queensland or the Northern Territory. I think if you look at the way countries like New Zealand represent themselves, there is a much greater sense of integration and a more contemporary Indigenous culture, which is intertwined with the mainstream. There is real pride that comes out of this, at least from a consumer’s perspective; that’s the sense I get. Australia wants to put itself on the map but is being hamstrung by the way it expresses itself. Combining contemporary location branding with traditional Indigenous knowledge is the real Australian to me, but it would be good to have a roadmap of how to achieve a result ethically and respectfully. A designer cannot expect to become an expert in this area without committing a great deal of time to it; but a guide would be a very useful place to begin_ (J. Wallace, personal communication, March 7, 2013).

Pritchard also identifies the need for designers and their clients to be educated on the need to invest in culturally based research incorporating appropriate engagement representation protocols:

_Design businesses need to adopt better cultural engagement practices because it shows that they have integrity and I think that’s very important in this realm. Companies need to understand that it’s not always the quickest path that gets the best result. They have to factor this in but I also understand that they don’t always have the time or the budget. It does take time and you’ve got to have patience because you might have to speak to a number of people and you might have to wait a while for a response. You also have to be willing to listen to that response and not assume you’re just going to show something that they expect will be_
approved, because it may not. I think one of the hardest things for a designer working in this field is that as designers we like to have control. Working with community can be frustrating for some. For example, you may have a vision that is aesthetically heading in a certain direction but it is rejected. You’ve got to learn to take on board a much wider variety of opinions and aesthetic values. That can be hard sometimes because there are reasons for a design point of view and the design process behind what you feel might be a better result and provide a better way to communicate and reach the audience. Designers have to realise that the community carries more weight than they do because it is their cultural heritage. So, that can sometimes be difficult for designers to navigate. Designers also have to realise that it’s no longer just about non-Indigenous and Indigenous. This is contemporary design discussion; it is important because there still remains a cliché view of what Aboriginal imagery is. We can’t continue to operate as we did a hundred years ago. Aboriginal visual culture is changing and it’s fluid and dynamic. It is very much a living culture, one that is evolving all the time. It is the designer’s responsibility to understand and reflect that, especially if we want to engage with a contemporary audience (J. Pritchard, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Some interviewees identified other obstacles, which included the anxiety experienced by some designers who tended to avoid Indigenous representation through the fear of offending. Most of those interviewed suggested that guidelines would help to allay designers’ fears by assisting them to facilitate ethical and respectful professional and cultural engagement. Laura Cornhill of Studio Binocular commented on designers’ trepidation:

_We have done some work for government, which involved an element of traditional acknowledgement but in those cases we have always been guided by the client who had their own policies on community consultation and permissions. We don’t tend to work in the area much. I think it’s because of a fear that we might do the wrong thing or offend someone. I think that fear of doing something inappropriate probably stops a lot of designers from representing Indigenous culture in their work. It would be great if there was some sort of guideline around that provided designers with a framework of how to work in this area. I think it would be helpful and would help designers get over that first barrier. Yeah, not knowing is a barrier and when you don’t want to do the wrong thing it is seems safer to do nothing. I think most people want to do the right thing but just don’t know how to go about it_ (L. Cornhill, personal communication, February 6, 2013).
Kimberly Moulton agrees with Cornhill’s comments relating to cultural avoidance:

*I think there is a lot of trepidation when learning or talking to people about Aboriginal history. People are sometimes scared to ask those questions because they don’t want to offend the whole PC thing. To be educated and to have guidelines which explain how I should talk to the community about what is and what is what is not appropriate, like the fact that we didn’t have dots in Victoria. To have some kind of design guideline would be very helpful and I think it could potentially cross over into other industries* (K. Moulton [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Di Lancashire made a significant statement in the context of this research when she argued that Indigenous content should be considered in every design project:

*As a design company we have always felt it’s our responsibility to put it to the client on every project that there should be some consideration of the Indigenous history or viewpoint. I think that’s what all designers should do* (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

Fran Edmonds highlights issues that relate to the acquisition and application of existing Aboriginal imagery in design practice. Although the creator may have been paid for the artwork, the context of its use may not have been clarified. Edmonds implies that this approach is tokenistic and insensitive:

*One of the biggest issues with people who are non-Indigenous graphic designers, especially people who might be just turning out any reports or fliers for an organisation, is that they have some sort of mindset that if you just get a particular Indigenous image, then that’s okay. So they’ve got an annual report, which might have a section that is dealing with Aboriginal youth for example then they’ll just get a random picture. There won’t be any provenance of that picture, where it comes from, who did it or the area that it’s from. And they just put it out there and expect that it is automatically identified as Indigenous, without actually respecting that it’s connected to a particular community or it’s somebody’s intellectual property. It still happens; it happens here in Victoria. It happens in so many places and it’s really hard to change those mindsets because they’re so engrained. I think for non-Indigenous designers, consultation should be behind anything they produce. This is probably the major issue that they really have to consider and it goes back to making sure that you talk to as many people as possible and get permissions. It’s not always just the permission of the person that created the artwork but sometimes it’s also about getting the permission of the community and the elders as well* (F. Edmonds, personal communication, January 22, 2013).
Natalie Waker also agrees with the need to connect the past with the present:

*What is contemporary today will be traditional tomorrow. We’ve got to let culture evolve. We should not represent us as one moment in time. Art and design should evolve with us. It should be traditional and contemporary* (N. Walker [Kuku–Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Marcus Lee’s sentiment responds directly to the primary research question. Lee emphasises the need for protocols and guidelines to help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communication designers working in the field of cultural representation. His comments reinforce the diversity that exists across Australian Aboriginal communities and that simply being an Indigenous designer does not provide you access to all Aboriginal cultures:

*I think guidelines to help both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers navigate this area, is the only appropriate way to go. Why would you go through that whole process in isolation and assume that you would have the acceptance of it. I’ve been involved in situations where I have presented what I thought to be appropriate contemporary Indigenous solution but even having an Aboriginal heritage I could still get it wrong. So I think it’s still important to go through that process with the Indigenous elders involved. I have to respect their opinions and at the same time subjective nature of design. What I might see as being appropriate is my understanding and may not be another person’s view. You still got to try to find the balance even though you may be disagreeing with someone else’s subjective opinion. Coming up with a right design solution requires you to work hard to find a balance rather than focusing entirely to what you think is right, you can’t ignore the situation, you need to respect and understand it* (M. Lee [Karajarri descendant], personal communication, January 23, 2013).

Mimmo Cozzolino commented on the need to respect cultural diversity within Indigenous Australia. He identifies the importance of a consultation process to respect and accommodate diverse sensibilities:

*There are many different cultural facets to Aboriginal culture. We can’t just view Aboriginal culture under one kind of umbrella; particularly give that there are up to 700 language groups. There are unique considerations but in some ways I think design companies can approach this like a normal identity project. Designers and their clients need to decide if they want to be involved or not. If they want to work on community-based projects, then they simply need to involve the community. When we worked on public utility or local government projects, we suggested to our client that we would like to run two or three public forums*
where we could explain how a corporate identity works. During these meetings, we would open the floor to questions. This was probably the liveliest part of the evening. This process wasn’t particularly a thing that we invented. Focus groups are not new, and I think a lot of design and branding companies are doing that sort of consultation, particularly on government projects. Perhaps there is potential for this model to be modified for Indigenous consultation. I just think listening, learning and keeping an open mind are important elements of any respectful professional design practice (M. Cozzolino, 2013, personal communication, January 24, 2013).

Patricia Adjei’s comments reinforced the need for Indigenous design guidelines and suggested that they could be used for strategic advantage for some companies. Adjei implied that such a policy document would be compatible with existing corporate Reconciliation Acton Plans. She provided Qantas as an example:

*I definitely think there could be a strategic advantage for designers and their clients if they had access to protocols or practice guidelines for Indigenous representation. I know a lot of corporates that have reconciliation action plans, such as Qantas, who positively engage with communities to help increase public awareness of Indigenous issues. That sort of awareness, understanding and visibility of Indigenous culture should also be a strategic consideration for businesses and government. You know, whenever we have tourists come to Australia, they always want to see the uniqueness of Australia, which includes the landscape, wildlife, but also our Indigenous culture* (P. Adjei [Torres Strait Islander], personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Colin McKinnon-Dodd reinforces Adjei’s point. Both Indigenous design stakeholders see the potential for more Indigenous referenced corporate use. That is provided the creative process is undertaken ethically and the designs applied appropriately. Their comments further reinforce the need for a professional design policy:

*Indigenous knowledge can be used strategically by business and government. For instance, I just don’t understand why the Australian Tourism Commission don’t promote Australia as the home of the world’s oldest living culture. That in itself is a statement no one else can make. We’re looking for an angle; it’s right there under our nose* (C. McKinnon-Dodd [Yamatji], personal communication, March 5, 2013).

Dillon Kombumerri suggested that cultural representation is a multidisciplinary design issue:

*We should be discussing design as a fluid process. It would be better to talk generally about design rather than focusing on a specific discipline* (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).
Dean Parkin, an Indigenous consultant and facilitator with Second Road made a comment about communication design specifically and the need to respect a different way of seeing:

> Generally I think the people involved in communication design have a more intuitive sense that there is a different way of looking at Indigenous communication, even more so than policy practitioners. There’s an intuitive understanding that Indigenous people communicate in a different way and therefore the various mediums and forms of communication design offer different approaches to transmitting, translating and articulating a message. I generally think that it’s better (D. Parkin [Quandamoka], personal communication, March 5, 2013).

The statements suggest that Indigenous knowledge considerations should be both respectful and strategic. Interviewees pointed out the value of cultural understanding when attempting to create authentic graphical representations of national identity. It was highlighted that Indigenous design businesses that consult or co-create with Indigenous design companies have a strategic advantage in obtaining work from both government and corporate clients. A strategic benefit for communities looking to retain their languages and visual culture was also mentioned. It was suggested that respectful Indigenous design practice fits well with CSR policy and could provide a strategic benefit to branding agencies working on place identification projects and in search of a unique cultural reference point in a globalised world. Some comments suggested that strategic benefit could be achieved by design practices that position themselves as specialists in the area of ethical practice and respectful cultural representation.

16. Industry Practice Standards: As evident in the preceding testimonials, those interviewed have confirmed the need to establish a professional conduct charter or code of ethics supported by protocols and guidelines to help design practitioners appropriately represent Indigenous culture in both commercial and non-commercial contexts. The following comments further reinforce this professional requirement.

