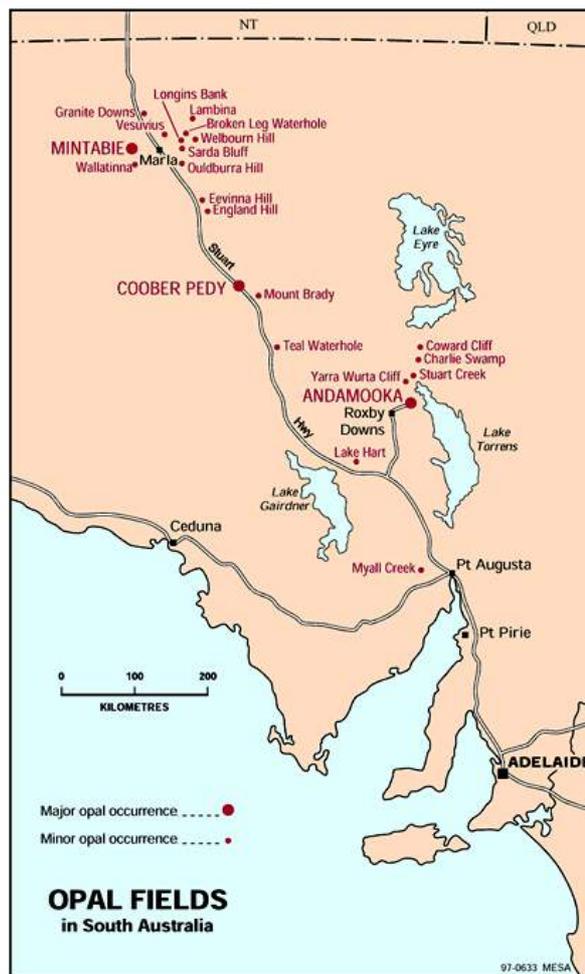


The Nature and Significance of Aboriginal Work in the Northern South Australian Opal Industry c.1940-1980¹

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Opal was discovered at Coober Pedy in 1915, and Andamooka in 1930, and by the mid-twentieth century mining it had become a significant industry. According to one official report Australian precious opal production is now estimated at 95 per cent of the world's total output, almost entirely coming from South Australia. The estimated total value of opal production in the state between 1916 and 1977 was \$204.3 million.² Opal production in 1979 was estimated at \$35 million and in 'terms of value was the second most important mineral produced in South Australia that year'.³ Despite being largely ignored in this history of opal production, Aboriginal people became seriously involved in it by the 1940s, and a significant find by an Aboriginal woman named Totty Bryant near Coober Pedy in 1946 kick-started the industry, which at the time had been in the doldrums.⁴

Figure 1: Opal Fields in South Australia.



Source: Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Resources Energy Division.

The autonomous nature of the opal industry appealed to Aboriginal people, who were effectively their own ‘bosses’ and could work when it suited them. The emergence of a ‘hybrid economy’ on the opal fields enabled Aboriginal people to participate in the market economy while also engaging in their traditional economy, thus allowing them to maintain a significant degree of cultural continuity. A significant Aboriginal population emerged on both major opal fields by the 1950s, even despite obstacles such as the Woomera Long Range Weapons testing program in the far-north of South Australia which often made it difficult for people to travel in the region, and also nuclear testing with radiation fallout which affected some Aboriginal people on the opal fields. Until the 1970s when technological, economic and social change combined to limit opportunities, and other labour market opportunities became available, they maintained a significant presence in the opal industry. From that time, Aboriginal organisations in Coober Pedy began offering their people an increased range of services while also providing more local employment opportunities, with several prominent Aboriginal miners finding employment with local Aboriginal community organisations.⁵

A range of employment opportunities in Port Augusta also became available at the time mining on the Andamooka opal fields was diminishing, thus providing an incentive to move there. For instance, Aboriginal people living on the Davenport reserve in Port Augusta were given some work at that location, while government jobs also became more accessible as affirmative action policies for Aboriginal workers were being implemented as part of a national trend.⁶ Administrative and clerical employment also became available in agencies delivering services to Aboriginal clientele in the Port Augusta region, while there were increasing blue-collar work opportunities in road maintenance and the Commonwealth Railways, the latter being a particularly large employer in that area.⁷

Perceptions of Aboriginal work in the opal industry

The nature of Aboriginal labour on the opal fields has often been derided, or generalisations made that Aboriginal people were merely noodlers of opal, afraid to mine underground, and perceived to be on the fringes of the industry. Accounts of Aboriginal people in the opal industry in the literature of the time have often been less than flattering. Visiting Coober Pedy in the late 1950s, filmmaker Charles Chauvel described how Aboriginal people ‘seldom ever do the hard digging: they leave that to the white man out in the noonday sun’.⁸ According to Australian author Ion Idriess, Aboriginal people considered opal mining a:

foolish waste of energy, digging holes in the ground to look for a stone when there were a million stones lying upon the sunlit surface! The aborigines could never understand such absurdity.⁹

Generalisations have also been made that Aboriginal people were fearful of opal because it was seen as ‘a manifestation of the devil’, and avoided mining underground.¹⁰ Such comments misrepresent the serious nature of Aboriginal engagement in the opal industry.

Aboriginal people on the opal fields quickly adapted to the industry and seriously participated in a variety of roles. They also challenged the notion of 'intelligent parasitism', an expression coined by anthropologist A.P. Elkin to describe Aboriginal labour in the northern Australian pastoral industry as a form of dependence and where a minimal amount of effort was expended in return for a basic subsistence.¹¹ Written at a time when the official policy of 'assimilation' was at its zenith, such discourse influenced debate at the time, as seen in several twentieth century studies of Aboriginal people in south-eastern Australia which implied that the seasonal horticultural work they engaged in reinforced a state of dependence.¹² Aboriginal people engaged in opal mining voluntarily and seriously, not in a state of dependence.

