

Calculating lives: the numbers and narratives of forced removals in Queensland 1859 - 1972

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“But there are other important side-issues in connection with the reserves and these are:
Upon what grounds are we justified in removing Aboriginals to these reserves at all?”

Walter Roth, *Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals for 1901*, p. 18

STATEMENT

I certify that this work is an original piece of research. It is based on primary sources and, except where otherwise acknowledged, the findings and conclusions are my own. All primary and secondary sources are acknowledged and correct to the best of my knowledge. The material contained in this thesis has not been submitted, in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Mark Stephen Copland

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ABSTRACT

European expansion caused dramatic dislocation for Aboriginal populations in the landmass that became the state of Queensland. On the frontiers, violence, abductions and forced relocations occurred on a largely informal basis condoned by colonial governments. The introduction of protective legislation in the late nineteenth century created a formal state-directed legal and administrative framework for the forcible removal and institutionalisation of Aboriginal people. This became the cornerstone for policy direction in Queensland and remained so into the mid-twentieth century.

This thesis traces the development of policies and practices of removal in Queensland from their beginnings in the nineteenth century through to their dismantling in the mid-twentieth century. There has been much historical research into frontier violence and processes of dispossession in Queensland. The focus of this study is the systematic analysis of archival data relating to the forced removals of the twentieth century.

The study has its genesis in an Australian Research Council Strategic Partnership with Industry — Research and Training Scheme (SPIRT) grant. This grant enabled the construction of a Removals Database, which provides a powerful tool with which to interrogate available records pertaining to removals of Aboriginal people in Queensland.

Removals were a crucial element in the gathering and exploitation of Aboriginal labourers during the twentieth century. They also constituted a major form of control for the departments responsible for Aboriginal affairs within the Queensland administration.

Tensions between a policy of complete segregation and the demand for Aboriginal labour in the wider community existed throughout the period of study. While segregation was implemented to an extent in relation to targeted sections of the Aboriginal population, such as “half-caste” females, employer insistence on access to reliable, cheap Aboriginal labour invariably took precedence.

Detailed analysis of recorded reasons for removals demonstrates that they are unreliable in explaining why individuals were actually removed. They show a changing focus over time. Fluctuations in numbers of removals for different years reflect reasons not officially acknowledged in the records, such as the need to populate newly created reserves and establish institutional communities. They tell us little about the situation of Aboriginal people, but much about the racial thinking of the time.

This study contributes to our knowledge base about the implementation and extent of Aboriginal child separation in Queensland. A comprehensive estimate of the number of separations concludes that one in six Aboriginal children in Queensland were separated from their natural families as a result of past policies.

Local Aboriginal Protectors (usually police officers) played a major role in the way that the policy of removals was implemented. Local factors often determined the extent of removals as much as policy direction in the centralised Office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Removals took place across vast distances, and the Chief Protector was often totally reliant on local protectors for information and advice. This meant that employers and local protectors could have a major impact on the rate of removals in a given location.

Responses of both Protectors and Aboriginal people to the policy of removals were not always compliant. Some Protectors worked to ensure that local Aboriginal people could remain in their own community and geographical location. Aboriginal people demonstrated a degree of resistance to the policy and there are a numerous recorded examples of extraordinary human endurance where they travelled large distances in difficult circumstances to return to their original locations and communities.

The policy of removals impacted on virtually every Aboriginal family in the state of Queensland and the effects of the dislocations continue to be experienced to this day.

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Abbreviations

BTH – Bringing Them Home Report of National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission

CPA – Chief Protector of Aboriginals

CPH – Community and Personal Histories Branch, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Queensland Government.

DATSIP - Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Queensland Government.

DCPA – Deputy Protector of Aboriginals

DNA – Director of Native Affairs

DDNA – Deputy Director of Native Affairs

HREOC – Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission

NAA – National Archives of Australia

PA – Protector of Aboriginals

RCIADIC – Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

RD – Removals Database . This refers to the database constructed as a part of this project. The database is the property of Community and Personal Histories, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Queensland Government

Introduction

The policy of removals affected every Aboriginal family and community living in the state of Queensland between 1897 and 1971. Even if they were not directly affected, all Aboriginal people living during this period knew of the policy and adapted their lives accordingly. This past policy continues to have an impact in contemporary Australian society. Debates over native title in the 1990s centred on whether Aboriginal people retained rights in the soil following the effects of dispossession.¹ In 2005, Aboriginal people still need to prove a “continuing connection” with country in order to have their native title rights recognised as part of the federal government’s legislative framework of native title. Removals are an important factor when claimants endeavour to “prove continuing connection” to land.

Following the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families in 1997, the term “removal” in relation to Aboriginal people has popularly been understood to mean the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents. This study deals with the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, but also looks at the removal of adults, and in some cases the removal of whole communities.²

¹ An example of this is Senator Brian Harradine’s speech in which he described how Aboriginal people for thousands of years had, “savoured the soil”: Australian Federal Parliament, *Senate Hansard*, Tuesday 25 November 1997: p.9438.

² Two examples of this: in 1908 the word *tribe* is an entry in the removals register to describe people being removed from Blackwater to Barambah; and in 1916 a whole community was removed from Kuranda to Mona Mona: QSA Removals Register A/64785 p.9;119.

From the first incursions of Europeans into the colony of Queensland, Aboriginal people were forced to move from their own territories. Whilst they were officially to be treated as British subjects, in reality this treatment did not include freedom of movement. For much of the nineteenth century, an ad hoc system of removals existed, and this period of ‘informal removals’ will be dealt with in Chapter 1 of the thesis. This changed with the passing of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*, which gave the Minister responsible for Aboriginal affairs in Queensland the legal power to remove any Aboriginal person to a reserve.³

The policy of removals has been described as ‘the cornerstone’ of the Queensland reserve system, yet it is difficult to define what constitutes a removal.⁴ The difficulty in defining “a removal” can be seen when one considers how the policy affected Aboriginal people in Queensland. Aboriginal people who were forced to sign “employment agreements” whilst not living on reserves or missions could also be considered to have been forcibly removed from their country. A large number of these people had no real choice in the signing of agreements. For more than 8 per cent of removals, “refusal to work or sign an agreement” was the stated reason.⁵ The intersection between employment and removals policies will be dealt with in depth in Chapter 5.