Elizabeth Gersakis, former Senior Curator of the National Philatelic Design Collection at Australia Post spoke about the need for a brief, succinct code of ethics:

> I think about ethics all the time. I think most of us do and we often confuse personal ethics with social ethics. Sometime they’re one and the same but sometimes they’re not. I think there is a need for protocols in this area but it could simply take the form of a code of ethics document with some key supporting protocols. Australia Post is a massive organisation but their code of ethics booklet was not huge (E. Gersakis, personal communication, February 4, 2013).
Dillon Kombumerri, Aboriginal Architect for the NSW Government spoke of the need for design practice guidelines for Indigenous knowledge. Kombumerri’s comments speak to the primary question of this research:

*The representation of Aboriginal Australian culture in design practice needs to be improved and design practitioners need guidance. There is a real need for protocols and guidance to inform designers about Indigenous culture. There appears to be a desire to do the right thing but the knowing is not there. Desire yes, knowing no. Guidelines for appropriate engagement would be of a great help for designers* (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Richard Henderson supported the suggestions of guidelines and the acceptance of cross-cultural collaboration by designers:

*It is needed, it’s part of the deal, and it’s part of the improvement. You’ve got to do this and I think the design community would celebrate it because I think they would be introduced to a bigger story. Designers, by and large, are egalitarian and collaborative by nature* (R. Henderson, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Clive Atkinson adds comment about the need of guidelines to help contextualise imagery with community and place:

*Guidelines explaining what you can do and what you cannot do with Aboriginal imagery would help a lot because Aboriginal imagery is not just painting pretty pictures. It always has a meaning, a reason and a story behind it. The most common appropriation or plagiarism that occurs is when non-Indigenous people use symbols out of context. They do so without any cultural knowledge for what they’re doing. They disrespectfully use symbols and imagery which are not relevant to the area or community. This happens quite a lot* (C. Atkinson [Yorta Yorta], personal communication, February 20, 2013).

Cato provocatively points out common perceptions of incongruity relating to cultural access rights. He does so to emphasise the need to educate designers and their clients of the unique sensibilities surrounding the representation of Indigenous culture. Referencing Indigenous culture cannot be put into a Western context. Cato points out that these sensitivities and hardships must to be acknowledged. An appreciation of what has already been taken from Aboriginal people in Australia needs to be appreciated and understood by those wishing to reference their visual culture:
Practice guidelines would help educate designers and their clients on how to gain knowledge, Indigenous knowledge, but if there is a set of protocols, who makes the rules, and what happens if you break the rules? It would be also good to know who are the practising artists and designers to tap into. I’m being a bit provocative here but what if you look at this in reverse and Aboriginal designers started making Western style illustrations that really weren’t within their own culture? Is there a protocol for that? As I said I’m being provocative but I guess the issue here is more about acknowledging the sensitivities and hardships experienced by Indigenous people and the damage inflicted on their culture by colonisation.

It is really about responsible practice. Having said that I must say that I don’t know when designers haven’t borrowed from other cultures and I don’t know when designers haven’t borrowed from artists. When you look at designers in general, they steal from everywhere; all sorts of things influence us, either consciously or subconsciously. I sometimes joking say that if designers need borrow then they need to borrow carefully. But seriously, copyright and IP ownership is always a sticking point regardless of it being a cultural project. Designers need to demonstrate due diligence and be aware that permissions can be complicated and the associated time and cost has turned many designers away in the past (K. Cato, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Alison Page supports the need for Indigenous design guidelines and warns of the danger of over-regulation. Her comments talk to additional research question (3), What tools are required (industry protocols, professional charter/practice policy):

Regulation can have an adverse effect sometimes. I think that’s why we haven’t seen a lot of Aboriginal design in the past because the Aboriginal art area is a very heavily regulated environment. I don’t think we see it a lot because unfortunately manufacturers place Aboriginal art/design reproduction in the too hard basket. That’s why we as an Aboriginal design agency we have an opportunity to address this because we’ve been able to facilitate something that has ultimate integrity, authenticity, but most importantly we’ve streamlined the process and made it a much easier (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

Ros Moriarty agrees with Page regarding the danger of over-regulation. She talks about their approach and highlights the amount of detail required to execute it appropriately. Moriarty expresses concern that such an industry policy can be created that still enables designers to operate:

We have worked with a group of remote artists since 1995. We work very closely with those providers of Indigenous material and we have developed very strong guidelines around the use of that intellectual property for our clients. We developed these guidelines in conjunction
with John’s [John Moriarty] community and with other Indigenous practitioners all around the place. There a lot of one-to-one contact and facilitation required of those projects. Clients must be made aware that protocols need to be observed. I think industry would be happy to see this issue addressed in a way that they can still operate. Hopefully the days are gone when people create designs based on something they saw and then think they can just go with it (R. Moriarty 2013, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

I think most business are trying to do the right thing in all areas, environment, sustainability and cultural relations. Appropriate cultural representation guidelines for designers would be another area of best practice. It would work like the Indigenous code of conduct (Indigenous Art Code) for Art Galleries (M. Clarke [Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung, Yorta Yorta], personal communication, March 31, 2013).

I strongly believe that if a client has a project, which involves Indigenous content then they should use an Indigenous design company whether it be Gilimbaa, Alison Page’s company or myself, or one of the many are others. If they decide to use a non-Indigenous company, then they should insist that the company engage with an Indigenous representative or design company as a consultant. It is crucially important that governments and corporates either use Indigenous design companies or consultants for related design work. Companies should build this into their reconciliation action plan, code of ethics and governance policies. I also think professional design organisations have a responsibility as well. There should be an Indigenous design chapter of both the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) and the Design Institute of Australia (DIA). My personal responsibility is to uphold the challenge of taking Indigenous design forward in honour of designers like Clive Atkinson and John Moriarty who blazed the trail (L. Harris [Kanolu], personal communication, February 6, 2013).

These statements confirm the need for industry practice standards and are affirmed in assumptions embedded in the primary research question of this dissertation. It was pointed out by those interviewed that the design industry needs guidance with Indigenous representation. It was also suggested that Indigenous design protocols and guidelines would be of benefit to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers.

It was stated that such protocols and guidelines should become part of the designer’s tool kit. It was also suggested that practice guidelines include a code of ethics. Interviewees also indicated that a policy document of this kind would assist designers in explaining the issue to their clients.
17. Reconciliation: Many of those interviewed made reference to the need to acknowledge Indigenous history and the sharing of knowledge and culture as integral to achieving meaningful and sustainable reconciliation. Many commented that appropriate and respectful representation of Indigenous culture was a crucial step in the process. Richard Henderson commented on the benefits of incorporating pre-colonial history into the broader Australian psyche. His comment is in response to the claim that Australia is the home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures:

*Immigrants came here to find new pathways, new ways of living but we’ve always had this feeling of never been quite ourselves. Recognising our full history means we are now part of the biggest story. I think it’s a great story* (R. Henderson, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Richard Henderson also raised an obstacle that has hindered his culturally inspired work in the past. His comment reflects a politically motivated divide that exists in some Indigenous and non-Indigenous sectors:

*I think reconciliation is the right word but I only see reconciliation if both sides reconcile and not just one ... people who are ambassadors for their culture are often quite radical in pushing a certain opinions. It’s not easy sometimes to have a new way. I think that’s probably why as a designer I have stepped back a bit in the past* (R. Henderson, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Jonathan Wallace highlights nation-branding issues that are interconnected with Indigenous representation:

*Reconciliation, the republic, constitution recognition and the need for ethical and appropriate representation of Indigenous people are all intertwined* (J. Wallace, personal communication, March 7, 2013).

Lynette Russell questions broader community interest in the issue of constitutional recognition and appropriate representation of Indigenous people:

*I’m sure constitutional recognition of Indigenous people will change the way we represent ourselves as a nation but will it change the way Australians think of themselves? The section of society that I work with tends to be highly literate, highly educated and motivated and interested. They tend to be active in social justice, that’s what academics are like, but the question remains, is it going to change the attitude of my taxi driver who takes me to the airport? Probably not, I mean, I can remember very clearly after the national apology...*
catching a cab and the taxi driver ask me: ‘What do you do?’ I told him and he said something like: ‘Oh that’s right. We’re all supposed to get on now don’t we?’ These attitudes are real. I’m probably a little bit cynical but I think, even the concept of reconciliation only really appeals to educated middle class people rather than the working class or even migrant communities (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).

David Lancashire comments on his attempt to use shared cultural knowledge to make a statement of reconciliation. In doing so, he highlights the challenge of finding common, familiar ground when communicating across cultures:

Some designers know better than reverting to clichés. I mean there are designers that do nothing but clichés. I try to stay clear of clichés but I did use a kangaroo in the poster I designed for the 2000 Olympics. I used it because I wanted something that represented peace and reconciliation between black and white Australia. The ‘roo’ shape was influenced by different drawings of a kangaroos but it never copied any of them. Inspiration also came from my involvement over the years with Indigenous people who practiced rock art (D. N. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013)

The following comments represent opinions on design’s role in responding to government policy such as constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples, Aboriginal business leadership initiatives and the broader reconciliation discourse:

We want a more open view. Especially government clients I think are becoming better educated, on their process even before it gets to us. There need to be more education and cultural awareness to the sensitivities. For example, I’ve just finished doing some design work for Fair Work Australia, and it involved an Aboriginal cultural project. To my amazement they wanted to launch it on Australia Day. I had to point out that Aboriginal people do not particularly welcome the day. Indigenous people refer to Australia Day as Survival Day or Invasion Day. You know, given that Indigenous people were the first Australians and one of the oldest cultures in the world, it’s probably not the greatest day and to celebrate what is basically an English invasion. It’s the day that changed their culture forever. So I find that date a hard one. For myself being non-Indigenous, I’d love Indigenous people to embrace it, well but I understand why they don’t. So I just advise my clients that it’s not a day to be taking their product to the marketplace. The Fair Work Australia client appreciated the advice and completely understood why Australia Day was not a great day to launch an Indigenous event. The reconciliation process still has a way to go when the government and the media promote Australia Day as celebration for white, black, Muslim or whatever, but for
certain people that’s not the case. How do you get people to open their mind to that? It’s a difficult thing and it certainly has an impact on the design process and the way we represent the Australian identity (C. Small, personal communication, January 22, 2013).

What we do (Supply Nation) is certify that a business is majority Indigenous-owned, controlled and managed. That certification in itself holds a lot of currency. Cooperatives and governments are more likely to want to do business with those businesses that have certification compared to those who don’t. If there was a design that was shown to adhere to the guidelines relating to its development, its promotion and the distribution of profits, then I think people would find that to be quite ethical and a sound practice. They would be more willing to support that design company as opposed to other designers that didn’t follow a process of cultural integrity (N. Walker [Kuku–Yalanji], personal communication, March 12, 2013).