The task-oriented nature of the opal industry particularly suited Aboriginal people. British historian E.P. Thompson wrote that in some pre-industrial societies, or those less influenced by modern capitalism, labour is often task-oriented rather than time-oriented, and there is often little demarcation between 'work' and 'life'.¹³ This was evident in the nature of Aboriginal engagement on the opal fields. Long hours were worked when necessary, and this is consistent with Thompson's concept of task-orientation, where 'the working-day lengthens or contracts according to the task'.¹⁴

One observer on the Coober Pedy fields in the 1950s wrote that many Aboriginal people 'dig and work like white people', and how he saw up to 50 individuals working on one claim.¹⁵ According to a European miner at Andamooka, if Aboriginal people 'were on a find they'd be out working like any normal person'.¹⁶ For some Aboriginal people hard work and persistence on the opal fields was often necessary in order to provide for their families. Two Aboriginal women who were born on the Coober Pedy opal fields and lived there for many years, both told of their respective fathers having to work hard in search of opal to feed their families.¹⁷ These examples challenge stereotypes that Aboriginal people were generally lazy or not prepared to work hard.¹⁸

Noodling

Most Aboriginal people working on the opal fields did so as noodlers. Noodling was a serious activity for both Aboriginal and European people, who sifted through the residue from mine shafts and open-cut diggings:

with their sieves and rakes and digging sticks, turning over the dirt, swooping down on a piece of colour. The noodlers move slowly, often on their hands and knees, searching through the soft dirt with their fingers. Many a big find has been unearthed in this way, much to the frustration of the miner who abandoned the open-cut after so much hard work.¹⁹

Observers often commented that Aboriginal people were adept at this work because of their visual skills. One European miner thought that Aboriginal people 'had very good eyes for seeing changes in the ground', and believed that was an extension of the traditional skills involved in tracking and hunting animals, and 'I think they were used to following the ground and looking for stuff all the time to eat and it just naturally transferred to looking for pieces of opal'.²⁰ An Andamooka miner remembered how

Aboriginal people ‘had eyesight you wouldn’t believe’ and were able to locate opal in a mass of white sandstone that could be easily missed.²¹ Some people have even suggested that Aboriginal people had the ability to ‘smell out opal’.²²

Figure 2: *Noodlers at work on a rich dump at Flat Hill, 1960.*



Source: Coober Pedy Historical Society.

Noodling also requires considerable patience and stamina. An ABC documentary made in the mid-1960s described Aboriginal people as ‘part of the character of the opal fields’ in South Australia, who possessed ‘amazing patience for this noodling and equally amazing stamina for long periods of exposure to the heat’.²³ Long-term Coober Pedy resident Faye Nayler described Aboriginal people ‘as the greatest noodlers’ on the opal fields there, aided by their ‘exceptional eyesight’ and patience, exemplified in an excerpt below from a ballad she wrote, titled ‘The Noodler’:

It takes patience to sit out on the dumps
In all kinds of weather
Sifting through the dirt and dust
It can really be a bother.
Sometimes they search for days on end
It can be unrewarding
But many as [sic] family has been kept from harm
By a noodler’s patience undaunting.²⁴

Aboriginal women were particularly adept at noodling, despite Australian mining being portrayed as a predominantly male activity and women traditionally under-represented in its history.²⁵ A number of Aboriginal life histories commented on the serious nature of women’s involvement in the opal industry.²⁶ One Aboriginal miner described this at Andamooka as ‘a bit of an eye opener’ when he first went there in the

1950s.²⁷ Europeans also acknowledged Aboriginal women as important noodlers, generally working harder than men, who often retreated to the shade of a tree or vehicle to watch them work.²⁸ A journalist visiting the Pilbara region of Western Australia in the 1930s and 1940s made similar observations, on how the 'burden of labour' fell upon Aboriginal women in mining activities there.²⁹

Archie Kalokerinos, who mined at Coober Pedy in the 1960s, observed that the presence of Aboriginal people on opal dumps was an indicator that good opal was being pushed out to the surface.³⁰ A European miner also noted that the presence of Aboriginal people noodling was an indicator of opal to others, and how in earlier days some people would come and 'rat on your claim', adding that Aboriginal people were honest and never indulged in this practice.³¹ The presence of Aboriginal people who camped in close proximity to the opal fields was actually welcomed by some miners, as it assured them that 'ratters' would probably steer clear of their diggings in fear of being observed.³²

One long-term resident of both the Coober Pedy and Andamooka fields wrote how Aboriginal noodlers often found opal other miners had discarded, because they failed to remove enough of the exterior of the potch, which may have contained opal inside. In some instances pieces of opal may have been discarded when miners viewed them by candlelight and did not think they were valuable: a further examination in the light of the sun may have revealed better quality stones.³³ One Aboriginal miner thought that some miners 'didn't know the trade that well enough to go through the dirt and tailings thoroughly enough' and that some 'were less sophisticated and went full bore blasting and often blew up opal'.³⁴ He also recalled how some Aboriginal people went back to re-noodle some of the old grounds around Coober Pedy, particularly in the 1970s when the smaller opal chips that had once been discarded because they were considered to be worth little had since become more valuable.³⁵

Aboriginal people noodling on the dumps were even known to have informed other miners that they were failing to recognise opal, and:

on more than one occasion ... it was due to the noodlers being on the dump that the miners started to realise that they were on opal and pushing opal out. A lot of them didn't find opal on the ground, they've pushed it all out until they woke up ... *anangu* used to sit on the dumps and start noodling ... and I remember a lot of occasions where some of them say look, you're pushing opal out, you should check.³⁶

One European also recalled how Aboriginal people at Andamooka would sometimes offer to return pieces of opal pushed out by miners.³⁷

Throughout much of the study period Aboriginal people were welcome to noodle, although this situation would begin to change by about 1980 with the emergence of automated noodling machines. According to two long-term miners at Andamooka, Aboriginal people were welcome to noodle there, and in their view were entitled to the dirt and anything of value in it that had been pushed out of a mine and discarded.³⁸ Marty Dodd remembered noodling at the Coober Pedy Eight Mile prior to the 1960s, and how some of the miners there would evenly distribute buckets of

discarded dirt from their shafts to different Aboriginal groups of noodlers to ensure that all got a fair chance.³⁹

Claim ownership

Aboriginal people often owned their own claims. One example was Marty Dodd, who not only noodled from time to time, but also held mineral claims and owned basic mining equipment such as winches, as well as picks and shovels. He recalled purchasing a 12 month Miner's Right that cost £5 per annum which enabled him to peg a standard claim of 50 metres by 50 metres, and how Aboriginal people pegged their own claims on fields such as Jeweller's Shop, Potch Gully and German Gully that were close to the Coober Pedy township, as well as several of the fields more distant, for instance, the Eight Mile, Eleven Mile and Twelve Mile.⁴⁰ This was an era when it was safe to leave a claim and the equipment on it unattended without the fear of pilfering, and small groups of people often banded together to work collaboratively.⁴¹

