

Preface

'Treaty ... let's get it right' is an important contribution to a national dialogue in Australia, a nation that has been shaped by a history that contains little trace of Treaty or peaceful co-existence amongst its Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Treaty has been a part of the Indigenous political agenda for many years still deliberations and discussions about Treaty have been few and far between. The recent acknowledgement by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation that this country was settled without treaty or consent of the Indigenous peoples put Treaty where it rightfully belongs—an issue that must now be discussed, debated, possibly rejected or perhaps embraced.

In 2000 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission established a National Treaty Think Tank whom it charged with raising awareness of treaty issues. In 2001 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) became a partner to this responsibility and commenced the engagement of treaty research, including a Treaty seminar series and Treaty Visiting Research Fellowship. I was fortunate to be engaged as the AIATSIS Treaty VRF in 2001 wherein I undertook to edit this collection of Treaty essays.

'Treaty ... let's get it right' is primarily concerned with communicating treaty matters to a wide as possible audience, especially the youth. Whether they be Indigenous to this country or descended from the many countries that now make up this multicultural nation, there can be no doubt that they will be the future judges of Treaty. Hopefully this collection of papers will be of some help to them as they learn of Treaty and what it may or may not mean in Australia.

Whether one is a supporter or not of Treaty, there can be no doubt that this book breaks new ground in its consideration of the many possibilities and aspects of an Australian treaty process, an important first step in any domestic treaty process.

The contributors to this book give no certain answers, nor do they address all the issues that could possibly be associated with a national treaty dialogue. However, they give an important voice to Treaty and the many subject matters that have been left largely unheard.

The essay papers engage in a broad range of topics including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty, constitutional change, governance, histories of treaty, settlement and agreement making within and outside of the native title sphere, issues for the Torres Strait, intellectual and cultural property, international human rights law, perspectives of youth, international experiences with treaties, education and language, concepts of citizenry, matters of identity.

All contributors, from the National Treaty Think Tank and the individuals approached by AIATSIS to write papers for this book, are Indigenous people from many parts of Australia. And they raise a great diversity of subject matters and personal opinions in 'Treaty ... let's get it right'. Like many Indigenous peoples, past and present, they have a passion for Treaty that resonates through this book.

Hannah McGlade