I hope constitutional recognition promotes better understanding and empathy and awareness. Australian history should reflect an Indigenous past, and even if it’s hard to talk about, it should be talked about. I mean, look at South Africa, and how Truth and Reconciliation Commissions brought out all sorts of horrible things that happened with Apartheid. But they talked about it and acknowledge it, that’s a way for a country to move forward. Constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples would add weight to Australian history, increase national pride and promote the potential for an authentic Australian culture (P. Adjei [Torres Strait Islander], personal communication, April 4, 2013).

I’m sure that many would regard protocols and ethical codes as being interference. There are many who are critical of over-regulation and claim that they would somehow be compromised by new standards. Introduction of ethical guidelines may also reflect badly on the things that they’ve done prior to when the code was introduced. They may also feel that guidelines would potentially limit their creative freedom. The hard thing is to get people to talk about this because the people you need to talk to don’t want to be part of it. Any proposed guidelines, codes or protocols would need to be presented as innovative. I think designers would be more supportive if guidelines were positioned in a way that was seen as a facilitating rather than instructing. I think people need to feel that following a guide will add value to what they are already doing. I think if it was presented this way then people would be part of it (K. Murray, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

These statements regarded the suggestion of practice-based guidelines as an action-based reconciliation policy. This is a significant point in terms of elevating awareness and
informing Australian communication designers of their national and social responsibility when working on projects involving Indigenous visual culture. Acknowledgement and appropriate representation of Indigenous people and their culture was emphasised by interviewees as an important step towards *reconciliation* and authenticating the Australian national identity. It was pointed out by those interviewed that effective *reconciliation* requires the sharing of culture and knowledge and a willingness to put political motives to one side. It was also stated that *reconciliation* requires the restructuring/authentication of Australian history to acknowledge Indigenous pre-colonial occupation.

18. Respect: Respect and trust were mentioned often in relation to the need to acknowledge the wrongs of the past but also to recognise both the pre- and post-colonial history of Australia. Understanding cultural diversity within Indigenous Australia was mentioned often. Cultural ownership, Indigenous-led and co-created design practice were also common themes. The general sentiment of those interviewed suggested the need for more visible representation of Indigenous culture within the broader Australian identity. A historical paradigm shift was a recurring point that highlighted the need for respectful representation:

> I’d really like to think that Australians would look at things differently if Aboriginal people were recognised as for a history longer than 220 years. At the moment we aren’t fully acknowledged. Many small steps had been taken. I don’t particularly feel that things are going to change, although constitutional recognition would be great. I do feel that things will change for the better but it will happen slowly. It’s about respect but things will only change through education, the media and through school textbooks being updated and no longer focusing solely on first contact and colonial Australia. To see things change in the constitution would be a fantastic thing but I don’t believe that it will impact greatly on generations of Australians that are no longer at school (J. Patten [Bundjalung–Yorta Yorta], personal communication, January 21, 2013).

Respecting place is very important. We must understand that we are all working in some one’s country. First and foremost the key considerations are place, community, cultural spirituality and context. I find it disappointing sometimes when I’m presenting an idea and people’s eyes glaze over when I start to talk about the spiritual and cultural context considerations in the design proposal. Unfortunately many non-Indigenous clients don’t take this seriously (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).
The fundamental premise is ‘respect’. If you come to the table with respectful attitude and willingness to listen, then you will find understanding and solutions. It’s simply respecting the other party. For example, if Toyota were talking to Kia, they would be respectful because they both think of each other as big shots. Maybe one thinks they are better than the other but they would show the utmost respect to each other in their dealings. Why then wouldn’t BHP Billiton show the same level of respect when talking to local Aboriginal communities? If they were truly respectful, then you would acknowledge that these people have knowledge, which is valuable. What they don’t understand is that lot of times it’s not just about money, sometimes there are human factors underpinning those negotiations, which might include traditional values, lifestyle and maintenance of their cultural identity. It’s no different from anywhere around the world, you know, it’s pretty simple. It all sits under that umbrella word respect; it’s a big word. Hopefully the day comes when Aboriginal culture and people are valued, acknowledged and recognised. We need to be understood and respected for the position we hold in this country. Hopefully one day everyone living here will understand what that means (V. Couzens [Gunditjmarra], personal communication, February 19, 2013).

Be respectful, work directly with the right people from the community. In particular the elders and key local representatives nominated from the community. Elders and community consultants should be paid for their consultation services. Be respectful and understand that elders may seem not to be contributing but they will. They may just have different methods, which need to be acknowledged and respected. A project that has not worked with elders should be considered a failed project (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

It comes back to respecting Aboriginal people for who they are what they offer too. Apart from knowledge and awareness there’s got to be respect. I don’t think it’s there at the moment. What I’m saying is that people are knocking off Aboriginal art without any knowledge of what they’re doing like putting them on wine labels like Yellow Tail to export overseas; it’s almost robbery, you know. At the moment I don’t think white Australian designers couldn’t care less to be honest. They just look out to themselves and that’s the same with architects, they are all trying to find a buck. It is a difficult process; it needs government backing, education and industry support. The DIA have got to start talking about this sort of thing and start doing something about it (B. Tucker, personal communication, April 6, 2013).

Those interviewed regarded ‘respect’ as the most important word in any discussion surrounding appropriate representation. Honouring cultural ownership was regarded as an imperative, as was need to acknowledge diversity across Indigenous cultures. A requirement of mandatory consultation and co-creation was also identified. Key commentary involved the need for Indigenous-led design processes involving the positive representation of Indigenous
people in the media and advertising. Encouraging a conceptual framework of Australia being the home of the world oldest continuous living culture was repeatedly mentioned within the context of respect.

19. Communicating: Interviewees commented on the need for a protocol/guideline document to assist designers to engage appropriately with Indigenous culture. It was also identified that such a document should carefully consider the use of language, tone and communication style. It was highlighted that, from a cultural and professional perspective, the demographic of the end-users would be diverse. The following comments mentioned the need for a protocol document to be written in a way that talks to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous designers and participatory stakeholders. These testimonials inform answers to additional research questions 4 and 5:

I would imagine that stakeholders would embrace such a guide because they generally need some assistance. If people had guidelines, it would really assist them and potentially help them to generate a path through what can otherwise be very difficult circumstances. We’ve worked in museums and other generally long-term projects. That’s probably quite different than a lot of other types of design projects but it would be great if the proposed guidelines could suggest that designers be under some obligation to inquire as to whether there is an Aboriginal connection every project they work on, regardless of its scope (D. E. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).

The risk with protocols and those sorts of things is that they often try and get too prescriptive. You can’t assume a protocol would flow from one community to another; they are all different. A guideline document should be framed with general principles of respect and the ways of being with people. It needs to be written in a way that can apply to any community and allows you to also pick up the specific local protocols as you go along (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

I think possibly guidelines could work but then again it such an organic process. White knowledge and black knowledge are two different things and somehow you got to try and put the two together. Guidelines might help depending on how the guidelines are written and presented. Culture, language and everything is so intertwined and then if you get young kids and teenagers you have access to their culture as well. They’re learning too, often you have young people communicating to even younger people as well as respecting and communicating with their elders, it is interesting (D. N. Lancashire, personal communication, February 6, 2013).
I think professional guidelines are important but I don’t think a design protocol document should tell you to do this and tell you do that. I just don’t think a series of statements like that is going to work because I don’t think they would apply in every instance. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island design guide should be framed as a series of questions or a checklist of points. I think this approach would be much more appropriate. Another point is that rules and regulations change a lot. For example, some people want to be referred to as Aboriginal others Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander but there are also people don’t want to be called either, they want to be called by their language name. Indigenous is also not popular with some people. It is difficult to keep up with because the Aboriginal landscape is changing all the time. Having said that I think we’ve got a responsibility to communicate protocols to people clearly before we tell them off for not following them. There is a need for cultural protocols to be written down and to be adhered to but it should be more about the communication and less about the policing of it. I think people do want to do the right thing but nobody wants to be too scared to move forward. This is coming from an Aboriginal woman who is still learning about her own culture. I’ve learned by touching the fire and I’ve learned the right way by getting in trouble. By doing the wrong things you learn how to do the right thing. Nobody sat me down and said this is what you need to do. You need to know that you must call this lady Aunty because she’s older. So then, you start calling all the older women, Aunty and then, someone says, ‘Don’t call me your Aunty, I’m not your Aunty.’ In 2006, 50% of Aboriginal people were under 19 years of age and only 8% are over 55. So we need to look at things differently in terms of transferring cultural knowledge and cultural protocols on to younger generations. Here in the Aboriginal Design Agency office, we’ve just developed an iPhone application for accessing oral stories. Like design, this is telling our old stories in new ways (A. Page [Walbanga–Wadi Wadi] personal communication, February 14, 2009).

I think it’s incredibly important to have protocols but I think as a preface to any set of protocols is a conversation about how to communicate those protocols. It can’t be just a matter of constructing some protocols, which presumably would seat somewhere on the web. It is important not to let protocols fossilise. They must be consultative but they also must be regularly reviewed, critiqued and reworked. Protocols are a fantastic place to start but they need to be inclusive and users need to have the opportunity to give feedback. People need to be able to say this didn’t work for me or this did work for me, or I came up with something alternative that you might want to think about. It would also be good if the protocols were supported by some examples (L. Russell [Wotjobaluk descendant], personal communication, March 25, 2013).
Cultural guidelines need to be presented as a recommendation. It comes down to the pitch. Generally people respond better to a recommendation than a rule (D. Kombumerri [Yugemeir], personal communication, March 1, 2013).

Protocols change every time you go from one group to another and from one nation to another, and so I don’t think a general blanket approach that can always be applied. For example, the Indigenous representative we use on one project might not be necessarily the right person the next time. For us it feels like there’s always a constant learning from one project to the next. I’m not sure that it is something that should be too fixed. Generalised principles could apply from one case to another but I suggest the actual detailing would always change in terms of the real intellectual knowledge of each particular group (S. McNeil, 2013, personal communication, April 3, 2013).

These statements emphasise the importance of effective communication. Comments suggested that protocols should be structured as questions not statements and that they should not be too prescriptive. It was argued that any such design practice document should be framed as a set of respect focused guidelines and principles. It was also pointed out that a design practice charter should also include a professional code of ethics.

5.4 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS: CONTRADICTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

This dissertation acknowledges that the testimonials made by the Indigenous design interviewees may differ from those Indigenous people who are not design practitioners. Internal perceptions and contradictions base purely on Indigenous or non-Indigenous ethnicity was not clearly evident. Comments and opinions appeared to focus on ethical, respectful and/or professional practice considerations. This included the visible recognition of Indigenous Australia and its potential impact on, and relationship to the representation of national identity.