One Aboriginal man remembered his father having Miner's Rights in the 1950s in both Coober Pedy and Andamooka,⁴² and according to his daughter he also helped other Aboriginal people get mining permits.⁴³ A *Register of Miner's Rights* between 1940 and 1955 shows that a number of prominent Aboriginal people in the opal industry had been issued with Miner's Rights, including members of the following families: Austin, Bryant, Cassidy, Dodd, Egan, Gilbert, Johns, Larkins, Lennon, Pepper and Williams.⁴⁴

In a 1957 report following a recent visit to Andamooka, the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board (APB), Clarence Bartlett, wrote that many Aboriginal people had purchased Miner's Rights and were now sinking shafts, rather than just 'combing the surface dumps'.⁴⁵ In a two-day period in 1957 the postmaster at Andamooka issued 28 Miner's Rights to Aboriginal people.⁴⁶

There were some Aboriginal people with Miner's Rights around Coober Pedy in the 1960s, and at least a dozen had basic mining equipment and worked together.⁴⁷ In the same era, an Aboriginal man also recalled prominent Aboriginal people at Coober Pedy such as Barney Lennon and his son Bernard, as well as Norman Hayes and Archie Badenoch, who had pegged leases in the area.⁴⁸ The Department of Mines and Energy (DME) *Register of Correspondence Files* between 1955 to 1972 indicated that precious stones permits were issued to a number of prominent Aboriginal people in the opal industry on both major fields, for instance, the Badenoch, Brown, Cooley, Davis, Dingaman, Gilbert, Indich, Larkins, Lochowiak, Tilmouth and Turner families. However, the Department had destroyed the actual files relating to these people and I was unable to ascertain any more details.⁴⁹

By the 1970s Miner's Rights were replaced by the Precious Stones Prospecting Permit (PSPP). Claim owners were now required to peg out their claims and adequately mark them, in contrast to earlier haphazard methods, with permit numbers and the date of pegging marked on each corner post. Once a PSPP was pegged and registered, the owner(s) were permitted to prospect, and mine, and had ownership rights on any opal found on the claim.⁵⁰ A search of the *Register of Precious Stones Claim (PSPP)* of the

DME for the years 1972–1980, which consisted of a series of cards with the names of applicants and the location of the opal field, revealed that there were at least 65 PSPPs issued for periods of 12 months to Aboriginal people in Andamooka and Coober Pedy during that time, although some Aboriginal people held more than one claim.⁵¹ Some of these PSPP holders had previously held permits dating back to the 1940s. A number of these PSPPs were also applied for jointly by Aboriginal and European mining partners.

PSPP holders were also permitted to use explosives. Writing in 1969, a Coober Pedy miner described being directed by an Aboriginal man to some opal diggings that had been ‘abandoned by other Aborigines because they were too frightened to use gelignite’.⁵² However, some Aboriginal people were competent explosives users and aware of the risks. When filmed a decade ago, Aboriginal miner and claim owner Norman Hayes recounted the practice of using gelignite to find opal around Coober Pedy. After drilling holes underground with an auger to place sticks of gelignite in and then lighting the fuses, he then had to allow sufficient time to ascend the mine using the step holes carved into the wall and get a suitable distance away.⁵³

Checkers

By the late 1960s a group of up to 20 Aboriginal people were also hired as specialist checkers on the Coober Pedy fields, working behind bulldozers soon after when they were introduced to the fields because of their visual skills.⁵⁴ There were estimated to be

Figure 3: *Checking the level in a bulldozer cut, 1970.*



Source: Coober Pedy Historical Society.

150 bulldozers operating there during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵⁵ The checkers would walk behind the bulldozers as they ripped aside the overburden in an attempt to reveal traces of opal, or even pockets and seams. The checkers' role was crucial, as the scything bulldozer blades could quickly bury seams of opal that were exposed. In the event of opal being found, the checkers would use hand tools to work down to the opal level, while the bulldozer moved away from the cut.⁵⁶

This process was continuously repeated over an extensive area of ground, and once the first floor of an area was cut and cleaned, subsequent cuts down to an agreed, and often considerable, depth continued.⁵⁷ Checking required patience, thoroughness and good vision, as opal could be potentially missed where 'a thin veneer of dirt can hide a pocket ... worth many thousands of dollars'.⁵⁸ There was also an element of danger for checkers, as they were not always visible to bulldozer operators manoeuvring or reversing their equipment. Checkers needed to be aware of this, for there were some fatalities because of the checker being too absorbed in looking for opal and being unaware of the bulldozer changing direction, or heading towards them.⁵⁹

Aboriginal checkers were eagerly sought after by other miners, and usually engaged on a percentage basis. Marty Dodd started working as a checker in the 1960s, at a time 'when the bulldozers were in full swing'.⁶⁰ He recalled that a number of miners were aware of his particular skills as a checker and were keen to engage him. On one occasion he earned £800 for a day's work, but there were also times when a week or even a month elapsed before any more opal was found. However, he was content with the lifestyle and what he considered to be the relative ease of the job, compared with hard digging.⁶¹

Checking required a considerable degree of knowledge of the ground and opal levels. For a skilled and experienced miner 'The ground tells a story. It slides and runs in levels, and a good miner can read that ground'.⁶² Opal levels may occur from 1 to 30 metres underground and surface features may indicate its presence: for example, flat-capped sandstone hills or coloured bands of sandstone wedged between dirt could mean the presence of vertical faults below ground containing opal.⁶³ Because the Coober Pedy fields lack a distinct opal level, compared to that found in Andamooka, it makes opal harder to locate.⁶⁴ One former Aboriginal checker there explained:

they say you need good eyesight but I think it's more to the knowledge of the ground and knowledge of what you're trying to look for. I mean a lot of people – really literally a lot of them don't know what they're looking for when they look for opal.⁶⁵

Because of his skills as a checker Marty Dodd found regular employment, adding that 'if they reckon he's all right and good enough to check for them—they keep him as long as they can'.⁶⁶ His daughter recalled her father working as a checker, and one day in the 1970s when her father predicted a good find of opal the family watched him walking behind the bulldozer. She witnessed his prediction come true and the delight the miners expressed at the time: 'next minute it was on, they were screaming'.⁶⁷ Two Aboriginal men with long-term involvement in the opal industry in Coober Pedy also recalled Marty Dodd, and another Aboriginal man Norman Hayes, regularly

employed as checkers on a good percentage basis.⁶⁸ It was not only men who were engaged, and one Aboriginal woman remembered how she and another used to work as checkers, walking behind bulldozers and collecting pieces of opal in a bucket, moving from field to field depending on where it was being found.⁶⁹ During my interviews a number of Europeans at Coober Pedy spoke highly of the skills of Aboriginal checkers.⁷⁰