Whilst I would argue that employment agreements and bonds were a form of removal, it is beyond the scope of this project to deal with them in detail due to the extensive time

³ This was lawful under section 9 of the 1897 Act. Aboriginal people exempted from this legislation could not be removed — although the exemption could be revoked at any time.

⁴T. Blake, “Deported at the Sweet Will of the Government: The Removal of Aborigines to Reserves in Queensland, 1897–1939”, *Aboriginal History*, vol.22, 1998, p. 51.

required for further research and the many challenges in the archival records.⁶ Nevertheless, this area is one that requires similar historic attention to removals. The use of cheap and unpaid Aboriginal labour contributed much to Queensland's economy. At the same time, it impacted severely on the economic base and family life of many Aboriginal people.

Definition of Removal

As outlined above, Aboriginal people were forced to move for a variety of reasons. The expansion of European settlement and violence on the frontier forced Aboriginal people to seek refuge or to relocate. Abduction of men, women and children accompanied the expansion of pastoral, agricultural and fishing industries. The first chapter of the thesis concentrates on the emergence of the policy of removals in nineteenth century Queensland. These early removals often took place with the tacit approval of the state. This study will focus on removals that took place within the formal or legislative framework of the state. For the purposes of this study, a removal is taken to mean:

⁵ CPH Database. Removals involving employment will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

⁶ More than two years of detailed primary research at the Queensland State Archives and the office of Community and Personal Histories⁶ has been undertaken for this research project. This has involved more than 400 days spent on reading records and data entry. A similar period of time would need to be spent researching bonds and employment agreements. The nature of the data relating to employment of Aborigines would also bring a range of challenges to such a task. The annual reports for the department responsible for Aboriginal affairs between 1900 and 1947 record 156 113 employment agreements or permits. The actual number of Aboriginal people employed during this period could be considerably higher. One reason for this is that a single employment permit or agreement was often issued for a number of Aboriginal employees.⁶ Thousands of employment agreements were issued for a period as short as a month, and many of these were not recorded in a central register. If we looked at the period from 1900 to 1971, the number of agreements would be well over 200 000. To combine employment agreements with removals as part of a useable database would have been impossible to achieve within the timeframe of this project. The nature of employment records could not be manipulated in a similar way to the removals database, but other quantitative methodologies could be applied to the data.

The forcible movement of an Aboriginal person to a church or state run institution. This action is brought about or sanctioned by the state often through the use of race-based legislation.

These removals are distinct from the sending of Aboriginal people to gaols or welfare institutions set aside for the use of the wider public. Put simply, they are instances where Aboriginal people have had their freedom almost totally restricted due to their racial background. In saying this, it is recognised that the criminal justice system often clearly discriminated along racial lines. McGuire and Finnane have demonstrated the uneven application of justice to Aboriginal people during the colonial period.⁷ In a study of punishment of Aborigines in the colonies of Queensland and Western Australia, they link the treatment of Aboriginal prisoners with the development of the ‘race-specific incarceration’⁸ that is the focus of this study;

Underlying the perception that racially-specific policies were required for indigenous offenders was the idea that Aborigines themselves were irreconcilably different.⁹

This thesis represents the most comprehensive analysis of Aboriginal removals in Queensland to date. Whilst other states and colonies in Australia had similar practices of

⁷ Mark Finnane and John McGuire, “The uses of punishment and exile — Aborigines in Colonial Australia’ *Punishment and Society*, vol. 3, no.2, 2001, pp. 279-298.

⁸ Term used by Finnane and McGuire, *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 285.

removal, the nature of records held in those states would preclude similar analysis.¹⁰ As a result of this work, it is now possible to know who was removed along with factors affecting removals over a period of 112 years. This has been made possible through the construction of the Removals Database.

The Removals Database

This survey and analysis of removals in Queensland has been a part of a SPIRT¹¹ project initiated by Regina Ganter and Mark Finnane in partnership with the Community and Personal Histories (CPH) Branch of Queensland's Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP). The outcome of the collaboration between Griffith University and the DATSIP is the Removals Database.

The Community and Personal Histories Branch was established in 1992 in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC). The CPH Branch assists members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Queensland to conduct family and community historical research. The final RCIADIC report highlighted the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal people have access to archival documents relating to their own families.

Access to knowledge can assist: to reinstate pride in family experiences;
enhance a stronger sense of identity; re-establish contacts with family
members; reaffirm interaction within broad family networks; revive and

¹⁰ Personal communication with Peter Read for New South Wales, Anna Haebich for Western Australia and Tasmania, Peggy Brock for South Australia and Bill Wilson for the Northern Territory.

maintain Aboriginal traditions, understand the historical background of contemporary personal issues; re-claim ownership of material pertaining to family life; develop resource and enhance research skills.¹²

This thesis contributes to this effort to make archival collections more accessible to Aboriginal people in Queensland. This database is the property of DATSIP. It is now possible to search for removals by year, place name, personal name and in some cases tribal name. The database also provides the user with access to information gleaned from thousands of files previously not researched in a systematic fashion. The archival evidence used in constructing the database dates back to 1859 — the year that Queensland was proclaimed a separate colony. The database and the archival evidence used to construct it form the basis of this thesis. Chapter 2 describes the construction of the database. The influence of three Chief Protectors of Aborigines (CPA) is also examined.

RCDIAC touched upon the devastating effects of policies of Aboriginal child separation. In investigating the backgrounds of Aboriginal people dying in custody, the Royal Commission found that “the impact of earlier programs of separation of families, forced relocation and institutionalisation was a significant underlying issue.¹³ In 1990, the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care submitted that there was no Aboriginal family untouched by the policy of child separation.¹⁴

¹¹ Australian Research Council Strategic Partnership with Industry — Research and Training Scheme.