Most of those interviewed (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) projected a pragmatic, problem-solving tone in their testimonials. This could be explained by the inherent problem-solving aim of design and the mindset of its practitioners. Contradictory opinions regarding knowledge sharing appear to emanate from fields outside of design, which highlights the need for greater discourse and intersected research. A cross-over between design practices and social sciences was raised in the testimonials. It was argued that an increased commitment to culturally respectful, industry-based research for relevant projects is required. Designers need to have a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions,
motivations and values of Indigenous cultures. As highlighted in the literature review, opinions vary on the issue of shared access to Indigenous visual culture and its embedded knowledge. Smith (1999) highlights key issue when she points out that non-Indigenous people interpret Indigenous knowledge from a Western framework, which she argues has an effect of distorting reality.

Opinions on this issue are layered with many personal levels of complexity that transcend the issue of Indigenous or non-Indigenous. City, regional and remote dynamics can influence views, as can the diversity represented through different Aboriginal Torres Strait Island groups and those with mixed heritage. These testimonials highlight issues related to the integrity and values of business, which are also not simply defined as Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The commercial dynamics of business create the challenge of balancing value systems. At the heart of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander value system is the desire to recognise collective rights and interest of a community. On the surface this appears at odds with Australian Western legal system, which has a focus on the rights of the individual. The underlying aim of business is to buy and sell commodities, products, or services in the case of the design profession.

Although the primarily objective of business is to generate income, there are other values that determine the success of a company in the long run. Described in Stakeholder theory (see Section 3.1 Theoretical Framework) business values often embrace intangible assets not necessarily attributable to any one stakeholder. Stakeholder theory suggests that business should be viewed as a network of relationships both internal and external. These networks could be another stakeholder group, a resource, an organisation, end-consumers, interest groups, regulators, or the environment itself. Stakeholder theory represents a shift away from the command-and-control business methods of the past. The question remains, however, whether more synergistic business engagement processes have the potential to align with the underlying values of community and land as represented in Indigenous cultures. The testimonials documented in this dissertation represent people operating between cultures and who are looking for respectful but pragmatic ways of working with contemporary expressions of traditional culture. All acknowledge that a new, respectful, collaborative approach is required for designers to work with Indigenous knowledge and visual culture.
5.5 ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP

The data gathered during the interview phase of this research identified that design practitioners need assistance when working on projects with Indigenous-themed briefs. This data was used to inform the structure and identify the aims of the focus group. There were four clear objectives identified for the focus group:

1) Confirm the need for a professional practice guide for Indigenous representation in communication design.
2) Identify the end-users (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and the level of engagement required by stakeholders.
3) Identify and prioritise key content and themes for the proposed guide.
4) Recommend an author’s voice and writing style for the proposed guide (language and tone).

The focus group started with an introduction of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-chairs and the customary acknowledgement that we were gathered on the land of the Kulin Nation and the Waringarri people. A presentation providing an overview of the research study was made to the focus group attendees. The focus group agenda was divided into the following discussion themes. The themes were framed as questions referring to the proposed Indigenous design professional practice guide:

1) Is it needed?
2) Who should it speak to?
3) How should it be used?
4) What should it say?
5) How should it speak?

Is it needed?: Focus group attendees participated in a round-table discussion on the need for a professional practice guide for the representation of Indigenous culture and knowledge in communication design. The group agreed on the following points:

- Group agreement on the need for an Indigenous design professional practice guide
- Group agreement on the need to include a code of ethics statement
- Group agreement on the need non-intimidating and encouraging language

Who should it speak to?: Focus group attendees discussed who would be the end-users of the proposed guide. The focus group agreed on the following points:
• Non-Indigenous designers and design companies (communication design, branding and advertising)
• Indigenous designers and design companies (communication design, branding and advertising)
• Government, not-for-profit and corporate clients of design companies (communication design, branding and advertising).

How should it be used?: Focus group attendees were set a task (1: Stakeholder User Survey) to identify stakeholder dynamics and rank potential end-user combinations. The focus group agreed on the following points:

• Non-Indigenous designers working on Aboriginal-themed briefs for non-Indigenous clients require the most assistance.
• Indigenous designers working on Indigenous-themed briefs for an Indigenous client from their own community require the least assistance.

What should it say?: Focus group attendees were set a second task (2: Advancement Themes and Concepts) to identify and prioritise key content for the proposed Indigenous design professional practice guide. The focus group agreed that the detail of the professional practice guide should be framed around the following themes:

• Cultural innovation
• Assisting designers
• Collaboration and co-creation
• Shared knowledge
• Recognition
• A maturing nation
• Reconciliation
• National identity

How should it speak?: Focus group attendees discussed the author’s voice of this document and the ‘language’ and tone to be used. The focus group agreed on the following points:

• The tone should be open, optimistic and encourage participation.
• A code of ethics should be included.
• Case studies should be included as good and bad examples of appropriate representation.
As mentioned above, the focus group participated in two workshop tasks:

Task (1): STAKEHOLDER USER SURVEY
This survey aimed to identify and rank stakeholder combinations and user requirements of a proposed professional practice guide on Indigenous design for communication designers.

Task (2): ADVANCEMENT THEMES AND CONCEPTS
A word association exercise designed to inform content of a proposed guide by aligning key issues, concerns and considerations with the core themes that emerged from interview analysis phase.

FOCUS GROUP: TASK (1) – STAKEHOLDER USER SURVEY
The Stakeholder User Survey was designed to help identify the level of assistance required by potential end-users of an Indigenous design practice guide. This survey identifies potential user and client combinations. Focus group participants were asked to rank the level of assistance required by designers for each combination. Client combinations were described as:

- Non-Indigenous – corporate
- Non-Indigenous – government or not-for-profit organisation
- Indigenous – corporate
- Indigenous – government or not-for-profit organisation
- Indigenous – other community (no family connection)
- Indigenous – home community (family connection).

Focus group participants were asked to rank from lowest to highest the level of additional cultural knowledge assistance required from the listed combinations. Below is a ranked list of seven proposed user combinations as agreed to by the focus group. The rankings represent an average of the individual participant’s scores.

(Highest need of assistance is ranked (7). Lowest need of assistance is ranked (1)).
Table 5.5.1 Focus Group Ranking of User Engagement Combinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief</th>
<th>Designer/Co</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>1–7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous, Corp.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous – Gov., NFP</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous, Corp.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Non-Indigenous – Gov., NFP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous – other community</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Indigenous themed</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous – home community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TASK (1) CONCLUSION: The results of the Stakeholder Combination Survey indicated that non-Indigenous designers working on Indigenous-themed briefs for non-Indigenous clients require the most assistance. Indigenous designers working on Indigenous-themed briefs for Indigenous clients from their own community require the least assistance. The survey concluded that there are different levels of assistance required by Indigenous designers even when working for Indigenous clients. It was also concluded that level of assistance required varies on a number of factors. These factors relate to the professional and cultural dynamics of the participating stakeholder combinations.

FOCUS GROUP: TASK (2) – THEMES AND CONCEPTS

This phase followed the analysis of the interview phase. Key themes that emerged from the interviews (as listed) were posted as headings on A1 sheets of paper. Focus group participants were invited to write words, comments or past pre-printed interview codes on the sheets. The aim was to build on data already gathered by asking the group to critically discuss the interview groupings. The work sheets were later reviewed and recategorised into broader themes and groupings. This word association exercise and open discussion resulted in a distillation of comments and sentiments into eight broader conceptual themes. The resultant
themes are: Cultural Innovation, Assisting Designers, Collaboration, Shared Knowledge, Recognition, A Maturing Nation, Reconciliation and National Identity.

Table 5.5.2 Themes and Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cultural Innovation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Promoting the appropriate cultural representation of Indigenous people by establishing innovative practice codes for communication design.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assisting Designers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• A need for professional assistance for communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the form of cultural guidelines, protocols, and code of ethics was confirmed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 | • Collaboration and co-creation.  
   • Respectful professionalism, honesty and integrity.  
   • Establish the trust required to share knowledge and culture. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shared Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4 | • Trust and respect.  
   • Indigenous-led practice and consultation.  
   • Collaboration and co-creation.  
   • Respect for cultural beliefs and practices.  
   • Honouring cultural ownership and intellectual property rights.  
   • Work to benefit all stakeholders. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recognition</th>
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</table>
| 5 | • Indigenous visual culture as integral to the Australian nation.  
   • The potential for Indigenous considerations in all design projects. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Maturing Nation</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 6 | • Acknowledging Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture would be a sign of national maturity.  
   • Facilitating appropriate Indigenous representation and respecting its contribution to the national identity is an important step in Australia’s development as a nation.  
   • Corporate understanding and support of the issue. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reconciliation</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 7 | • Acknowledging the past (60,000+ years) and co-creating future.  
   Shared knowledge.  
   • Recognising the diversity of Indigenous visual cultures. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8 | • Design practice guidelines would assist the development of an authentic national identity though the respectful representation and increased visibility of Indigenous visual cultures in the print and digital mediums.  
   • Indigenous design practice guidelines should be embedded into a national design policy. |

TASK (2) CONCLUSION: This process helped to direct the focus of the data collection towards a tangible outcome. The eight emerging themes encapsulated the key issues identified by this research. The consolidation of information both clarifies the issues and makes the data manageable. The next step was to use these themes to frame the structure of a draft professional practice document for communication design practitioners. This
hypothetical proposal aims to promote, encourage and advise designers on the collaborative processes required to produce and/or co-create designs that represent Australian Indigenous people and their cultures, appropriately and respectfully.

In the context of this research I have titled this draft document:


**ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

This research did not profess to deliver a panacea to issues surrounding the appropriate commercial use of created Indigenous graphical representations. Many regard this aim as a typically ‘wicked’ problem, which cannot be solved easily and one that often creates additional problems in the process. However, this research did set out to establish a framework for an ethical and appropriate engagement with Indigenous knowledge and visual culture. To that end, the research succeeded in identifying the associated issues and provided clarity for building strategies and moving forward. In summarising the analysis process, the following questions were addressed: What worked best? What did not work well? What does the data mean? How was the project useful? What factors the influenced success?

**What worked:** The interview process involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from all states of Australia except Tasmania.

The even balance and diverse regional representation of Indigenous participants was also highly beneficial and integral to the integrity of the outcome.

The interview process worked well because people were isolated from the influence of others, which can occur in a group setting. The open-ended questions enabled the exploration of areas and relevant stories, which would not have been possible through a qualitative survey method.

The focus group also proved effective in achieving its primary aim to establish the content, language, tone and potential stakeholder user combinations of the proposed design practice guide. The original assertion that guidance had been provided was confirmed; however, the empirical data gathered suggested that a less authoritative delivery of the cultural innovation message was required. The proposition was that a formal set of protocols and rules was
required for designers (non-Indigenous and Indigenous) to navigate this area of cultural representation. The data suggested that such a guide should be written in way that encourages stakeholder buy-in. There was concern that if not written in the right tone the document may intimidate designers and therefore deter participation.