Machine operators

About a dozen Aboriginal men who were prominent miners were also employed as machine operators on the Coober Pedy fields, and within a few years of these machines arriving they became highly sought after because of their expertise.⁷¹ Some of them had progressed from noodlers to checkers beforehand, and several would continue to have some involvement in mining beyond the study period. Several even recalled that they had learned to drive bulldozers in their teens.⁷² Although these men predominantly operated bulldozers, some also used equipment such as backhoes and excavators.⁷³ Two Aboriginal brothers interviewed recalled their father working in the 1960s as an operator with several prominent miners in the area. The fascination of seeing their father driving machinery that was relatively new to the opal fields, and being one of the first Aboriginal operators at the time, stand out in their memory.⁷⁴

One very well known Aboriginal miner's primary motivation for working in the opal industry was his love of machinery. Although on occasions he worked with other miners on a percentage basis, he also worked for himself. His expertise in being able to 'read the ground' was crucial to locating opal while operating machinery:

depend what field you [are] in. You look at the ground and you'd know exactly what colour the ground was, where the opal was ... different opal was formed in different coloured ground and we'd know all the time.

He contended that some inexperienced operators were not aware of this and 'ended up pushing heaps out all the time. I wasn't going to tell them that ... More money for us on the dump'.⁷⁵

Two Aboriginal men regarded as 'the two main operators ... were being chased all over the place by a lot of miners',⁷⁶ and one of them was also known to have trained Europeans in how to successfully operate heavy machinery.⁷⁷ A number of European miners acknowledged the skills of Aboriginal machinery operators, including one described as 'the velvet operator because he was so smooth and used to do as much as anyone else' and was 'equal to the best'.⁷⁸ One European miner considered this man one of the best operators he had ever worked with, and generally thought that Aboriginal machine operators were more proficient in finding opal than others.⁷⁹

Partnerships

The skills of Aboriginal people as machinery operators and checkers enabled them to negotiate good partnership arrangements with other opal miners. Some Aboriginal and European people also jointly applied for PSPPs. Partnerships were common on the opal

fields, particularly with open-cut mining: the high costs of diesel fuel and maintenance of heavy machinery necessitated this.⁸⁰ Partnerships were usually based on ‘a gentleman’s agreement or handshake’, for a certain percentage of any opal found, and typified the informal nature of business on the opal fields.⁸¹ There is documentary evidence of one such arrangement in Coober Pedy as far back as 1941, when a local miner, R.G. Campbell, wrote to the APB, and informed them of a partnership he had with ‘an old native, a fine old chap, as straight as a die, and between us we are managing to make a living at opal’.⁸²

Many Aboriginal people interviewed recalled individuals involved in partnerships with Europeans. One recalled how several members of her family had partnerships with miners at Andamooka. She noted that these partnerships were verbal and sealed with a handshake, but generally honoured.⁸³ Her younger brother also recalled how both he and another brother worked in partnerships, and he had recently moved back to work at Andamooka in such an arrangement.⁸⁴

One European opal miner who first went to Coober Pedy in 1975 recalled how partnerships with Aboriginal people at the time were common. He had a number of partnerships there, and later at Mintabie, with Aboriginal people, who he thought more honest than Europeans.⁸⁵ Another European miner also had a number of successful partnerships with Aboriginal people over the years, for example, machine operators such Barney Lennon, Bernard Lennon, George Cooley and John Cooley, as well as checkers like Marty Dodd.⁸⁶ Another described his dealings with Aboriginal people who found opal but needed someone with earthmoving equipment to extract it:

If they found a spot and had samples to show a person, including myself, [they] would come to me, would come and see if you could make a cut and do a deal, 50/50 or 60/40, and a lot of the time you’d find opal where they showed you.

He thought that most partnership arrangements were equitable, and that experienced Aboriginal people ‘knew where they could get a fair deal’.⁸⁷

The proceeds of partnership arrangements were often complicated, depending on who owned the claim and who owned the machinery being used, as the costs of fuel and maintenance were extremely high, however, there was general agreement that Aboriginal people were fairly paid.⁸⁸ One Aboriginal man recalled being able to make \$50 per day in the 1970s when involved in partnerships on the Coober Pedy fields, and during periods where little or no opal was being found it was possible to earn extra money noodling. Another estimated working on a basis of 20 per cent when driving a bulldozer, while he thought a checker might earn ten per cent.⁸⁹ Marty Dodd was offered between eight to ten per cent of any successful finds in partnerships he was involved in, which was considered a fair amount.⁹⁰

Opal selling and classing

Aboriginal people made considerable efforts in presenting the opal they found for sale, demonstrating their seriousness and pride in their work. According to one Aboriginal woman it was important ‘to see the colour, you know ... and to be proud at the end of

the day for ... the effort you put into working, collecting and cleaning'.⁹¹ According to another Aboriginal woman in the earlier days of opal mining Aboriginal people would place their opal in newspapers or dry clean rag and take it to the dealers, but as they became more experienced they began soaking it in water before trading.⁹² Aboriginal people began to present their opal more professionally, and many began to clean their stones by rubbing them on cement with soap powder and water to enhance their appearance.⁹³

Aboriginal people also used modern technology to enhance the opal they found, for example, small tumbling machines consisting of a trough and agitator were used to remove the loose dirt around it. An Aboriginal miner described this process to me and how one of his relatives made a tumbling machine for him, using a washing-machine agitator powered by an electric motor.⁹⁴ George Cooley was also filmed using a tumbling machine and then sifting the processed opal into a number of wire-mesh pans to sort into different sizes. Finally, careful snipping using special pliers was done to remove the remaining sandstone casing around the opal once it had been sorted.⁹⁵ This was a delicate but important step in ensuring that the opal was well presented, as incorrect snipping of the outer casing could reduce the amount of opal inside. Extreme care was also necessary in order to avoid damaging or blemishing the opal.⁹⁶ One Aboriginal miner can recall in the late 1950s and 1960s Aboriginal people on the Coober Pedy fields using pliers or tile cutting snips, a tool also favoured by other miners, to clean their opal, either where they resided or under the shade of a tree.⁹⁷

Matrix opal from Andamooka was made more attractive by soaking it in a sugar solution and boiling it in sulphuric acid, a time-consuming process that required a considerable degree of caution.⁹⁸ As young boys, two Aboriginal men often visited relatives at Andamooka in the 1970s, and remembered how they would boil up the matrix opal they found in acid to enhance the colour. One of them later lived there for some years and recalled how he, his aunt, and uncle:

would just drive around for hours and getting it all. We'd get buckets – flour buckets full of it, and bring it back, and I'd help him [uncle] light the fire and he'd put the acid in it and then that would make the colour come out of it.⁹⁹