¹² Commissioner Dodson, RCIADIC National Report Volume 2, Section 11.7.19.

¹³ J.H. Muirhead, RCIADIC, Interim Report, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, p.12.

¹⁴ RCIADIC, National Report, Volume 2, Section 11.7.7

In 1995, the federal government established a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. Over a period of two years, the inquiry took written and oral evidence from across the country. The findings of the inquiry were tabled in the federal parliament in May 1997. In an essay titled “In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right”, Robert Manne highlighted the significance of the inquiry.

No inquiry in recent Australian history has had a more overwhelming reception nor, at least in the short term, a more culturally transforming impact. ... Very rapidly the question of Aboriginal child removal moved from the margin to the centre of Australian self-understanding and contemporary political debate.¹⁵

The creation of this database clearly addresses one of the key recommendations of the Inquiry’s *Bringing Them Home Report* (BTH):

Recommendation 22a: That all government record agencies be funded as a matter of urgency by the relevant government to preserve and index records relating to Indigenous individuals, families and/or

¹⁵ Robert Manne, “In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right”, *The Australian Quarterly Essay*, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5–6.

communities and records relating to all children, Indigenous or otherwise, removed from their families for any reason.¹⁶

The database has been developed in a way that protects the privacy of individuals in keeping with recommendation 22b of *BTH*. It is able to generate statistics that will contribute to our understanding of the process of removal while at the same time fulfilling a primary objective — that of better enabling Indigenous Queenslanders seeking to piece together the jigsaw that past government policies and actions have created.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody also recommended:

Recommendation 53. That Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments provide access to all government archival records pertaining to the family and community histories of Aboriginal people so as to assist the process of enabling Aboriginal people to re-establish community and family links with those people from whom they were separated as a result of past policies of government. The Commission recognizes the questions of the rights to privacy and questions of confidentiality may arise and recommends that principles and process for access to such records should be negotiated between government and appropriate Aboriginal organizations, but such negotiations should

¹⁶ *Bringing Them Home, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (*BTH*), Sterling Press, Sydney, April 1997, p. 347.

proceed on a basis that as a general principle access to such documents should be permitted.¹⁷

The object of this thesis is to analyse the details and findings of the database and policies of removal. Whilst a number of historians have dealt with removals to date, there has not yet been a systematic analysis of the policies and practices of removal of Indigenous people in Queensland.

This discussion and analysis will focus on the removal of Aboriginal people. It is recognised that many Torres Strait Islander people were also removed and came under legislation that made this removal “legal”. The database includes Torres Strait Islander removals that fall under the definition of a removal, but it is beyond the scope of the thesis to deal with the experience of Torres Strait Islanders in the thorough and systematic manner that this deserves.

The Data

The data used in the construction of the Removals Database has been drawn largely from government documents and files held at the Queensland State Archives. These primary documents range in dates from 1859 to the 1980s. Between 1859 and 1896, the Colonial Secretary’s Department was the main administrative arm of the newly formed Queensland government. All 807 bundles of Colonial Secretary’s Department

¹⁷ RCIADIC National Report, Volume 2, 1991, Section 11.7.21.

correspondence held in the Queensland State Archives were carefully combed for evidence of Aboriginal people removed within the state.

Between 1900 and 1971, three handwritten registers of removals were kept by the office of the CPA, later the Director of Native Affairs (DNA). These removals registers form the backbone of the database but contain many gaps. For example, the first legislation empowering the state to remove Aboriginal people on the basis of their racial background was the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act* 1865, yet the first register begins with removals from 1900. This database includes all recorded removals prior to 1900.

The majority of removals are contained in two main registers covering the years 1908 to 1971, but no removals are recorded in these registers for the years 1936 to 1942. This study takes into account all removals prior to 1908 along with other removals which have “fallen through the cracks” of the existing registers. Many removals not found in the registers can be located in other files and documents. These gaps have been plugged through a thorough examination of hundreds of removal cards and thousands of correspondence files and official reports, mainly located within the government departments responsible for Aboriginal affairs throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The records of nineteenth century children’s institutions have been drawn upon for this project but, for reasons of privacy, individual records within the Department of Children’s Services (or its later equivalent) have not been accessed.

Two years have been spent daily attending the Queensland State Archives and the CPH offices.¹⁸ The actual number of hours spent on the primary research phase of this project far exceeds two years because at times I worked with a research assistant and fellow postgraduate student combing records for evidence of removals. The equivalent of nine months' full-time research was spent on researching the colonial period alone. Records from the Police Department, the Health and Home Affairs Department, the Department of Children's Services, the Lands Department along with the Premier's Department have been accessed as part of the research for this project.

Ethical Considerations

The research plan for this project has been submitted to the Griffith University Ethics Committee and adheres to the guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council. Aboriginal historian Jackie Huggins has highlighted a number of important ethical issues that need to be considered when writing about Aboriginal people.¹⁹ In a chapter titled "Respect versus Political Correctness", she argues the importance of proper consultation with relevant Aboriginal organisations. One of Huggins' guiding principles for such research is that "the material needs to empower not disempower Indigenous people".²⁰ This research has involved almost daily working with staff from Community and Personal Histories Branch of DATSIP. In the research and public dissemination of this work, I have listened to and valued the advice of Aboriginal people working in the Community and Personal Histories Branch.

¹⁸ Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Queensland government).

¹⁹ J. Huggins, *Sister Girl: The Writings of Aboriginal Activist and Historian Jackie Huggins* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998), pp. 86–87.