What did not work: The focus group worked well; however, in hindsight, it would have been beneficial to include some buyers of design from the corporate and government sectors. This would have been interesting; however, the scope of this research was always framed from the designer’s perspective. The scope of the study at no time aimed to investigate the buyer’s perspective, but this has certainly been identified as a potential area of further research. Although the cohort of interviewees and focus group attendees was more than adequate, it would have been beneficial to be able to hold focus groups in all Australian capital cities and selected regional and remote areas. This clearly sat outside the scope and budget of this study. Taking that into consideration, I believe this research to be an accurate reflection of stakeholder opinions across Australia.

What the data means: The data analysis confirmed the research assertion that the design profession requires guidance when working on projects with Indigenous content or those that require referencing of visual culture. It also confirmed the anticipated need for consultation, collaboration and acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of Indigenous cultures across Australia. The real value of this research is that the data also revealed new knowledge concerning the varying levels of cultural guidance required for Indigenous designers, depending on the stakeholder dynamics of individual projects. Other key points revealed in this study related to designer support, education, practice methods, cross-cultural co-creation, wellness, intellectual property protection, and the language and tone required to deliver a specific cultural innovation message to design stakeholders. This knowledge, elicited from the data, was used to inform the content and the tone of the final professional practice guide.

Eight key points emerged from the qualitative data that were either not anticipated or with importance that exceeded original expectations:

1. Support for an Indigenous design practice guide:
   - Stronger than expected support from design practitioners.
   - Financial cost of cross-cultural collaboration was acknowledged.
   - Rigorous research culture is required in design practice.
2. Call for improved education systems (Indigenous culture and history):
   - Responsibility of government and private education systems.
   - Responsibility of professional design association.

3. Stronger than expected support for an Indigenous design practice guide from Indigenous designers:
   - A tool for them when working with communities outside of their own country.
   - A tool for young Indigenous designers.
   - A tool to help explain Indigenous processes to clients.

4. Recommendation: Indigenous-related design projects should only be given to:
   - Mainstream design companies that engage Indigenous consultants.
   - Indigenous design companies.
   - Indigenous design consultants.

5. Recommendation: Is there an Indigenous story associated with this project?
   - Designers to ask clients this question of every brief.
   - Designers to assist clients to find the answer if they don’t know.

6. Structure and tone of an Indigenous design professional practice guide:
   - The document should include a code of ethics.
   - The tone should be open, optimistic and encourage participation.
   - The content should be framed as questions and/or suggestions not directives.

7. Higher than expected support for Australian law and legal system:
   - Indigenous designers satisfied with the level of protection provided.
   - Indigenous designers advise never to assign copyright to clients.
   - Licensing agreements give control over application and usage.

8. Higher than expected potential for improved wellness:
   - Respectful representation can build personal pride.
   - Respectful representation can build community pride.
   - Respectful representation can advance the reconciliation process.

*Why the project is useful:* The findings of this research project have the potential for immediate impact within the design community. A positive aspect of this study is that opportunities have already presented themselves to further progress the findings and recommendations of the study. Both the Australian Graphic Design Association and the Design Institute of Australia have indicated that they support the adoption and implementation of the research findings.
Another useful outcome of the study was the acknowledgement by all stakeholder groups that appropriate representation can add to the cost of some projects. It was acknowledged that research and collaboration requires a commitment to time and resources that will be on-charged to clients. It is an important issue to be highlighted, but it points to a broader issue in design practice that relates to the development of an across-the-board research culture in design practice. The subject of industry-based research in design requires further investigation and should involve the client perspective.

Factors that influenced success: The timing was right for this study. Governments and the design profession appear ready to have this discussion. This research aligns with federal government policy development in design (Creative Australia – National Cultural Policy) and constitutional reform (recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution).

The study benefited from the unilateral support it received from communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who participated in the study.

There was also strong support for this research from key stakeholders, including cultural institutions and professional design associations. These included:

- Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA)
- Design Institute of Australia (DIA)
- Koorie Heritage Trust
- Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre – Melbourne Museum
- National Aboriginal Design Agency.

Focus group participant, Charles daCosta, a film and television lecturer from Swinburne University of Technology, made an interesting comment. It was particularly interesting in that it came from an Indigenous African from Zimbabwe:

_Australians live in an Ostrich culture. Their heads are in the sand regarding this issue. Australians just don’t want to address it but they need to. They just don’t seem to realise how wrong their identity appears from the outside looking in_ (daCosta, 2013).
Chapter 6: Australian Indigenous Design Protocols

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS DESIGN PROTOCOLS: a code of ethics and professional practice guide for the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture in communication design is the suggested title for a document representing the findings of this dissertation. This proposed professional practice document has been developed in the spirit of Goal 1 of the Australian Government’s Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 6), and Article 31.1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Indigenous people have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (UN, 2007).

This proposal for a professional practice guide including a code of ethics constitutes a mission for ‘fair play’. It is envisaged that this cultural innovation initiative will assist designers (non-Indigenous and Indigenous) when working on projects involving Indigenous knowledge and the graphical representation of culture. It presents a positive, strategic way forward by steering designers and their clients away from unethical business practices and the resultant negativity and damage caused by ignorance and naive business practices. The practice methods outlined in this dissertation involve protocols and collaborative processes based on respect and the building of trust required for sharing knowledge and culture.

The tone of the document is inclusive and encourages cross-cultural participation but only if executed ethically and respectfully. The primary aim of the document is to help facilitate the appropriate creation of respectful new designs that can be used in professional practice of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous design companies. It does refer to the acquisition and use of existing Indigenous art but that is not the primary aim. This guideline is firmly positioned within the context commercial design practice and the development of visual
communication including branding. Communication design is a broad creative discipline involving many mediums and expressions. Practitioners are often required to represent culture, interpret national identity and represent the unique and intrinsic values of place (branding).

It is envisaged that such a guide would be of value to both non-Indigenous designers working with Indigenous culture and Indigenous designers working outside of their traditional country or community. An Indigenous design practice guide would represent and deliver the actions of a maturing nation, one that recognises a need for the true and rightful positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within its history and national identity. It would also represent a strategy that acts on Australia’s pledge for reconciliation and encourages designers to consider representing Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures.

By detailing the professional conduct expectations in plain English, this document would be inclusive, and by doing so, encourage the participation of all stakeholders, including designers and their clients, sub-contractors and other associated relationships. It encourages cross-cultural exchange but also sends a clear message to designers to make sure they act appropriately and respectfully.

This document would be written for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communication designers and is framed in a positive spirit of cross-cultural collaboration. Its specific aim would be to improve the representation of Indigenous culture in communication design practice. This would not be a legal document, nor a set of rigid rules. Protocols, by definition, do not establish strict legal requirements but do promote an ethical framework of principles. This document would be composed as a professional practice guide. It would includes a code of ethics statement and professional engagement recommendations. To gain a broader understanding of the requirements of a practising designer working with Indigenous culture it is recommended that this document be used in conjunction with related professional practice codes and cultural protocol publications such as:

- **Icograda Best Practice: Code of Conduct**
  – Published by the International Council of Graphic Design Associations
- **Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Media Arts**
  – Published by the Australia Council for the Arts
• Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies
  Published by Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
• Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Visual Arts
  – Published by the Australia Council for the Arts

NOTE: For this document to be effective it would need to be formally endorsed by the Commonwealth of Australia, a national Indigenous organisation and a professional design association.

CODE OF ETHICS

The following code outlines ethical guidelines designed to advance the quality of Indigenous representation by the Australian communication design profession. The articles specified within this code insist that adherence to ethical standards is necessary to achieve appropriate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in communication design practice. The purpose of this code of ethics (the code) is to provide designers with standards of professional ethics and conduct. This code contains guidelines for the conduct of communication designers in fulfilling their professional obligation to the representation of Indigenous culture in their practice of design.

CODE: OBJECTIVE

The objective of this code is to state broad principles for ethical standards related to the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the practice of communication design. The code of ethics is a powerful tool in dealing with inappropriate and counterproductive practices. The code can also serve to enhance clients’ understanding of the need for respectful cross-cultural engagement and the associated research. These principles are primarily based on common courtesy and a respect for individual and community ownership and control of intellectual property, and the representation of their culture.

CODE: DEFINITIONS

The words ‘Indigenous’, ‘designer’ and ‘communication designer’ have been defined for the purposes of this code. The broader definition of ‘designer’ has been included, even though this code is aimed at the specific discipline of communication design. These definitions acknowledge the dynamic nature and multidisciplinary evolution of the design where sometimes it is difficult to establish clear boundaries between the sub-set disciplines. This code respects and accommodates these disciplinary and definition overlaps. The description
of both *design* and *communication design* are based on official definitions sanctioned by Icograda, the International Council of Communication Design.

For the purposes of this code the words:

• ‘Indigenous’ refers to an Australian person who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
• ‘Designer’ refers to an Indigenous or non-Indigenous person who:
  a) practises design, a constantly evolving and dynamic discipline. The professionally trained designer applies intent to create the visual, material, spatial and digital environment, cognizant of the experiential, employing interdisciplinary and hybrid approaches to the theory and practice of design.
  b) understands the cultural, ethical, social, economic and ecological impact of their endeavours and their ultimate responsibility towards people and the planet across both commercial and non-commercial spheres. A designer respects the ethics of the design profession.
  c) practises design as a freelance or salaried designer, or group of designers, acting in partnership or within other forms of association. They understand the cultural, ethical, social, economic and ecological impact of their endeavours and their ultimate responsibility towards people and the planet across both commercial and non-commercial spheres. A designer respects the ethics of the design profession.

• ‘communication designer’ refers to an Indigenous or non-Indigenous person who practises communication design, a specialist area of design, and has the sensibility, skill and experience and/or professional training to create designs or images for reproduction by any means of visual communication, and who may be concerned with graphic design; illustration; typography; calligraphy; surface design for packaging; the design of patterns, books, advertising and publicity material; broadcast, interactive or environmental design; or any form of visual communication.