Several Aboriginal men on the opal fields also established themselves as successful intermediaries between Aboriginal miners and opal dealers by becoming classers. According to Archie Kalokerinos, 'Good opal classers are rare and precious' and 'the best insurance that one can buy. If his work is right, the buyers have very little ground on which to argue'.¹⁰⁰ Classers ensure that parcels of opal are sorted into grades depending on quality and colour, and careful snipping is required to ensure that the opal is presented to its best appearance and not damaged.¹⁰¹ Ricky Brown was a well-known Aboriginal man in Coober Pedy who some Aboriginal people used when selling their opal because of his ability to successfully negotiate good prices with the dealers: he was 'pretty smart at haggling'. There is also an image of him selling opal in a large-scale mural on the sidewall of a prominent business in Coober Pedy.¹⁰² A European opal miner at Coober Pedy recalled another Aboriginal man there named Billy Brown, who

he described as ‘an exceptional classer’.¹⁰³ Other Aboriginal opal classers at Coober Pedy included Barney Lennon and Monty O’Toole.¹⁰⁴

Ted Larkins was also a well-known opal classer whose activities were clearly remembered by several family members. One of his sons described how his father:

was pretty knowledgeable. So a lot of the Aboriginal people bought their opal, little parcels to the old man to class it for them. Clean it up, class it, put a price in it and sell it for them. Even myself, I used to run around and sell 20 quids’ worth or 10 quids’ worth, 40 quids’ worth of opal too—you know, I tout it around to the different buyers, and the old man would say ‘ask for 50, if they give you 40 take it’.¹⁰⁵

One of Larkins’ daughters also recalled how Aboriginal people would come to him to get their opal classed, as they trusted him to negotiate a fair price. She also thought that many Aboriginal people were sufficiently astute to realise if they were being taken advantage of:

I think that most times they knew if they were being ripped off or not. So they would come and Dad would help them. I can remember he had this little pair of scales, and he used to weigh them all and put them in different sections and classify them.¹⁰⁶

Establishing businesses

Several Aboriginal people were able to establish their own businesses because of their success on the opal fields. Although Aboriginal machinery operators were less evident at Andamooka, one became a successful operator there. Having started mining at Andamooka in the late 1950s, he made sufficient money to purchase a small D6 bulldozer, a front-end loader and backhoe, which enabled him to establish his own infrastructure contracting business on pastoral stations in the local area. This in turn enabled him to move to Coober Pedy, where he was extensively involved in the opal industry there. This included owning a mine at the Potch Gully field, and a family retail business selling opal from his mine. He had learned to cut and polish, to run tours and to operate a aeroplane refuelling contract, well into the 1980s.¹⁰⁷ Another Aboriginal man was able to establish a successful rural contract fencing business because of the income earned from opal mining, and alternated between both the pastoral industry and opal industry.¹⁰⁸ Several of his children worked with him at various times, and recalled how working as an independent contractor was far more lucrative than working as a station employee.¹⁰⁹

Significance of this work

While many Aboriginal people regularly noodled for a living it is difficult to quantify actual numbers. The autonomous and informal nature of the industry meant that individuals or small family groups may have worked irregular hours. In addition, the scattered nature of the opal fields over many kilometres also meant that Aboriginal people working on them may not have always been obvious to others. Official records relating to employment numbers for this period are also very minimal. However, in

1956 a geologist estimated that in Coober Pedy, there were 30 European miners compared to a floating population of Aboriginal people ranging from 80 to 250, 'working individually in a sporadic manner', and supplying on an aggregate basis large quantities of opal to buyers there. He also noted that opal was in demand and buyers in the field were unable to get enough to meet their needs.¹¹⁰ On a visit to the field the following year, Native Patrol Officer (NPO), MacDougall, reported that there were '100 Aborigines, most of whom are engaged in fossicking for opal'.¹¹¹

It is apparent that Aboriginal people were able to earn reasonable incomes from opal and the industry soon became a regular source of income, to the extent that one source believed it could potentially provide 'a degree of economic security unique in the Western Desert'.¹¹² In 1962, the APB estimated that two Aboriginal people had earned £2,000 each from opal mining that year in Coober Pedy, while several others had earned at least £1,000 for the same period. It also concluded at the time that the opal industry enabled 'all able-bodied adults ... to earn their own living'.¹¹³ A senior government officer formerly based at Coober Pedy estimated that in the 1962–1963 financial year, several Aboriginal people in Coober Pedy actually earned over £3,000, with considerably more earning amounts of £2,000, and that some women and children had also 'handled a few hundred pounds'.¹¹⁴

The Aboriginal Affairs Board (AAB), established in 1963, acknowledged in 1969 that the Coober Pedy reserve was the one place in South Australia where 'ample opportunity for self-employment exists' in the opal industry, with an average income for families estimated at \$2,500 to \$3,000 per annum.¹¹⁵ At that time the average weekly wage for a male worker in South Australia was \$63.10, or \$3,281 per annum.¹¹⁶ Most Aboriginal workers in the northern South Australian pastoral industry around the same time were actually receiving less than the basic wage.¹¹⁷ Aboriginal people continued to successfully participate in the opal industry in the following decade. A report by the Department for Community Welfare (DCW) in 1973 estimated that most Aboriginal people on the Coober Pedy fields 'earn an income roughly equal to the normal living wage'.¹¹⁸

Information about numbers of Aboriginal miners and their earnings in Andamooka is less clear. However, when the APB Superintendent of Reserves, C.J. Millar, visited Andamooka in 1956, he observed that many people were mining successfully to the extent 'that nearly every family possessed a motor car of some description', suggesting that reasonable amounts of opal were being found.¹¹⁹ Motor vehicles were a particularly prized item for Aboriginal people, as this enabled them to travel and attend ceremonies more easily. NPO MacDougall visited Andamooka later the following year and also observed how Aboriginal people were successfully mining, and canvassed the possibility of self-sufficiency. He believed that:

an average of approximately £200 a week is obtained from opal by the native community, and there is, therefore, a possibility of setting up a small self-supporting community.¹²⁰

An APB welfare officer visited Andamooka in September 1958 and reported that a number of Aboriginal people there had found good supplies of opal and were able to

make a reasonable living if they could ‘apply themselves to it’. The Andamooka Progress Association (APA) advised him that Aboriginal people had earned £1,000 in the month prior to his visit.¹²¹ Visiting the Andamooka fields in 1959, he wrote that:

Almost without exception the natives are making a good living from opal and their camps are almost entirely deserted throughout the day, the men working down holes and the women on the dumps.¹²²

Two years later, another NPO, R.A. Macaulay, noted that most able-bodied Aboriginal men and women worked on the fields there, including some who had ‘their own shafts and have as much success as the white prospectors’.¹²³ An official report in 1963 also noted that as Aboriginal people at Andamooka were ‘able to earn their living from mining very little [welfare] relief is necessary’, and how they (and Aboriginal people in Coober Pedy) ‘live and work in the same conditions as the rest of the community’.¹²⁴ The same agency reported in the following year that all Aboriginal people there ‘over school age are engaged in opal mining’, either noodling or working their own claims.¹²⁵

Conclusion

Aboriginal people seriously engaged in the northern South Australian opal industry for several decades in the twentieth century were provided with a reasonable income. In many instances they were able to earn at least the equivalent of the basic wage, and in excess of that earned in the pastoral industry which was a major source of Aboriginal labour in northern South Australia. Far from being peripheral to the industry, Aboriginal people engaged in a variety of tasks that required patience and skill. As well as being noodlers, some Aboriginal people owned their own claims, and engaged in partnerships with Europeans. Others undertook skilled and specialised roles, working as checkers, earthmoving equipment operators, opal classers, and several even established their own business enterprises.

Endnotes

¹ This research is based on my recently completed PhD at the University of Adelaide. In the course of my research I interviewed 53 people (40 Aboriginal and 13 Europeans) at a number of locations predominantly in northern South Australia, and several in Adelaide, in 2013 and 2015. These included people who had worked in the opal industry, and several younger people who had older family members involved in the industry and provided good recollections of events. Material drawn from recorded interviews is referenced by the letter ‘RI’ and is followed by the interview number and the date of the interview.

² P.P. Crettenden, M.W. Flintoft, S.J. Ewen and D.C. Watkins, ‘The Opal Industry in South Australia’, *Mineral Resources Review SA for the Year Half-Ended 31 December 1979*, no. 151, 1979, pp. 18, 27.

³ Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, South Australian Office, *South Australian Yearbook*, no.17, 1979, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1979, p. 446.

⁴ Len Cram, *A Journey with Colour: A History of South Australian Opal, 1840-2005*, Len Cram, Lightning Ridge, 2005, p. 67.

⁵ (RI 10) 22 August 2013;(RI 16) 26 August 2013. These men also retained an ongoing interest in the opal industry while employed with Aboriginal community organisations. One later returned to the opal industry and established his own business in Coober Pedy.

⁶ D.L. Busbridge, ‘Aboriginal Employment Problems in South Australia’, in Ian G. Sharp and Colin M. Tatz (eds), *Aborigines in the Economy: Employment, Wages and Training*, Jacaranda Press in association

The Nature and Significance of Aboriginal Work in the Northern South Australian Opal Industry c.1940-1980

with Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University, Melbourne, 1966, p. 99; Jon Altman and Anne Daly, 'Do Fluctuations in the Australian Macroeconomy Influence Aboriginal Employment Status?', *Economic Papers: A Journal of Applied Economics and Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1992, p. 33.

⁷ R.J. Anderson, *Solid Town: The History of Port Augusta*, R.J. Anderson, Port Augusta, 1988, p. 199; Peggy Brock, 'Pastoral Stations and Reserves in South Australia and Central Australia, 1850s-1950s', in Ann McGrath and Kay Saunders with Jackie Huggins (eds), *Aboriginal Workers*, Special Issue of Labour History, no. 69, 1995, p. 112.

⁸ Charles Chauvel and Elsa Chauvel, *Walkabout*, W.H. Allen, London, 1959, p. 178.

⁹ Ion L. Idriess, *Opals and Sapphires: How to Work, Mine, Class, Cut, Polish, and Sell Them*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1967, p. 63.

¹⁰ Allan W. Eckert, *The World of Opals*, John Wiley, New York, 1997, pp. 199–200.

¹¹ A.P. Elkin, 'Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 53, no. 2, 1951, p. 168.

¹² James Bell, 'The Economic Life of Mixed-Blood Aborigines on the South Coast of New South Wales', *Oceania*, vol. 26, no. 3, March 1956, p. 186; R.G. Castle, and J.S. Hagan, 'Dependence and Independence', in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our Enemies: Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, in association with Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1978, p. 159.

¹³ E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, no. 38, December 1967, p. 60. For further commentary on the nature of Aboriginal labour and time see Mike Donaldson, 'The End of Time? Aboriginal Temporality and the British Invasion of Australia', *Time and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1996, p. 203; Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 1.

¹⁴ Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline', pp. 59–60.

¹⁵ Robert Bruderer, 'The Coober Pedy Opal Fields', *Walkabout*, vol. 23, no. 9, September 1957, p. 36.

¹⁶ (RI 28) 28 October 2013.

¹⁷ (RI 44) 12 November 2013; (RI 25) 24 October 2013.

¹⁸ Office of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Rebutting the Myths: Some Facts About Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992, pp. 2–3.

¹⁹ Robert G. Haill, *Opals of Australia*, Axiom Publishing, Adelaide, 2003, p. 87.

²⁰ (RI 19) 28 August 2013.

²¹ (RI 31) 30 October 2013.

²² See Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 78; (RI 15) 25 August 2013; (RI 7) 20 August 2013.

²³ Mark Van Cleefe and Barry Pitman (directors), *Opal*, Town and Country Series, DVD, ABC Commercial, Sydney, 1966.

²⁴ Faye Nayler, *Warm in My Heart: Ballads and Stories of the Coober Pedy Opal Fields*, Pinto Australia, Brisbane, 2003, pp. 82–3.

²⁵ Katrina Alford, *Gilt-Edged Women: Women and Contemporary Mining in Colonial Australia*, Working Papers in Economic History, no. 64, Australian National University, Canberra, February 1986, p. 28; Susan Lawrence, 'Gender and Community Structure on Australian Colonial Goldfields', in A. Bernard Knopp, Vincent C. Pigott and Eugenia Herbert (eds), *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 39. Some exceptions noting the importance of women mining in remote regions in the Northern Territory include Barbara James, *No Man's Land: Women of the Northern Territory*, Collins Australia, Sydney, 1989, pp. 204–5, 209; Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, Second Edition, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 69–70. The importance of Aboriginal women mining in the Pilbara region of Western Australia is noted in Marjorie Bickerton, *Dust Over The Pilbara*, Artlook, East Perth, 1980, pp. 11–2, 18; M.J. O'Reilly, *Bowyangs and Boomerangs: Reminiscences of 40 Years' Prospecting in Australia and Tasmania*, Oldham, Beddome and Meredith, Hobart, 1944, p. 48.

²⁶ See for instance Emily Munyungka Austin, *My Young Days*, Umoona Aged Care Aboriginal Corporation, Coober Pedy, 2006, p. 41; Eileen Unkari Crombie, *He Was a South Australian Film Star: My Life with Billy Pepper-Tinyrna*, Nyiri Publications, Murray Bridge, 2003, pp. 4, 19; Milly Taylor, 'Born out Bush', in Adele Pring (ed.), *Women of the Centre*, Pascoe Publishing, Apollo Bay, 1990, p. 149.

²⁷ (RI 16) 26 August 2013.

²⁸ (RI 18) 28 August 2013; (RI 15) 25 August 2013.

- ²⁹ John K. Ewers, 'Yandying for Tin at Moolyella', *Walkabout*, vol. 1, no. 7, May 1935, p. 24; John K. Ewers, 'In and Around Marble Bar', *Walkabout*, vol. 15, no. 2, February 1949, p. 35.
- ³⁰ Archie Kalokerinos, *In Search of Opal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1967, p. 99.
- ³¹ (RI 19) 28 August 2013. 'Ratting' or 'nightshifting' on an opal producing claim sometimes occurred at night, or when the owners were away. Cram, *A Journey With Colour*, p. 366.
- ³² (RI 13) 24 August 2013; (RI 22) 30 August 2013.
- ³³ P. Vin Wake, *Opal Men*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Sydney, 1969, p. 106.
- ³⁴ (RI 20) 29 August 2013.
- ³⁵ (RI 10) 22 August 2013; (RI 20) 29 August 2013. Small chips were often discarded when miners clipped their parcels of opal and thought that the value of the off-cuts was minimal, but later they were found to be of some value if sufficient quantities were collected. See Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 63. A Swiss visitor to the Coober Pedy opal fields in 1957 noted that dumps made thirty years before were being re-noodled for stones that were thought to have no commercial value at the time. See Bruderer, 'The Coober Pedy Opal Fields', p. 36.
- ³⁶ (RI 10) 22 August 2013.
- ³⁷ (RI 31) 30 October 2013.
- ³⁸ (RI 28) 28 October 2013; (RI 31) 30 October 2013.
- ³⁹ Marty Dodd, *They Liked Me, The Horses, Straightaway*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, 2000, p. 63.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² (RI 24) 23 October 2013.
- ⁴³ (RI 39) 8 November 2013.
- ⁴⁴ See file series Government Record Group (hereafter GRG) series and files 30/12–13, State Records of South Australia (hereafter SRSA).
- ⁴⁵ Bartlett to Aborigines Protection Board (hereafter APB), 19 June 1957, GRG 52/1/1956/180, SRSA.
- ⁴⁶ *News*, 20 June 1957, p. 1.
- ⁴⁷ (RI 10) 22 August 2013.
- ⁴⁸ (RI 42) 12 November 2013.
- ⁴⁹ The actual register is located in Government Record Series (hereafter GRS) 8573, SRSA.
- ⁵⁰ Alan Osterstock, *Andamooka Opal*, Alan Osterstock, Adelaide, 1976, p. 14.
- ⁵¹ See GRS 8295/1–2, SRSA. While I am aware of the more prominent Aboriginal people associated with the opal industry, on the basis of my research and long-term working association with people in the region, there may have been some individuals working in the industry whose names are unknown to me.
- ⁵² *Australian Women's Weekly*, 1 January 1969, p. 9.
- ⁵³ Warwick Thornton (director), *The Old Man and the Inland Sea*, DVD, Ronin Films, Canberra, 2005.
- ⁵⁴ Pers. Comm., George Cooley, 29 January 2016.
- ⁵⁵ R.S. Robertson and D.C. Scott, *Geology of the Coober Pedy Previous Stones Field: Result of Investigations, 1981–86*, Report of Investigations 56, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1990, p. 12.
- ⁵⁶ Haill, *Opals of Australia*, pp. 51, 76.
- ⁵⁷ Jann Einfeld, *Life in the Australian Outback*, Lucent Books, San Diego, 2003, p. 73.
- ⁵⁸ Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 76.
- ⁵⁹ Eckert, *The World of Opals*, p. 192.
- ⁶⁰ Dodd, *They Liked Me*, p. 75.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–6.
- ⁶² Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 79. See also Simon R. Pecover, 'Australian Opal Resources: Outback Spectral Fire', *Rocks & Minerals*, vol. 82, no. 2, March/April 2007, p. 114.
- ⁶³ Einfeld, *Life in the Australian Outback*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁴ Stephen Aracic, *Rediscover Opals in Australia*, Stephen Aracic, Lightning Ridge, 1999, p. 212.
- ⁶⁵ (RI 10) 22 August 2013.
- ⁶⁶ Dodd, *They Liked Me*, p. 76.
- ⁶⁷ (RI 20) 29 August 2013.
- ⁶⁸ (RI 9) 22 August 2013; (RI 27) 27 October 2013.
- ⁶⁹ (RI 35) 2 November 2013.
- ⁷⁰ For example, (RI 1) 14 August 2013; (RI 12) 23 August 2013; (RI 15) 25 August 2013.
- ⁷¹ Dorothy Lennon and Vicki McCormack, 'A Health Worker at Coober Pedy', *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker*, vol. 8, no. 3, September 1984, p. 37; (RI 10) 22 August 2013.