²⁰ *ibid.*

Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus note that the work of white historians may be regarded with scepticism and hostility by some Indigenous Australians. In their preface to *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, they argue that no field of research should be “constrained” by such feelings:

We reject the idea that fields of study should be the sole preserve of particular groups or that some sort of certificate of authenticity be required before one can work in a field such as this. It is our view that the historical imagination cannot be thus constrained — that a work needs to be assessed on its merits, not on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion or political beliefs of the author.²¹

While the ethnicity of the author should not impact on the subject written about, the degree of government surveillance which created the records drawn upon for this study should always be kept in mind. Aboriginal people in Queensland had many aspects of their lives recorded and judged by authorities in a way unimaginable to the rest of the population in a liberal democracy. When a researcher works with material of a sensitive nature, ethics require that the person conducting the research use that information in a manner that the persons being researched would find appropriate. This is not to say that one’s academic freedom to interpret or analyse the material has been inhibited. The fact is that the researcher has been granted a privilege in accessing this material and should

²¹ Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights A Documentary History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. xxi.

ensure that, as far as possible, the dignity of the people about whom the records are written is maintained. Peter Read has raised the issue of Australian historians having a code of ethics when working in this and other areas of history. He argues that, whilst academic freedom remains central, the time has come “to allow that other considerations also are relevant to the academic process”.²²

What, then, are these “other considerations”? In discussing the need for access to records for Aboriginal people the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody considered the pain this access can cause:

The effect of seeing information which has been kept confidential, because it is private information, or because it was the practice in some States to document every governmental action and ungenerous remark of an administrator, can be devastating. Sympathetic counselling, especially by other Aboriginal people who have themselves been adopted or institutionalised, such as the Link Up staff, ought to be available to Aboriginal people who gain access to records of their family. We should be mindful of the emotional hurt which can be caused.²³

Almost every removal entered into the database has an accompanying stated reason for that removal. The majority of these reasons are of a subjective nature, and many contain sensitive information concerning individuals regarding such things as health and morality

²² Peter Read, “Come On In, the Water’s Fine” *AHA Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1990, p. 40.

²³ *RCIADIC National Report*, Volume 2, Section 11.7.20.

along with subjective judgements and assumptions. This information is restricted from public access and CPH works to ensure that only family members of those removed have access to these details. The database provides the user with what might be termed "hard data" — where individuals were removed from, removed to and the year that this removal took place. An archival reference is also provided to the database user. To access the stated reasons for removal, the database user must follow current protocols administered by CPH.

Much sensitive material is contained in the general correspondence files used in the construction of this database, and the privacy of the individual has been maintained in the use of these files. Other personal files containing information specifically relating to individuals and their families have not been accessed in the research for this project. The database has been constructed with the aim of facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's easy access to information regarding their families and ancestors.

Issues of Interpretation

There is no denying the historical fact of removals. The contest or debate begins when the motivations behind and reasons used for these removals are considered. A plethora of reasons for removal can be found in the removal orders. These include "immoral conduct", "refuses to work", "mixes with Chinese", "neglected", "for own good", "inciting other aboriginals to [*sic*] strike", "for medical treatment" and "dangerously affected by moon".²⁴ Chapter 3 of the thesis critically examines these stated reasons and analyses their use over time to determine whether they were excuses for removal or had

some basis in the claims that they made. In stating this it must be made clear that, whether or not the stated reasons had any basis they can in no way be seen as justifying the removal of Aboriginal people to a life of institutionalisation. The policy of removals was a racialised policy which treated Aboriginal people as a separate group. This thesis will show, that even when need was identified amongst the Aboriginal population, removal did little to alleviate this need.

The study will use numbers and narratives to arrive at a better understanding of the development of the policy of removals in Queensland. Numbers will be used as a way of interrogating the motives and factors affecting removals.

Numbers have played a central role in recent debates in Australian history. In March 2000, the federal government made a submission to a Senate Committee Inquiry into the Stolen Generation that disputed calculations and estimates of separated children discussed in *BTH*. The submission argued that the number of separated children did not constitute a “stolen generation”.²⁵ One of its principal propositions was that the proportion of Aboriginal children separated from their parents was no more than 10 per cent and that there had never been a generation of stolen children.²⁶ This submission built upon the work of a small number of newspaper columnists and non-historians such as P.P. McGuinness in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Ron Brunton in Brisbane’s

²⁴ QSA Removals Registers A/64785 and A/64786.

²⁵ Federal government submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee Inquiry into the Stolen Generation, March 2000, p.18

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. ii.

Courier Mail attacking *BTH*. Articles also appeared in metropolitan newspapers and journals such as *Quadrant* and *The Institute of Public Affairs Review*.

Quadrant nurtured and supported another Australian historical controversy involving numbers in September 2000. Former academic and author Keith Windschuttle delivered a paper entitled “The Myths of Frontier Violence” at a *Quadrant* Seminar in Sydney, and following the seminar, *Quadrant* published a series of three articles jointly titled “The Myths of Frontier Massacres in Australian History” in which Windschuttle argued that stories of massacres of Aborigines in colonial Australia had been exaggerated by “neurotic Christian missionaries searching for souls and careers”.²⁷ This he claimed had then been continued by “twentieth century leftist historians intent upon denying the legitimacy of the British settlement and denigrating Australia’s good name”.²⁸ The second article in Windschuttle’s trilogy, “The Fabrication of the Aboriginal Death Toll”, dealt with the number of Aboriginal lives lost on Australian frontiers in the nineteenth century. Windschuttle contested previous estimates of the numbers of lives lost on the frontier as well as ratios of white to black deaths. These estimates had been made by historian Henry Reynolds in his influential book *The Other Side of the Frontier*.²⁹

The controversies surrounding the separation of Aboriginal children and frontier violence generated considerable publicity. All major newspapers covered the issue and commentators and historians debated the issues in a range of public forums. The debate

²⁷ Manne, “In Denial”, p. 94.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Keith Windschuttle, ‘The Fabrication of the Aboriginal Death Toll’, *Quadrant*, November 2000, pp. 17–24.

became labelled “the history wars”.³⁰ Thousands of words have been devoted to the controversies, and they have become topics for conferences and a number of books.³¹ The public debate probably hit its lowest level when the life story of a prominent Aboriginal leader, Lowitja O’Donohue, was interrogated and, she was trapped into answering questions about whether, as a small girl, she was “stolen” or “removed” from her mother.³²