• ‘Indigenous design’ refers to traditional or contemporary artworks, traditional markings, spiritual iconography or communication designs made by, or belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and/or communities.
OBLIGATIONS: COMMUNICATION DESIGNERS TO INDIGENOUS CULTURE

It is a designer’s responsibility and obligations to the professional practice of communication design when working on projects involving Indigenous culture to:

• respect the uniqueness and diversity of Indigenous culture across Australia.
• act in the best interest of Indigenous people when representing their culture.
• respectfully honour the history and dignity of Indigenous people and Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture(s).
• seek out and deal with the appropriate community representatives or authorised custodians of cultural knowledge.
• work respectfully with the community elders or authorised representatives to establish the parameters of the project and to obtain permissions.
• work respectfully with the community elders or authorised representatives to listen, learn and build trust.
• not to be forceful or presumptuous by presenting ideas based on preconceived ideas or past experience with other communities.
• learn about the varying demographic and the end-user considerations required of regional, national and international representation of Indigenous peoples, cultures and communities.
• avoid using inappropriate clichés and stereotyping. It is acceptable to use commonly used cultural references such as boomerangs, dot painting and the Aboriginal flag, but only when relevant and appropriate.
• act within the specific protocols and customs of the Indigenous community they are working with.
• act in the client’s interests within the limits of professional duties and in compliance with this code.
• ask every client on every project if there is an Indigenous story to tell.
• reach agreement on the financial aspects of the project, which may include consultation fees, the procurement of artworks or the licensing of imagery.
• help facilitate community development through paid consultancy, fixed-term appointments or on-the-job training, including internships or work experience.
• not accept instruction from the client that knowingly involves plagiarism or cultural misappropriation, nor act in a manner involving plagiarism.
• print or display the following traditional custodian’s notice drafted by the Arts Law Centre of Australia alongside reproduced artworks containing traditional knowledge:
The images in this artwork embody traditional ritual knowledge of the (name) community. It was created with the consent of the custodians of the community. Dealing with any part of the images for any purpose that has not been authorised by the custodians is a serious breach of the customary law of the (name) community, and may also breach the Copyright Act 1968. For enquiries about permitted reproduction of these images contact (community name).

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION DESIGNERS WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS CULTURE**

The following recommendations should be viewed as a guide to help communication designers navigate this area of cultural representation. These recommendations are not a rigid set of rules as customs and protocols vary from community to community across Australia. Guidelines need to be flexible enough to accommodate cultural and geographical diversity (city, rural, remote, very remote), changing generational attitudes, and the contemporary interpretation of a living culture.

These recommendations provide a starting point for designers and their companies to develop their own best practice methods for Indigenous representation.

**Cultural Innovation – a strategy for cultural authenticity**

Communication designers have a responsibility to promote the appropriate cultural representation of Indigenous people by implementing innovative and respectful methods for cross-cultural communication design. Following are some points to consider before starting work on an Indigenous-themed project:

1) It is recommended that designers and design companies follow the recommendations of this Indigenous *Design Practice Guide*.

2) It is recommended that designers and design companies honour the code of conduct as presented in the *Australian Indigenous Design Practice Guide*.

3) It is important to understand the role of the designer as a cultural facilitator and respect the need for Indigenous people to be in control of their culture and the way it is represented by others.

4) Promote continuing cultures by encouraging contemporary expressions of traditional culture when suitable.
5) Use the approach presented in the *Australian Indigenous Design Practice Guide* as a strategic advantage by presenting your company as a provider who can offer a cross-cultural design service.

6) Incorporate Indigenous design practice methods into your company’s corporate social responsibility policy.

7) This professional practice document recommends that buyers of design (government and corporate) play their part in promoting cultural innovation by only commissioning Indigenous-related design work from those suppliers who meet professional Indigenous design practice standards:

   - Minimum preferred supplier (minimum requirement): Non-Indigenous designers or mainstream design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for engagement with Indigenous design.
   - Preferred supplier: Non-Indigenous designers or mainstream design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for Indigenous design but also employ Indigenous expertise or engage Indigenous consultants on relevant projects.
   - Preferred suppliers: Indigenous-owned and operated design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for Indigenous design engagement.
   - Preferred supplier: Indigenous designer or consultant who engages and oversee creative work produced by subcontracted design companies (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for Indigenous design engagement.

**Assisting designers – communication, collaboration, consent**

This practice document has been created out of an identified need for professional assistance for communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the form of cultural guidelines, protocols, and code of ethics. Following are some benefits of using this guide and other points to consider when working on an Indigenous-themed project:

1) This professional practice document can be used by non-Indigenous designers to help them engage appropriately and ethically with Indigenous culture.

2) This professional practice document can be used as a tool for Indigenous designers
when working with communities outside of their own country.

3) This professional practice document can be used as a tool for Indigenous designers to educate Indigenous youth and to inspire potential new Indigenous designers.

4) This professional practice document can be used to help explain Indigenous processes and production requirements to clients.

5) This professional practice document can be used to explain the financial implications of cross-cultural collaboration and the commitment required for appropriate research.

Consultation – collaboration, co-creation, confidentiality

Communication, consultation and consent are vitally important when working on Indigenous-themed projects. Working within a climate of open collaboration and potential co-creation is the key to establishing the level of trust required to share knowledge and culture. Respectful professionalism, honesty and integrity are the required ingredients to build strong relationships and authentic design outcomes. Following are some points to consider regarding collaboration for Indigenous-themed projects:

1) If you are a not an Indigenous designer or from a non-Indigenous design company, it is recommended that you engage the services of an Indigenous design company or Indigenous consultant to work with you on the project.

2) If the brief requires a national or international statement, it is recommended that you contact a national Indigenous representative body for advice on generic representation.

3) If the brief requires a regional statement, it is recommended that you seek out the individuals, or authorised representatives, who are authorised to speak about their culture and grant permissions on behalf of the relevant community.

4) Show respect. When consulting with Indigenous communities, it is recommended that you commence discussions with an open mind and without preconceived ideas of what you think will work and what has worked in the past for other communities.

5) Be sincere and thorough during the consultation process and be aware that some previous efforts by designers have been criticised for being tokenistic. Consultation is the process of achieving respect. It should be woven through the fabric of any project involving Indigenous people. Do not underestimate its importance and relevance to achieving integrity and authenticity.
6) Do not present yourself or your company as having all the answers. Do not come in with ‘the big idea’ at the first meeting. Be prepared to listen and learn.

7) Be patient and do not expect approvals and permissions to be granted straight away. It takes time to build trust. Once trust has been established, the permissions will follow. Be prepared to take some backward steps to move forward.

8) Respect secret knowledge and issues of confidentiality.

9) Be willing to co-create with members of the community and pay people fairly for their contributions.

10) Make sure to note all those who contributed to the project and acknowledge them appropriately.

**Shared knowledge – trust, respect, attribution, ownership, protection**

Trust and respect need to be established before the sharing of Indigenous knowledge can occur. Representatives of the community you are dealing with need to feel comfortable with the expectation that you will respect their cultural beliefs and practices. They also need to trust you to honour their cultural ownership and intellectual property rights. The sharing of knowledge will come if the consultation and collaboration process is Indigenous led.

Designers and design companies must respect the rights of Indigenous people to control their own culture and the representation of it and its people. Following are some points to consider when seeking knowledge relating to Indigenous-themed projects:

1) Clearly state what you are looking for from the community. Be open about how the sharing of their culture will help your project. Likewise, explain how the respectful representation and application of the culture in the project will help their community.

2) Confirm that the representatives you are dealing with have the authority to speak and grant permissions on behalf of the community.

3) Make sure you confirm in writing any agreement that involves the representation of their cultural heritage or intellectual property.

4) Seek specialist legal advice if required but never ask an individual or community to assign copyright to you or your client. Common law only gives the buyer of an artwork, or designs, the right to use them for the applications agreed to. But this is often abused and breaches are rarely challenged. Copyright protects works for a limited period (50 years after the death of the author) and therefore, it is sometimes assumed that after that point it becomes part of the public domain and free for all to
use and exploit. This is why licensing agreements are a preferred legal method to protect Indigenous designs. Licensing protects all parties including the designer, the client and the traditional cultural custodians. It means that the ownership is never sold or transferred. Licensing agreements, application formats and time frame of usage are negotiated between the cultural custodian and designer, or directly with the client. Licensing gives Indigenous communities the opportunity to allow appropriate commercial use of their culture without having to hand over ownership.

5) If a new design is co-created or designed under direction, a flat fee for consultation can be arranged. Copyright can be shared; however, it would depend on the application and usage as to whether a licensing agreement should be entered into. The job may be too small and licensing simply may not be warranted. There should be a written agreement struck for all projects regardless of the scale of cultural references. Seek legal advice if unsure.

6) To the best of your ability ensure that Indigenous rights are respected and protected and that your project works to the benefit and satisfaction of all stakeholders.

**Recognition – interpretation, integrity, visibility**

The respectful and visible representation of culture is vital to building the self-esteem and wellness of Indigenous Australians. The appropriate interpretations of community and cultural diversity are also important to developing an authentic Australian identity. Indigenous recognition has become an important issue for branding agencies in search of a point of difference when creating ‘place brands’. In a globalised world, the rich visual culture of traditional owner groups provides designers with a unique reference point. The use of design to make this ancient connection to a place provides visible recognition of Indigenous culture. It also highlights the need for designers working on such projects to follow a code of ethical practice. Following are some points to consider regarding appropriate recognition and cultural interpretation on Indigenous-themed projects:

1) Make sure to consider the multicultural diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

2) Respect the geographical diversity of people when representing Indigenous culture (city, rural, remote, very remote).

3) Understand the need to alter your approach to the representation of Indigenous culture depending on the audience you are designing for (regional, national, international).
4) Respect age demographics when representing Indigenous culture. Consider contemporary communication methods and social media.

5) Consider and respect expressions of both traditional and contemporary culture when representing Indigenous knowledge.

6) Ask clients if there is an Indigenous consideration on every design project. If there is, then discuss with the client to see if it is relevant to the objectives of the brief.

A maturing nation – Indigenous control

Recent events, such as the national apology to Indigenous Australians and the proposal for a referendum to recognise Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution, indicate that Australia is maturing as a nation. The want to deal with these difficult issues is an encouraging sign that Australia is growing up. Following are some points to consider regarding changing attitudes towards Indigenous-themed projects:

1) Acknowledging Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture would be a sign of a maturing nation. Consider this when design briefs, such as for tourism clients or place-branding projects, ask for a statement on Australian national identity.

2) Welcoming and encouraging Indigenous control of their own culture is another sign of a maturing nation. The National Indigenous Television channel and the Deadly Awards are great examples of Indigenous-led creative initiatives.

Reconciliation – respect

Reconciliation is regarded as a work in progress. It will take time. However, Australia is taking incremental steps towards that goal. This document aims to addressing the issue of Indigenous representation directly with the image-makers. Communication designers have a responsibility to represent Indigenous culture respectfully and appropriately. Adopting respectful and ethical professional practice methods that encourage consultation, collaboration, co-creation and the sharing of knowledge is a positive way forward. It is not a perfect solution, but to do nothing is counterproductive to the reconciliation process. Australian designers cannot continue to represent Indigenous culture with clichés and stereotypes. Following are some points:
1) Whenever possible, depict Indigenous culture with respect and in control of its cultural identity and destiny.

