

**INDEPENDENT SCHOLARLY REPORTING ABOUT CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS:
NEGOTIATING ABORIGINAL NATIVE TITLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor/Master of
Philosophy/Education of Murdoch University 2007**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses an action research methodology to develop a framework for improving independent scholarly reporting about interventions addressing social or environmental conflict. As there are often contradictory interpretations about the causes and strategic responses to conflict, the problem confronting scholar-reporters is how to address perceptions of bias and reflexively specify the purpose of reporting. It is proposed that scholar-reporters require grounding in conventional *realist*-based social theory but equally ability to incorporate theoretical ideas generated in more *idealist*-based peace research and applied conflict resolution studies. To do this scholar-reporters can take a comparative approach systematically developed through an integrated framework as described in this thesis.

Conceptual and theoretical considerations that support both conventional and more radical constructions are comparatively analysed and then tested in relation to a case study. In 2000 Aboriginal people throughout South Australia deliberated whether their native title claims could be better accorded recognition through conservative court processes or a negotiation process to allay deep-seated conflict. The author, in a scholar-reporter capacity, formulated a report attributing meaning to this consultative process.

As such a report could have been formulated according to alternative paradigms, methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks, the analysis of the adopted framework highlights how different approaches can bias the interpretation of the process and prospects for change. *Realist*-based conservative interpretations emphasise 'official' decision-making processes where legitimacy is expressed through political and legal frameworks based on precedent. *Idealist*-based interpretations emphasise that circumstances entailing significant conflict warrant equal consideration being given to 'non-official' 'resolutionary' problem-solving processes where conflict is treated as a catalyst for learning and outcomes are articulated as understanding generated about conflict and how different strategies can transform it.

The developed integrated framework approach establishes the independence of scholarly reporting. Its purpose goes beyond perpetuating scholarly debate about alternative 'objective' understandings of conflict; it focuses primarily on communicating a more inclusive understanding of the contradictions inherent in a particular conflict. It increases the capacity to understand when, where, why and how conflict precipitates social change, and articulates possibilities for reconceptualising what might be the more sustainable direction of change.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I firstly acknowledge my thanks to my daughter Ellen whose very being has prompted me to focus on the prospect of a sustainable future and what I could contribute to the world which she and her generation will inherit. I also thank Dr. Ian Barns for welcoming me to the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University and to Archie Zariski from the School of Law. Together they guided me in my considerations as to how I could approach my thesis topic. I also thank Dr. Peter McMahon for his encouragement and support through the process of expanding, contracting and organising its shape while he was my supervisor. I owe a great deal to the late Dr. Michael Booth for the promptings that ultimately contributed to me seeing that the whole of my emerging thesis was in fact more than the sum of its individual parts. Our eureka(!) moments gave me the confidence and the stimulus to fully appreciate the relevance of my ideas and the prospect that they could be usefully applied. I also wish to thank Dr. Dora Marinova whose guidance has helped me to develop and present the ideas in this thesis more cogently and concisely.

In addition I thank Professor Richie Howitt from the Department of Human Geography at Macquarie University and Mr. Parry Agius of the Native Title Unit of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement of South Australia who commissioned me to produce the case study report. I also thank Dr. Jocelyn Davies for her moral and practical support in seeing it through to publication and to Rhiann Williams and all the other people who collectively made up the consultative team throughout the period of the process. Finally I thank the members of the various Aboriginal communities who participated in the consultations, who welcomed us to their country and shared with the team their stories, ideas and insights and in return gave us a wider view of the world.

ACRONYMS

ALRM	Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
CR	Conflict Resolution
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IR	International Relations
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal
NTMC	Native Title Management Committee
NTRB	Native Title Representative Body
NTU	Native Title Unit of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SACOME	South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy
SAFF	South Australian Farmers Federation
TAG	Technical Advisory Group to Native Title Unit