Organisations such as the conservative Bennelong Group based in Sydney³³ have supported the work of journalists and commentators who have sought to discredit the findings of the *BTH*. They have argued that Aboriginal policies from the 1970s have failed, and one reason for this is that the wider Australian public have wrongly seen Aborigines as victims. Commentators such as Michael Duffy have proposed that one way of remedying this state of affairs would be to “re-evaluate parts of history where their victimhood might have been exaggerated”.³⁴

In a sense, these commentators are late to the game. Debates over the portrayal of Aboriginal people as passive victims took place within Australian historical circles in the

³⁰ For example, see the front cover of *The Australian Review of Books* (March 2001) “History — Whose History? Henry Reynolds on the Slaughter of Black History” and “Inga Clendinnen: the Real History Wars”.

³¹ Eg. *Frontier Conflict – the Australian Experience* – National Museum of Australia, Canberra, December 2001 and *Tasmanian Aboriginal History: Fabrication or Fact?* Roundtable Conference on Tasmanian History, 16 May, 2003; Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict The Australian Experience* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003); Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2003); Manne, “In Denial”; Robert Manne (ed.), *White Wash; on Keith Windschuttle’s Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2003).

³² ‘Aboriginal Leader’s Shock Admission’ *Herald Sun*, 23 February 2001; ‘Aboriginal Leader Sorry for Stolen Child Claim’, *Courier Mail*, 24 February 2001.

³³ Other organisations include the Sir Samuel Griffith Society and the Institute of Public Affairs.

³⁴ “Truth, Statistics and Massacres” *Courier-Mail* 23 September 2000.

early 1990s. Huggins succinctly posits that Aboriginal people should be depicted as both victims and survivors.³⁵

Windschuttle's broadest attack was on what he called the scourge of "separatist policy". He put forward the view that "massacre stories" had been invented as "ideological supports for the policy of separatism".³⁶ As this thesis deals with the history of so-called separatism in Queensland, that is — the removal of Aboriginal people to separate institutions — Windschuttle's claims will be addressed fully. The first chapter of this thesis will clearly demonstrate his misreading of history and lack of evidence for such claims.

Truth-telling plays a central part in any process of reconciliation. A greater understanding of the historical practice of removals in Queensland is not just important for Aboriginal citizens of the state; it is important for all who call this place home. Professor Larissa Behrendt writes of the importance of all Australians truly grappling with their past:

For White Australia, the current challenges are even greater as there is more division about the vision of what kind of Australia we should be living in from the non-Indigenous side of the equation. This split is evidence of an identity crisis and finds its current form in the "culture wars", the fierce debates about the telling of history, the squabbling about numbers killed on the frontier and the debates over the proper legal definition of "genocide".

³⁵ Huggins, *Sister Girl*, p. 87.

These "culture wars" are not about Aboriginal history because our experience and perspectives remain unchanged by semantic and numerical debates by academics. They are, instead, a battle about white history and, more importantly, white identity.³⁷

Quantitative History: The Numbers

Numbers have been central to debates surrounding the Stolen Generations and frontier violence. Some of the questions raised relating to numbers have been: How many Aboriginal children were stolen? How many children separated would be needed to constitute a generation? How many Aboriginal people were killed by white hands on Australian frontiers? How many deaths make a massacre? What was the death ratio of whites and blacks on the frontier? An over-arching question that appears to have been the driving force for those whom Robert Manne has labelled "denialists" is the controversial issue of whether the policies concerning the forcible separation of Aboriginal children from their parents amounted to acts of genocide.

It is not the purpose of this study to answer all of the above questions or to fully engage in the semantics of "the history wars". This study will address the broader issue of how Australian historians, and in more recent times political commentators, have dealt with numbers. Some of the questions that will be dealt with are: How useful or necessary are estimates for historians? What can numbers and statistics reveal about policies over time?

³⁶ Keith Windschuttle, "The Myths of Frontier Massacres in Australian History", *Quadrant*, December 2000, p. 19.

What can quantitative history bring to the larger field of social history? The intersection of technology and the practice of history will also be discussed. To date, historians have mainly used personal computers along with word processing software. Greenstein, however points out that historians have for a long time been involved in developing systems to collect, organize and selectively retrieve information.³⁸

The history of race relations in Australia has largely been the domain of historians employing qualitative methodologies. Much of the work has been thorough and constructed from a wide range of sources. Blake, Critchett, Goodall, Haebich, Markus, Milliss, Reece, Reynolds and Thorpe along with many others, have mined archival and oral sources to provide readers of Australian history with an understanding of our past, and have well and truly broken “the Great Australian Silence” highlighted by W.E.H. Stanner in 1968.

Rowley’s *Destruction of Aboriginal Society* was one of the first studies to address the Queensland frontier and the establishment of a system of reserves. Whilst subsequent writers have found fault with his approach, Rowley played a valuable role in starting to unravel “the cult of forgetfulness”.³⁹ Historians Raymond Evans, Kathryn Cronin and Kay Saunders rightly claim that, prior to their publication *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, no book had been “so diligently — perhaps obsessively — researched from

³⁷ Professor Larissa Behrendt, “From the Periphery to the Centre: A New Role for Indigenous Rights”, 2003 Law and Justice Address, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, www.lawfoundation.net.au/justice_awards/2003address.html.

³⁸ Daniel I. Greenstein, *A Historian’s Guide to Computing* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p.61.

³⁹ C.D. Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 157–86.

archival sources, contemporary newspapers and manuscript collections”.⁴⁰ Rosalind Kidd’s *The Way We Civilise*, published in 1997, was similarly groundbreaking. Whilst Evans had sourced previously neglected materials, Kidd sourced materials for her PhD at Griffith University which had been previously restricted from the public.⁴¹ The breadth of primary material researched by Kidd would definitely make the term “empirical history” an understatement. Kidd conducted what could almost be termed “historical auditing” in uncovering and highlighting the way in which the wages of Queensland Aboriginal people were stolen during most of the twentieth century.

Given the many histories of race relations and Aboriginal administration in Queensland what can this particular study that deals specifically with removals bring to the field? Geoffrey Bolton describes the role that access to archives has played in the development of an understanding of frontier history in Queensland:⁴²

it has sometimes been impossible to provide complete and objective histories of the Aboriginal presence in Australian history because researchers have not been able to get at the records.⁴³

The appointment of a full-time archivist in Queensland in 1959 provided a platform for historians such as Raymond Evans and Henry Reynolds to draw upon during the 1970s.

⁴⁰ Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975), p. xiv.

⁴¹ In 1990 Ros Kidd was granted access to Queensland departmental files dealing with Aboriginal Affairs. Prior to this much of the material had been restricted from any public access.

⁴² Geoffrey Bolton, ‘Reflections on Comparative Frontier History’, in Attwood and Foster, *Frontier Conflict and The Australian Experience*, p. 167.

⁴³ *ibid.*

The creation of CPH devoted to keeping and providing access to records led to further studies,⁴⁴ the most prominent of which has been *The Way We Civilise* by Rosalind Kidd. Evans and Kidd⁴⁵ viewed their sources through very different historical lenses —Evans favouring a race relations approach and Kidd an institutional or administrative approach. This thesis will enable readers to view the theories of Evans, Kidd and others using the large amount of empirical evidence collected as part of the Removals Database project.

Quantitative history has rarely been used in the history of Aboriginal Australians. An exception is *Our Original Aggression* by the economic historian Noel Butlin,⁴⁶ which examines the impact of diseases brought by Europeans after 1788 on the Aboriginal populations of Southeastern Australia. Butlin suggests that the original Aboriginal population was much larger than had been previously accepted, and that there was a major decrease in this population due to the effects of small pox.⁴⁷ Using computer simulations, Butlin estimates the Aboriginal population in Southeastern Australia to have been in the order of 250,000 people, more than four times the estimate reached by Radcliffe-Brown in 1930.⁴⁸

Quantitative history in the Australian context has largely been employed in debates over the character and origins of the convicts. In the mid-1950s a view of the convicts which

⁴⁴ Community and Personal Histories Branch, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (Queensland government)

⁴⁵ Raymond Evans and Rosalind Kidd are both currently adjunct professors at Griffith University's Centre for Public Culture and Ideas.

⁴⁶ Noel Butlin, *Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of Southeastern Australia 1788–1850* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983)

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 8.

caste them as victims of circumstance, as people more “sinned against than sinning”⁴⁹ was overturned. Historians Manning Clark and Lloyd Robson combined previously neglected sources and quantitative methodology to bring about this revision, drawing on the convict indents to investigate the convicts’ “real character”. The indents recorded each convict’s name, age, education, religion, marital status, family, native place, employment background, offence, place of trial, time of trial, sentence, former conviction, height, complexion, colour of hair and eyes, along with special marks and scars and general remarks.⁵⁰ Robson in particular “crunched the numbers” using a systematic sample of five per cent of the convicts to create a database of more than 7000 entries. This was accomplished without the aid of a computer, relying instead on punch cards and a knitting needle — a prototype of a database.⁵¹

The view that convict women were largely prostitutes was one outcome of these quantitative studies.⁵² This misleading conclusion reflected the researchers’ uncritical acceptance of the convict indents and failure to consider conditions of production of the historical evidence, notably the influence of factors of class and gender. In the 1970s, this portrayal of convict women as “immoral” or “whores” was reinterpreted by feminist historians Miriam Dixson and Anne Summers. However, whilst questioning what prostitution meant in the context of the convict women’s lives, they did not question the

⁴⁸ D.J. Mulvaney and J. Peter White, ‘How Many People?’ in D.J. Mulvaney and J. Peter White (eds), *Australians to 1788* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1987), pp. 116–17.

⁴⁹ Deborah Oxley, *Convict Maids: the Forced Migration of Women to Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 22–25.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵² “A particular and resilient theme emerged, resurrecting a nineteenth century notion: convicts belonged to a professional criminal class.... These were professional criminals, or, in the case of women, professional prostitutes, who lived entirely through crime...”, *ibid.*

fundamental validity of the claims made about the character of convict women in the sources they used.⁵³ From the late 1980s, historians have dealt more rigorously and critically with records relating to convicts. Deborah Oxley utilised quantitative methods and computer software to comprehensively investigate the background to and experiences of convict women in her study, *Convict Maids*.⁵⁴ Oxley challenged depictions of convict women as immoral and dissolute harlots who contributed nothing to the colony other than vice.⁵⁵ Based on the convict indents, she found that convict women came to Australia “bearing economic luggage loaded down with substantial skills, social baggage well-packed with experiences of ordinary working life, and a conducive age distribution which should have served colonial development singularly well”.⁵⁶

The nature of the convict indents bears some similarity to the removals registers that are the basis for this study. Both sources contain what might be termed “hard data” and “soft data”. The hard data contained in the convict indents consist of name, age, education, religion, marital status, family, native place, height, complexion, colour of hair and eyes, etc. The hard data contained in the Queensland Removals Registers consist of name, place removed from, place removed to and sometimes age. Such hard data are reasonably straightforward, reliable and usually beyond dispute.

Both historical sources also contain soft data that are of a more contentious nature. The convict indents make pronouncements on the social worth of the convicts. Women are

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 237.

described as “a regular thief”, “prostitute”, etc. Far more subjective in nature are the reasons stated for removal which appear in the Queensland removals registers. Reasons such as “leading immoral life”, “separated from her husband”, “a bad influence”, “threat to Europeans” and “dangerous character” abound.⁵⁷ Both the convict indents and the removals register were compiled largely by white middle-class men with a range of assumptions as to what constituted fit and proper behaviour.

By separating and critically analysing the soft and hard data⁵⁸, this thesis will test the integrity of the soft data (in this case, reasons for removal). In conducting this study, I have refused to read the reasons for removal at face value. They will be tested and findings made as to what can be reliably read out of records regarding Aboriginal removals in Queensland.

The comparison between the convict indents and removals register cannot be taken too far. Aboriginal people removed in Queensland were never found guilty of a crime. They were unable to appeal their removal and never had “their day in court”. In fact, on many occasions when police were unable to find enough evidence to charge an Aboriginal person with a criminal offence, they removed the person instead. These extra-judicial removals will be dealt with in Chapter 3. There is little evidence to suggest that many Aboriginal people even had the reason for their removal explained to them.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁷ Registers of Removals, QSA A/64785 08/2146 ; A/69523, 11; Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals, 1902, 14; Col 483(a) Correspondence Relating to Fraser Island Settlement; CPH Removals Cards.

⁵⁸ This ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ data is similar to what Floud terms ‘nominal’ and ‘ordinal data’. Roderick Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* (London, Methuen and Co, 1973), pp. 8-10.

What can quantitative history bring to a history of removals of Aboriginal people? The work of Clark and Robson on the convict indents demonstrates that quantitative history has no ransom on the truth. Their findings simply quantified subjective assumptions that had been made about convicts. The pitfalls of such an approach have been considered in the construction of this study. As Oxley points out: “Reliability is a problem for both quantitative and qualitative data, and historians must constantly challenge the validity of sources, and find ways of testing them and methods of using them which overcome some limitations.”⁵⁹

The records relating to removals lend themselves to the quantitative method. The same range of pre-defined fields (year of removal, place removed from, placed removed to) are available for almost every record. The techniques employed in this study enable the data to be examined in a way that has not been done previously. As Hudson states, “Statistical techniques may enable us to uncover important characteristics which are not apparent in the raw data and to confirm that relationships and patterns in the data are not present merely by chance.”⁶⁰

The construction of the Removals Database allows us to address questions that cannot be answered through the use of qualitative evidence. The collection of data allows a breakdown of numbers of men and women removed at certain times and throughout the

⁵⁹ Oxley, *Convict Maids*, pp. 21–26.

⁶⁰ Pat Hudson, *History by Numbers An Introduction to Quantitative Approaches* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 21.

study period. A similar figure is available for children removed. To gain an overall picture of removals in Queensland, numbers of removals can be analysed year by year. An analysis of reasons used should also prove useful in better understanding the practice of removals. Racial factors such as the use of terms “half-caste” or “Chinese” can also be analysed as part of the removal process. The age of people removed has been analysed. Removals policies under various Protectors, along with factors such as geography, the spread of “settlement” and growth of particular industries will also be examined. The claims made by various historians regarding the policy of removals can be tested on the data collected.

One way to demonstrate the value of a study such as this is to compare results of other researchers and this project.

Table I.1 Comparison of Removals with Long (1970)

Period	Long	Copland	Difference
1911-13	410	490	80
1914-18	1685	1705	20
1919-23	1157	1374	217
1924-28	646	830	184
1929-33	813	947	134
1934-38	1063	1509	446
1939-40	308	343	35
TOTAL	6082	7198	1116

Source: Removals Database (RD); Jeremy Long, *Aboriginal Settlements: A Survey of Institutional Communities in Eastern Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), p. 96.

Long's 1970 survey of Aboriginal communities in Eastern Australia examined the number of removals occurring in Queensland between 1911 and 1940. This project has identified over 1000 extra removals during the same period.

Table I.2 Comparison of Average Removals per Year to Barambah with Blake (1991)

Period	Blake	Copland	Difference
1905 - 09	39	49.4	10.4
1910-14	77	92.4	15.4
1915-19	86	89.8	3.8
1920-24	28	46	18
1925-29	28	51.6	23.6
1930-34	24	39	15
1935-39	35	54.6	19.6

Source: R.D.; Thom Blake, 'A Dumping Ground: Barambah Aboriginal Settlement 1900-40', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1991, p. 193.

Similarly, this study has identified an annual average of 15 per cent more removals to Barambah not calculated in Thom Blake's 1991 study of the Southern Queensland settlement.⁶¹ This study has also identified a number of removals and separations not found in *BTH*. The Queensland government submission to the HREOC Inquiry had 1000

⁶¹ Blake, *A Dumping Ground*, p. 193.

fewer children removed and 400 less children separated from their parents than found in this study.⁶² The final chapter looks at previous estimates of Aboriginal children separated from their natural families and concludes that the policies and practices of the Queensland government affected at least 13076 children.

These comparisons are not used just to highlight deficiencies in previous studies. They provide evidence that a research project such as this is essential to gain a greater understanding of the extent and pattern of Aboriginal removals in Queensland. Figures such as those referred to above do not just represent a thousand extra removals that can be used as artillery in a “history war”. They represent a thousand more individual stories of dispossession and separation from country and kin. One of the values of this study is that members of the Queensland Aboriginal communities might be able to access records of removal which they had not previously been able to.

This comprehensive survey and analysis of removals with its database component is of practical benefit to the wider community and also furthers our understanding of past policies concerning the removal of citizens of Queensland. It draws on technology in a way that very few studies have done in the field of race relations. The removals registers and associated records are a rich source of data as yet unavailable in other states of Australia. The critical analysis of this data helps us move beyond a one-dimensional view of history to a shared history which includes all of us.

⁶² DATSIP Submission to National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, cited in Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles Fragmenting Indigenous Families*

Narratives of Removals

Whilst the method and approach to the data are quite similar to those of quantitative historians dealing with convicts, the basic questions asked of the data are fundamentally different. A number of historians have used the convict indents and similar sources to endeavour to answer the question of “Who were the convicts?”; however, Thorpe and Evans rightly criticise any claim that the convict indents can reveal the convicts’ essential nature.⁶³ An uncritical reading of sources like the Queensland removals registers runs the risk of producing a study “innocent of any analysis of power”.⁶⁴

The importance of the narrative in examining power relationships between historical actors is highlighted by Evans and Thorpe. They criticise some quantitative studies for their “unquestioned assumption about the unimpeachable nature of statistics”.⁶⁵ They rightly point out that the manner in which official data are collected should be considered. The class and power relationship between the collectors and the sources of the information being collated must be analysed along with the relationship between statistical data and the real human beings and social situations that such data are meant to represent.⁶⁶ This study begins with an approach that assumes that the registers of removal and removal orders reveal very little information about the Aboriginal people removed.

1800-2000 (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), p. 174.

⁶³ Raymond Evans and William Thorpe, ‘Power, Punishment and Penal Labour: Convict Workers and Moreton Bay’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 2, no. 98, 1992.

⁶⁴ Ian Duffield, Problematic Passages: ‘Jack Bushman’s Convict Narrative’ in Duffield and Bradley (eds), *Representing Convicts: New Perspectives on Convict Forced Labour Migration* (London: Leceister University Press, 1997), p. 23.

⁶⁵ Evans and Thorpe, “Power, Punishment and Penal Labour”, p. 93.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

Along with Tasmanian historian Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, I would argue that such registers reveal more about the writer than the subject of the writing.⁶⁷

The statistics generated by this study shine new light on the subject of removals in Queensland. Despite this, the word “removal” if captured within the world of pure statistics can become a clinical term, a simple form of transfer which does little to reflect the human journey and experience of removal. Each entry in the Queensland removal registers has a story of pain attached to it. The entry in the Annual Report for the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1903 which requests that a boy named Walter be separated from his mother and removed from Cardwell to Yarrabah does not depict the sick boy sobbing inside the Cardwell lock-up with his mother howling outside trying to comfort him.⁶⁸ The single entry of a “tribe” to be removed from Blackwater to Barambah found in the removals register for 1908 does not reflect the pain of those left behind who cut themselves with knives and tomahawks as an expression of their grief.⁶⁹ Nor do the nine removals from Cape York to Palm Island entered in the register for 1933 tell the story of guns, handcuffs, physical beatings, sexual assaults and neckchains used as four women and a child were marched 145 miles for a health examination.⁷⁰ Similarly the feats of endurance as people escaped institutional life and walked thousands of

⁶⁷ Hamish Maxwell-Stewart. “Counting Out the Strokes: Offence Records in Convict Van Diemen’s Land”, Paper delivered at Australian History Counts Conference, ANU, 1–3 November 2001.

⁶⁸ Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1903, p.13.; Robert Manne, ‘Nellie and Walter: Too Late to Heal Their Wounds’, *The Age*, 26 May 1999; William Craig to Home Secretary, Cardwell, 18 July 1904 QSA A/58751 CR1097/5; Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles*, pp. 290–292.

⁶⁹ Petition from J.T. Bartholemew and residents of Duaringa protesting brutality of police removal, 24 February 1909, QSA HOM/J47.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 4 for details of this removal from Cape York to Palm Island in 1932.

kilometres to return to their country can never be captured as an entry in a database or a line on a graph.⁷¹

Case studies or narratives will be used in this thesis to ensure that the human experience of removals is not lost in the numbers. Historian Inga Clendinnen makes the following case for focusing on the particular, the specific historic event:

My own view is that the quest for global interpretations and grand narratives is always a mistaken one, assuming a shapeliness in human affairs and a simplicity of human motivation never encountered in muddy actuality....Large theories may generate good questions, but they produce poor answers. The historian's task is to discover what happened in some actual past situation - what conflicting or confused intentions produced what outcomes - not to produce large truths. The most enlightening historical generalisations tend to be those that hover sufficiently close to the ground to illuminate the contours of intention and action in circumscribed circumstances.⁷²

Deborah Oxley also describes the advantages of employing quantitative methodologies:

⁷¹ In 1901 a man named Tommy Tomahawk was wrongly accused of murder and removed from the Cairns district to Fraser Island. He subsequently escaped and returned to Redlynch near Cairns and joined the tribe there. Following this he was removed to Barambah twice and escaped on both occasions. This journey was more than 2000 kilometres: Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals for 1901, p. 10. QSA Removals Register A/69523, p. 10; In 1913 two men made their way from Barambah to their place of origin, Coen — again a journey of more than 2000 kilometres: QSA A/64785.

⁷² Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Melbourne:Text Publishing,1998), pp. 21–22.

While I might feel guilty of losing sight of the specific, an aggregate approach allows me a vision of the bigger picture – a framework of understanding into which individuals can then be placed.⁷³

The course set for this study is to soar with Deborah Oxley over the broader patterns and numbers of removals and to hover with Inga Clendinnen around the narratives of individual removals. Numbers and narratives will be engaged in an interrogation of motives for and factors affecting removals. The use of the word “narrative” does not mean “the Aboriginal voice” or “the story of Aboriginal people”. The use of narrative in this sense is taken to simply mean the reconstruction of events based on the careful and critical use of primary sources. Narratives or case studies will be used to interrogate the reasons used for removal which appear in removal orders and removal registers created by the Chief Protector of Aborigines and his successors.

Numbers can often have a dehumanising effect. In total institutions⁷⁴ inmates can be addressed by numbers rather than by names. The number of people killed in a war hardly conveys the human experience of war. The number of people voting for a political party at an election masks the human thoughts and feelings that have brought about a political result. A pure concentration on numbers of people can dehumanise the experience of a group of people. But, while a focus on hard data can obscure the human experience of removals, a sole focus on the narratives of a small number of individuals might leave the

⁷³ Oxley, *Convict Maids*, p. 33.

⁷⁴ I am using the term “total institution” as defined by Goffman. In this work, Goffman discusses the taking of an inmate’s name in the admission procedure to a total institution: Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 18.

reader without any idea of what is typical or special about a particular case. This study will bring numbers and narratives together to get closer to understanding the policy of removing Aboriginal people in Queensland.