2) Think of this as a process of sharing, history, knowledge, identity and culture.

3) Do not think of these guidelines as the answer to achieving reconciliation. Adopt them because you believe they provide an effective way of achieving cultural authenticity and quality design outcomes.

**National identity – historical recognition and continuing cultures**

Communication designers have an important role to play in the development of Australia’s national identity. Historical recognition and respectful representation of the past and continuing cultures of Indigenous Australians must be woven into a national identity. The national identity needs to evolve and it must cease to speak with a post-colonial voice.

Following point need to be considered:

1) Understanding the role of Indigenous culture within the framework of national identity is important. Australian national identity is a consistent theme in all forms of advertising and commercial design practice, particularly tourism and branding. Government clients are also sensitive to the relationship of Indigenous culture and the representation and acknowledgement of place.

2) Acknowledging Australia as the home of the world’s oldest continuous living culture is likely to change the way Australian history is represented by communication designers.

3) Design practice guidelines would assist designers to develop concepts for an authentic national identity through the respectful representation and increased visibility of Indigenous visual culture.
This study set out to investigate improved practice methods for the representation of Indigenous culture in communication design practice. The study asked: What are the appropriate protocols to assist practising communication designers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in the respectful use of Australian Indigenous knowledge and visual culture?

Pre-existing data indicated that protocols had been established for some related creative industries such as the visual arts but nothing specifically for communication design or graphic design. It was identified that issues relating to the communication design profession involved creation, appropriation, acquisition and the sharing of knowledge within the context of commercial application. The study also asked: What methods do communication designers currently use when representing Indigenous cultures? Is policy assistance required? If so, what form should the policy take (engagement protocols, code of ethics)? Whose voice should policy speak with, the Indigenous, the profession or both? How should the message be presented and delivered (language, tone)?

The study was positioned within interpretivist and stakeholder theories. It asserted that there is a widening gap between Indigenous cultural understanding and communication design practice, and that a cognitive strategy based on shared knowledge and collaboration was required to help facilitate appropriate engagement in the future. It set out to establish a framework for, and ethical and appropriate engagement between stakeholders. It was proposed that a formal set of protocols/rules were required for designers to navigate this area of Indigenous knowledge and visual culture representation. The asserted need for professional guidance and protocols was confirmed in the research; however, the empirical data indicated that the delivery method and writing tone of such protocols would need to be carefully considered.

Although supporting a need for design profession guidelines, the testimonials made during both the interview and workshop/focus group phases identified a general aversion to protocol documents and rules by both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous design communities. Respondents expressed caution of over-generalising and not respecting the diversity of culture and individual circumstances. It was often pointed out that every community has its own protocols and that every job is different. During the workshop/focus group, Alison Page,
CEO of the National Aboriginal Design Agency said: ‘From my experience clients often shy away from featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait work in their designs because they see it as already too regulated and complicated’ (Personal communication, 2013). Alison went on to explain that regulation and intellectual property protection is completely justified when it refers to the use of existing artworks. Although acquisition of existing artworks is part of communication design practice, the more complex area lies in the creation of new artefacts or imagery, which involves a different discussion to that of acquisition. It also involves collaboration, learning and permissions but has a stronger focus on co-creation and the sharing of knowledge and culture. The sensibilities associated with the sharing of Indigenous knowledge require, sensitivity, responsibility, respect and the building of trust.

Shared knowledge and a more visible representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture was supported; however, there was a concern that Aboriginal designers and participation could be marginalised or even passed by. It was understood that the voice of the author of the document should be from the communication design profession and it should speak from both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous designer’s position. All workshop participants agreed that the final protocol document should not be a set of rules but instead should read as a list of questions, suggestions or recommendations. A recurring suggestion was that the publication (website or book) should also document historical case studies of good and bad examples of Indigenous representation in Australian communication design. A further suggestion was that some international examples could also be included.

The data obtained during the research clearly suggested that a concisely written guide utilising an informal tone that featured case study examples of past representation of Indigenous culture in communication design would be well accepted and widely used. It was generally felt that a document of this sort would provide the end-users with methods to find co-created answers to Indigenous-related design problems. The engagement methodologies and processes unearthed in this research have the potential to help designers effectively answer certain design briefs in an appropriate and respectful manner. Such a document can also be used by designers to educate their clients on specific and strategic sensibilities when applying cultural innovation and engaging with Indigenous culture.

It is also envisaged that the application of a framework for Indigenous engagement could be incorporated into a future national design policy to provide direction for designers working on projects requiring the representation of Indigenous culture. The format and delivery of this policy would be developed in research activity beyond this thesis report.
This policy would be separate from, but integrated with, a broader creative or visual arts policy. It should also be included as an integral part of any dedicated national design policy.

Such a policy would apply to any design that relates to Indigenous culture and/or its connection to national identity and place. To achieve this, the design profession would need to support an Indigenous-led government policy and help establish a climate that honours respectful methods of research, production, procurement and representation.

This dissertation acknowledges a traumatic and turbulent post-colonial history and the need for Australian design stakeholders (practitioners, their clients and the users of design) to show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture if representing it in their businesses and/or design practices. Within the context of an Australian national design policy, Indigenous design guidelines should highlight examples of misappropriation, generalisation, stereotyping and misunderstanding of the cultural diversity within Indigenous communities across Australia. A national design policy incorporating Indigenous design will help facilitate the natural evolution and contemporary relevance of Indigenous visual culture in Australia and potentially around the world. The future expectations are that, if successful, this research could extend to an international iteration of an Indigenous design engagement framework.

A summary of key recommendations from the empirical data include suggestions that the publication should be written with the voice of the communication design profession (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). It would be phrased in a friendly, informal tone that asks questions, makes suggestions and gives advice. It could also showcase appropriate and inappropriate historical examples of Indigenous representation in communication design. An Indigenous design engagement framework/charter would be supported by both government and the design profession and published online and in print. Such a publication would be promoted by national, government and industry supported education and media campaigns. The document could also be used to inform future government design policy.

The research does not claim to have found the definitive solution to problems related to the appropriate use of Indigenous culture in communication design but it has made some significant key findings. The recommendations made from these key findings can be used to inform professional practice policy and/or charter in regard to the appropriate representation of Indigenous communication design. In the general Australian domain, and in discussion related to this research, there have been many positive words spoken about reconciliation, but
for the rhetoric to be realised, action is now required. Waiting for a perfect solution to a wicked problem can be futile.

As previously mentioned, this dissertation does not profess to deliver the perfect solution for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into contemporary communication design, but it does make pragmatic recommendations to enable both the design profession and Australia’s Indigenous communities to move forward together. These expansionist-based recommendations aim to facilitate respectful knowledge sharing but they also have the loftier potential to act as a catalyst to help inform the development of an authentic Australian identity.

7.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

A summary of the empirical data analysis identifies four key findings that emerged from this study. All four findings have potential implications for policy and practice in communication design. The findings are listed below:

1) This research confirmed the need for policy and guidance in the representation and referencing of Indigenous culture in communication design practice.

2) This research identified the need for professional guidance for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous designers in the representation and referencing of Indigenous culture in communication design practice.

3) This research identified that the level of need varies depending on user and stakeholder combinations.

4) This research suggests that all Indigenous-themed communication design projects require a level of consultation and/or co-creation between communication designers/design companies and the relevant Indigenous community stakeholders.

Key recommendations from the empirical data suggested that the best way to deliver this professional practice policy would be in the form of a practice document that included a code of ethics, suggestions and recommendations for engagement. The data also suggested the inclusion of cases study examples with descriptions of the collaboration or co-creation process. The analysis of the qualitative data indicated such a practice document should:

- be written with the voice of the communication design profession (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).
- be written in a friendly, informal tone, which asks questions, makes suggestions and gives advice.
• showcase appropriate and inappropriate historical examples (images and stories) of Indigenous representation and cultural referencing in communication design.

• be published online (website), as a smartphone app and as a printed book.

• be supported by both governments and the design profession.

• incorporated into federal government design and creative policy.

• be promoted by both government and the design profession.

• be promoted by both government and the design profession to design education institutions.

The research findings suggest that all Indigenous-themed communication design projects require a level of consultation and/or co-creation between communication designers/design companies and the relevant community stakeholders. The proposed professional practice document recommends that buyers of design (government and corporate) show leadership in promoting cultural innovation by only commissioning Indigenous-related design work from preferred suppliers who meet professional Indigenous design practice standards. It was concluded that preferred suppliers of Indigenous-themed communication design would be described in the following ways:

• Preferred supplier (minimum requirement): Non-Indigenous designers or mainstream design company who pledges to comply with professional practice standards for engagement as outlined in the proposed professional practice guide for Indigenous design in communication design.

• Preferred supplier: Non-Indigenous designers or mainstream design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for Indigenous design but also employ Indigenous expertise or engage Indigenous consultants when appropriate.

• Preferred suppliers: Indigenous-owned and operated design companies who pledge to comply with professional practice standards for Indigenous design engagement.

• Preferred supplier: Indigenous design companies or consultant who subcontract creative work to other design companies (Indigenous or non-Indigenous). These companies would also need to agree to comply with professional practice standards for engagement as outlined in the proposed professional practice guide for Indigenous design in communication design.
7.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The theoretical framework as identified demands the need for Australia to acknowledge and celebrate its whole history, not only its colonial past. If broadly embraced, this contextual recognition has the potential to impact power bases, change the way history is taught and eventually authenticate a ‘true’ national identity. If Australia is regarded as the home of the oldest continuous living culture(s) in the world, it must follow that such a warrant should inform the notion of an ‘Australian design style’.

This study has the potential to stimulate thinking and actions relating to government and professional practice policy. It also opens opportunity for additional research in the field of appropriate commercial use and creation of Indigenous graphical representations. It does, however, highlight a need to establish a framework of protocols that will provide the end-user(s) with a method to find co-created answers to Indigenous-related design problems. It is suggested that that adherence to an engagement processes will help solve individual design projects in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Such a policy would be primarily aimed at commissioned design that relates to Indigenous culture, national identity and place. To achieve this, the design profession would need to support an Indigenous-led government policy and help promote a climate that honours respectful methods of research, production, procurement and representation.

Within the context of an Australian national design policy a framework for engagement with Indigenous knowledge would educate practitioners on issues of misappropriation, generalisation, stereotyping, ownership and cultural diversity within Indigenous communities across Australia. A national design policy incorporating Indigenous design could help facilitate the natural evolution and contemporary relevance of Indigenous visual culture in Australia and potentially around the world.