The Nature and Significance of Aboriginal Work in the Northern South Australian Opal Industry c.1940-1980

- ⁷² (RI 10) 22 August 2013; (RI 27) 27 October 2013; (RI 9) 22 August 2013; (RI 42) 12 November 2013.
- ⁷³ (RI 10) 22 August 2013; (RI 27) 27 October 2013.
- ⁷⁴ (RI 43) 12 November 2013.
- ⁷⁵ (RI 27) 27 October 2013. Many bulldozer drivers around Coober Pedy have unknowingly missed out on fortunes because they were unaware of which levels in the ground contained opal, and pushed out sandstone they thought was useless. Aracic, *Rediscover Opals*, p. 209.
- ⁷⁶ (RI 10) 22 August 2013.
- ⁷⁷ (RI 8) 21 August 2013.
- ⁷⁸ (RI 1) 14 August 2013.
- ⁷⁹ (RI 12) 23 August 2013.
- ⁸⁰ Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 87.
- ⁸¹ Aracic, *Rediscover Opals*, p. 56.
- ⁸² Campbell to Penhall, 2 August 1941, GRG 52/1/1941/88, SRSA.
- ⁸³ (RI 39) 8 November 2013.
- ⁸⁴ (RI 30) 30 October 2013.
- ⁸⁵ (RI 4) 17 August 2013.
- ⁸⁶ (RI 1) 14 August 2013.
- ⁸⁷ (RI 15) 25 August 2013.
- ⁸⁸ (RI 15) 25 August 2013.
- ⁸⁹ (RI 9) 22 August 2013.
- ⁹⁰ Dodd, *They Liked Me*, p. 75. In north Queensland, some Aboriginal people also engaged in partnerships with European miners on the goldfields. Although Aboriginal people there were able to obtain Miner's Rights and claims, they were not granted actual mining leases unless they entered into a partnership arrangement. See Galiina Ellwood, 'Aboriginal Prospectors and Miners of Tropical Queensland, from Pre-Contact Times to ca.1950', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 12, October 2014, p. 72.
- ⁹¹ (RI 25) 24 October 2013.
- ⁹² Eileen Wingfield, interview with Jan Scott, Port Augusta, 19 July 2005. Transcript in possession of the author.
- ⁹³ Lennon and McCormack, 'A Health Worker at Coober Pedy', p. 37.
- ⁹⁴ (RI 47) 29 September 2015.
- ⁹⁵ Roger Whittaker (director), *Million Dollar Gamblers*, VHS, Roger Whittaker Films, Sydney, 1982.
- ⁹⁶ Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 103.
- ⁹⁷ (RI 20) 29 August 2013. See also Nicholas Kollias, 'Opal Mining in South Australia: From Picks and Shovels to Modern Noodling', in Angela Lush (ed.), *Opal*, South Australian Museum, Adelaide, 2015, p. 46.
- ⁹⁸ Jeffrey G. Olliver, Steven G. Carr, Colin H.H. Connor and Douglas C. Scott, 'Andamooka Opalfields: A Geological Guide for the Prospector', *Department of Mines and Energy Report Book* (hereafter DMERB), 78/86, 1978, p. 7; Osterstock, *Andamooka Opal*, p. 74.
- ⁹⁹ (RI 41) 11 November 2013.
- ¹⁰⁰ Kalokerinos, *In Search of Opal*, p. 105.
- ¹⁰¹ Haill, *Opals of Australia*, p. 103.
- ¹⁰² (RI 8) 21 August 2013.
- ¹⁰³ (RI 19) 28 August 2013.
- ¹⁰⁴ Janet Skewes (compiler), *Coober Pedylanguru Tjukurpa: Stories from Anangu of Coober Pedy*, Umoona Community Council, Coober Pedy, 1997, p. 10; (RI 44) 12 November 2013.
- ¹⁰⁵ (RI 24) 23 October 2013.
- ¹⁰⁶ (RI 39) 8 November 2013.
- ¹⁰⁷ (RI 17) 27 August 2013.
- ¹⁰⁸ (RI 39) 8 November 2013.
- ¹⁰⁹ (RI 24) 23 October 2013; (RI 30) 30 October 2013.
- ¹¹⁰ W. Johnson, 'Letter to the Chief Geologist—Coober Pedy Opalfield', *DMERB*, 43/26, 17 August 1956, p. 1.
- ¹¹¹ MacDougall to Superintendent Woomera, 16 July 1957, GRS 1002/1/6/6, SRSA.
- ¹¹² Isobel White, 'The Aborigines of the North-West of South Australia: Their Present Conditions and Future Prospects', in J.W. Warburton (ed.), *The Aborigines of South Australia: Their Background and*

Future Prospects. Proceedings of a Conference held at University of Adelaide June 13–16, 1969. Publication no. 19, Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, 1969, p. 124.

¹¹³ 'Report of the APB for the Year Ended June 30, 1962', *South Australian Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *SAPP*), no. 20a, 1962, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ D. Busbridge, 'Government Reserves and the Opal fields', *Aborigines Advancement League of South Australia. Wages and Employment of Aborigines in S.A.*, Proceedings of the Seminar held on October 9, 1965, the University of Adelaide, p. 3, State Library of South Australia (hereafter *SLSA*) series SRG 250/6/4.

¹¹⁵ 'Report of the Aboriginal Affairs Board (hereafter *AAB*) for the Year Ended June 30, 1969', *SAPP*, no. 20, 1969, p. 21. Emphasis added. In 1963 the APB was replaced by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (*DAA*) with C.J. Millar appointed as its Director, and a new advisory body, the *AAB*, established. *South Australian Government Gazette* (hereafter *SAGG*) 21 March 1963, p. 693.

¹¹⁶ Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 'Average Weekly Earnings, March Quarter 1969'. <[www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/65CAF876A476737BCA2575160011324D/\\$File/63020_MAR1969.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/65CAF876A476737BCA2575160011324D/$File/63020_MAR1969.pdf)> accessed 26 January 2016.

¹¹⁷ Robin Percy, 'Annual Report', 21 June 1967, GRG 52/1/1967/9, *SRSA*.

¹¹⁸ 'Report of the Director-General of Community Welfare for the Year Ended June 30, 1973', *SAPP*, no. 23, 1973–74, p. 32. The Department for Community Welfare was established on 1 July 1972 and assumed responsibility for Aboriginal affairs in South Australia. Cameron Raynes, *'A Little Flour and a Few Blankets': An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834–2000*, *SRSA*, Adelaide, 2002, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ Millar to Bartlett, 13 July 1956, GRG 52/1/1956/181, *SRSA*.

¹²⁰ MacDougall to Bartlett, 27 November 1956, GRG 52/1/1956/180, *SRSA*.

¹²¹ J.D. Weightman, 'Andamooka Report', 20 September 1956, GRG 52/1/1956/181, *SRSA*.

¹²² Weightman to Bartlett, 26 August 1959, GRG 52/1/1956/81, *SRSA*.

¹²³ R.A. Macaulay, 'Some Descriptions of Certain Aspects of Ceremonial Life', November 1961, *GRS* 1278/1/Box 58, vol. 12, pp. 2–3, *SRSA*.

¹²⁴ 'Report of the *AAB* for the Year Ended June 30, 1963', *SAPP*, no. 20, 1964, p. 16.

¹²⁵ 'Report of the *AAB* for the Year Ended June 30, 1964', *SAPP*, no. 20, 1965–66, p. 12.