7.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

This dissertation suggests the potential for further research that includes a broad survey to gauge stakeholder acceptance of the research findings. This feedback could also be used to inform the development of policy and effective deployment of the research findings. There is also the potential to expand this research to investigate the need for an international Indigenous protocol version of this study. The following points expand on highlighted areas for further research:
• Broader acceptance of the research findings.
  
  Further study could involve quantitative and qualitative testing of cities, rural, remote and very remote communities and design stakeholders across Australia.

• Deployment and application of the findings.
  
  Further study could investigate methods of disseminating information such as web, telephone/tablet apps and other forms of social and traditional media.

• Education and distribution of the findings.
  
  Further study could involve the introduction of the findings of this research at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary), all levels of government (local, regional and federal) and professional practice organisations including the Australian Design Alliance (ADA) and the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA).

• International version of the findings
  
  There are over 370 million Indigenous peoples living in 90 countries across the globe. The demand for cultural authenticity in communication design, advertising and branding, particularly place branding is growing. As the globalised marketplace matures and becomes more discerning, the quest for a unique cultural point of difference becomes more difficult to obtain. Indigenous culture is now being identified as an important tool to represent cultural uniqueness, but this new emphasis raises ethical issues of appropriate engagement and knowledge ownership. The findings of this research could form a platform for an international expansion of this study. This is a global issue and one that requires a coordinated effort with potential collaborations with WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) and key international peak professional design organisations such as Icograda, the International Council of Communication Design.


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IMAGE REFERENCES (in order of appearance)


Kennedy, R. (2007). Historical timeline (Indigenous Australia)
Appendixes

Appendix A: Letters of Support for the Research

Koorie Heritage Trust

Mr Russell Kennedy
Main Student Investigator (PhD)
Swinburne University of Technology
Faculty of Art Design
PA Building
144 High Street
Pratrran Victoria 3181
16 July 2012

Dear Russell,

The Koorie Heritage Trust Inc commends yourself and Swinburne University, Department of Design for undertaking this important and much needed area of research.

The Koorie Heritage Trust regards this as a worthy initiative and is pleased to support and assist the PhD research activity titled:

Investigating Methods to Encourage Aboriginal Authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice

The support will take the form of:

> Reviewing and co-developing all research questionnaires and techniques.
> Recruiting members of the Aboriginal representative bodies as workshop attendees and research participants.
> Provide the Koorie Heritage Trust Board Room for the Melbourne workshop (10am-2.30pm)
> Recommend other sites around Australia for workshops and provide the relevant and appropriate introductions.
> Provide introductions to potential designers for case-study interviews.
> Ensure that the innovative solutions from the project fairly and equitably meet the needs of the Aboriginal community.
> Assist in the distribution and management of the evaluation questionnaire.

The Koorie Heritage Trust notes Swinburne’s pledge of Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research.

Given the involvement I have personally had in the project to date, I strongly urge you to consider the ability to convene the Melbourne workshop late July or early August as my employment at the Koorie Heritage Trust concludes August 2012.

We look forward to the commencement of the research and believe that we can assist with the recruitment of highly relevant and dedicated members of the Victorian Aboriginal community who will support the dialogue and development of innovative solutions for Aboriginal authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Paten
Chief Executive Officer
18 July 2012-07-18

Russell Kennedy
Main Student Investigator (PhD)
Swinburne University of Technology
Faculty of Art and Design
PA Building
144 High Street, Prahran
Victoria 3181

Dear Russell,

The Design Institute of Australia (DIA) congratulates you and Swinburne University, Department of Design on undertaking this important and much needed area of research.

The DIA regard this as worthy initiative and is pleased to assist you with the data gathering phase of the research project titled:

Investigating Methods to Encourage Aboriginal Authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice

The specific support from the DIA will include:

- Recruiting members of the Australian design community as workshop attendees and research participants.
- Providing assistance in obtaining the use of sites for research activity (workshops).
- Provide introductions to potential designers for case-study interviews.
- Assist in the distribution and management of the evaluation questionnaire.

We look forward to the commencement of the research and believe we can offer a cohesive, networked interface with the design profession nationally.

The DIA is hopeful that this research will produce outcomes, which inform the future development national design policy in regard to promoting appropriate engagement with Indigenous knowledge by design practitioners.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Eppich
Director - National Strategy
Design Institute of Australia

CC Oliver Kratzer FDIA
National President

Philippa Rowland FDIA (Hon)
General Manager
Dear Russell,

RE: Investigating Methods to Encourage Aboriginal Authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice

As the peak national organization representing the Australian graphic and communications design industry, AGDA enthusiastically supports this research investigation. This is a timely research project, which has the potential to help our members to appropriately engage with and better understand indigenous knowledge.

AGDA congratulates Swinburne University, Department of Design for supporting you in the pursuit of this knowledge and understanding.

Guidance is definitely needed. This is a delicate and sensitive area for communication designers to navigate.

AGDA has agreed to support the data gathering aspect of this research in the following ways:

- Recruiting members of the Australian design community (communication design) as workshop attendees and research participants.
- Providing assistance in obtaining the use of sites for research activity (workshops)
- Provide introductions to communication designers for case-study interviews.
- Assist in the distribution and management of the evaluation questionnaire.

AGDA and its members are proud to be part of this important design research initiative.

Yours sincerely

Rita Siow
Executive Director
Appendix B
List of Research Participants

1) Patricia Adjei (Torres Strait) – Copyright Australia
2) Sue Alnutt – Nutshell Graphics
3) Clive Atkinson (Yorta Yorta) – Clive Atkinson Design
4) Mason Atkinson (Yorta Yorta) – Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce
5) Ken Cato – Cato Purnell and Partners
6) Laura Cornhill – Studio Binocular
7) Vicki Couzens (Gunditjmara) – Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum
8) Mimmo Cozzolino – Symbols of Australia
9) Maree Clarke (Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung/Yorta Yorta) – Artist/Designer
10) Charles deCosta (Zimbabwe, Africa) – Swinburne University of Technology
11) Fran Edmonds – Melbourne University
12) Kevin Finn – Open Manifesto
13) Geoff Fitzpatrick – Design Institute of Australia (DIA)
14) Francis Flood – Swinburne University of Technology
15) Elizabeth Gersakis – Melbourne University
16) Leigh Harris (Kanalu) – Ingeous Studios
17) Richard Henderson – R-Co Design
18) Derek Hopper – Design Consultant
19) Dillon Kombumerri (Yugemeir) – NSW Government Architect’s Office
20) David Lancashire – David Lancashire Design
21) Dianne Lancashire – David Lancashire Design
22) Andrew Lane – Swinburne University
23) Marcus Lee (Karajarri descendant) – Marcus Lee Design
24) Justin Mansfield – TANK Branding
25) Colin McKinnon-Dodd (Yamatji) – Mia Mia Gallery
26) Sally McNeil – FutureBrand
27) Tom Mosby (Torres Strait) – Koorie Heritage Trust
28) Kimberly Moulton (Yorta Yorta) – Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum
29) Ros Moriarty – Jumbana Group
30) Kevin Murray – RMIT University
31) Narah Naarden – Bates Smart Architects
32) David Okotel (Uganda, Africa) – Swinburne University of Technology
33) Sharon Paten (Gunnai) – Koorie Heritage Trust
34) Alison Page (Walbanga–Wadi Wadi) – National Aboriginal Design Agency
35) Dean Parkin (Quandamoka) – Second Road
36) John Patten (Bundjalung–Yorta Yorta) – Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum
37) Jeffrey Pratt (Jaara descendant) – Upatree Productions
38) Joanne Pritchard – Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum
39) Mark Rose (Gunditjmara) – Deakin University
40) Lynette Russell (Wotabaluk descendant) – Monash University
41) Rita Siow – Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA)
42) Rosemary Simons – Rosemary Simons Design
43) Craig Small – Deadly Design
44) Nicholas Teo – Swinburne University of Technology
45) Barrie Tucker – Barrie Tucker Design
46) Jonathan Wallace – Alter Design
47) Natalie Walker (Kuku-Yalanji) – Supply Nation
48) David Williams (Wakka Wakka) – Gilimbaa
49) Marc Williams (Yorta Yorta) – Deadly Design
50) Andrew Wood – Latitude Design
Appendix C
Aligned Writings and Lectures Undertaken during Candidature


2012 Keynote Lecture – *Solved by design: The relevance of the creative industries to society*. Asian Creative Industries Alliance Conference (Shanghai Design Week), Shanghai.


2011 Keynote Speaker – *Icograda, INDIGO and Indigenous design*. Opening of Originality 100 Conference and Mother Tongue and Native Waves Exhibition National Taiwan University of Arts, Taiwan.

Appendix D
Human Ethics Approval:

Note: the Human Ethics approval notification (below) features the original thesis title, which later changed to: Designing with Indigenous Knowledge: Policy and protocols for respectful and authentic cross-cultural representation in communication design practice.

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SUHREC Project 2012/186 Ethics Clearance
Sheila Hamilton-Brown <shamiltonbrown@swin.edu.au>
Fri 5/10/2012 3:17 PM

To: Associate Professor Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall; Design
Mr Russell Kennedy

Dear Dori and Russell

SUHREC Project 2012/186 Investigating Methods to Encourage Aboriginal Authenticity in Contemporary Design Practice
Associate Professor Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall, Mr Russell Kennedy; Design
Approved Duration: 05/10/2012 To 31/12/2015 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol by Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). The responses to the review, as emailed on 26 September 2012 (with revised protocol and attachments including revised consent instruments), were put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project may proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator-supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Sheila
for Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC

******************************************************************************
Sheila Hamilton-Brown
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics & Biosafety)
(Tues, Wed & Fri)
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
PO Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel: 03 9214 5935
Fax: 03 9214 5267
Focus Group/Participatory Workshop Invitation:

Developing protocols and guidelines for appropriate visual representation of Indigenous knowledge in communication design practice.

**VISIBLE STEPS WORKSHOP**

**VISIBLE STEPS**, a doctoral research workshop, hosted by the Koorie Heritage Trust and cochaired by Russell Kennedy (PhD candidate) & Alison Page (Walbanga-Wadi Wadi):

**Russell Kennedy** - Adjunct Research Fellow, Faculty of Design, Swinburne University of Technology, Past President Icograda (International Council of Communication Design)

**Alison Page** - Creative Director, National Aboriginal Design Agency, Chief Executive Officer, Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance

Address: Koorie Heritage Trust board room, level 2, 295 King St, Melbourne
Date: Monday 17 June, 2013
Time: 10AM -1PM
RSVP: 0421 060 747 or russellkennedy@swin.edu.au

Supported by: Koorie Heritage Trust, Design Institute of Australia (DIA), Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA), Swinburne University of Technology, National Aboriginal Design Agency, Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum.