

## MS 4157

### Papers of Leonard J. Webb

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#### Access

R1; C1b : Open access – reading; Partial copying and use

#### Scope and Content Note

Date range: 1947-2001

Extent: 36 cm (2 boxes)

The papers were donated to the Institute by Leonard Webb in 2002

The papers consist of correspondence, journal articles, newspaper cuttings, notes, reports and reprints. They relate to Webb's long and distinguished career as an ecologist and ethnobotanist and his general interests in Indigenous affairs.

The papers have been arranged into four series. Where possible the original arrangement of the papers and file titles has been preserved by the Library.

For a complete listing of the Webb material held by the Institute see Mura online catalogue <http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au/index.html>.

Papers belonging to Leonard Webb are also held at the National Archives of Australia, Brisbane Office at Series M3954, M3955, M3957 and M3958.

The 'Len Webb Ecological Images Collection' can be found in the Library of Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland.

#### Biographical note

Dr Leonard Webb is a renowned pioneer of rainforest ecology in Australia. His writings, research, lecturing and discussions have led Australians to a greater awareness and appreciation of our rainforests and an acute concern for their preservation. He is also well known for his studies in the field of ethnobotany.

Webb was born in Rockhampton in 1920. The early days of his life were spent in outback Queensland where his mother was a domestic cook and his father a horsebreaker and stockman. He attended Rockhampton State High School and later studied Science at Queensland University.

He joined the CSIR (later CSIRO) as a technical officer in the Division of Plant Industry in 1944 where he became a member of the Australian Phytochemical Survey, a joint project carried out by the Universities of Queensland, Melbourne and Sydney and the CSIR. The project had begun initially in 1940 as a war effort project to find native plants with medicinal qualities and also those of a poisonous nature. Part of his research included consultation with Aborigines about the use of plants as medicines and poisons. Webb was extensively involved in the early stages of the project and encouraged its extension into Papua New Guinea.

Pursuing his growing interest in rainforest ecology, Webb with his assistant and colleague, Geoff Tracey, established a Rainforest Ecology Unit within CSIRO in 1953. His most noted work was his 'Classification of Rainforests and Relations of Rainforest Communities to Habitat Factors and the Problems of Land Use'. He used this scheme to classify New Guinea rainforests and researched the effects of man upon the biosphere (known as the MAB project). Webb was also interested in ethno-ecology and traditional indigenous knowledge centred on Aboriginal perceptions and conservation practices in the natural environment.

Webb's interest in conservation in the 1960s involved him with the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. President, poet and conservationist, Judith Wright, proved a great influence on Webb at this time. He also became involved with the World Wildlife Fund and is a foundation councillor of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

In 1980 Webb retired from the CSIRO and took up an Honorary Professorial Fellowship with Griffith University where he remained involved with rainforest and ecology projects. He has also continued to lecture to schools and groups in North Queensland.

In 1983 Webb was awarded the Gold Medal of the Ecological Society of Australia for his sustained investigations into the types of Australian rainforests, their distributions and relations to environmental factors and for his leadership in raising public awareness of rainforests.

In 1984 Webb was awarded the inaugural BHP Award for the Pursuit of Excellence in the field of the environment and in 1987 was listed in the Queen's Birthday Honours for service to conservation, particularly in the field of rainforest ecology.

Webb has also been active internationally in organisations with interests in tropical and sub-tropical rainforest conservation including the United Nations and UNESCO.

His publications include *Guide to the medicinal and poisonous plants of Queensland* (1948), *Australian phytochemical survey I: Alkaloids and cyanogenetic compounds in Queensland*

*plants* (1949), *Australian phytochemical survey II Alkaloids in Queensland flowering plants* (1952), *Last of lands*, co-edited with D. Whitelock and J. LeGay Brereton (1969), *Environmental boomerang* (1973), *Ecological considerations and safeguards in the modern use of tropical lowland rain forests as a source of pulpwood: example, the Madang area, PNG*, co-authored with J. G. Tracey (1979), *Ecological survey of the monsoon forests of the north-western region of the Northern Territory*, co-authored with J. G. Tracey (1979), *Australian tropical rainforests: science - values - meaning*, co-edited with J. Kikkawa (1989)

Webb has also written numerous journal articles and papers which have been published in Australian and international journals.

#### References

1. **Biographical note by Don Henry in *Wildlife Australia*, Autumn, 1985, p. 30**
2. **Australian Archives, *Person notes for person CP 658*, <http://www.naa.gov.au>**
3. **Who's Who in Australia 2002, p. 1927**

## Series List

Series	Contents
<u>1</u>	<u>General correspondence, 1984-97</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>Correspondence and papers of Joe McGuinness, 1991-98</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Writings, 1947-85</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Other papers, 1968-2001</u>

## Series Descriptions

### 1. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1984-97

This series consists of correspondence relating to lobbying by Webb to have traditional indigenous knowledge of the environment recognized and to be included in a proposed bicentennial history of Australian Science to be published by the Australian Academy of Science. There is also correspondence relating to environmental and conservation issues.

Correspondents include Greg Crouch, Warwick Dix, Rod Kennett, Sue Tully, Joe McGuinness, J. D. Ovington, Sir Robert Price and Judith Wright.

#### Item

- 1 **Bicentennial Science Publication, 1988.** Includes correspondence with Warwick Dix, Professor J. D. Ovington, Sir Robert Price and Judith Wright relating to the inclusion of a chapter on indigenous traditional knowledge as part of this publication
- 2 **Miscellaneous correspondence, 1984-97.** Includes correspondence with Sue Tully of the Tully Wildlife Preservation Society, Judith Wright, Dr Greg Couch, Acting Director, North Australia Research Unit, Dr Rod Kennett of the North Australia Research Unit and Paul Neal

- 2 **Stockman's Hall of Fame, Longreach, Queensland.** Correspondence with the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Peter Andrews relating to the display 'Environment and trade', 1999. Also attached is a copy of an article by Webb 'Eat, die, and learn - the botany of Australian Aborigines' (1973). The correspondence can also be found in the Manuscript Collection at PMS 5925

## 2. CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS OF JOE MCGUINNESS, 1991-98

This series consists mainly of correspondence between Webb and Joe McGuinness. It includes exchanges of a personal and professional nature. McGuinness has also passed on to Webb copies of various papers he has written for information and comment.

There are also various issues of *From around the campfire*, a newsletter produced by McGuinness for the Indigenous Elders Council, Cairns and other reports produced by the Council relating to Council activities and issues.

Item

- 1-2 **Correspondence, 1991-97.** Correspondence between Webb and McGuinness which discusses matters of a personal and family nature and also indigenous issues of common interest including the Kuku Djungan Aboriginal Corporation and Mount Mulligan (Nurrabullgin). The file also contains copies of a draft paper by McGuinness proposing the establishment of a 'Historic Shrine - Museum' to commemorate the role played by indigenous people in the settlement of Australia, a biographical newscutting on McGuinness (1997) and one on his grandson, Tobin McGuinness (1996)
- 3 ***From around the campfire, 1994-98.*** Various issues of the newsletter produced by McGuinness for the Indigenous Elders Council, Cairns. The file also contains some miscellaneous reports by the Indigenous Elders Council and a copy of a report entitled *We the Australians: what is to follow the referendum?*
- 4 **Indigenous Elders Council, Cairns, 1998.** Papers relating to an appeal for funds for the Indigenous Elders Council in 1998 and miscellaneous reports of the Council sent to Webb by McGuinness
- 5 **Joe McGuinness and Barry Christophers.** An essay written by Susan Taffe on Joe McGuinness and Barry Christophers entitled 'A Cairns waterside worker and a Melbourne GP - a valuable political collaboration' (n.d.)

## 3. WRITINGS, 1947-85

This series consists of typescript manuscripts, book chapters and journal articles by Webb. Many of the journal articles were published as 'reprints' by the CSIRO. They relate mainly to Webb's research work into the chemical properties of Australian plants and also their use by Indigenous Australians.

Some of the journal articles can be found in the Library's Printed Collection. They can be located on the Mura online catalogue <http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au/index.html>.

## Manuscripts

### Item

- 1 'The struggle for Mapoon', typescript draft, 1962. Also published in part as a leaflet by the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League, Cairns
- 1 'The use of the natural environment of the Australian Aborigines': typescript manuscript with amendments (one original copy and two photocopies), c. 1968-1970. Attached to the original manuscript is a letter with comments from Dr A. H. Campbell and a response from Webb
- 1 'An ecological classification of habitat types in relation to the Aborigines in Cape York Peninsula': typescript manuscript. Talk given at the AIAS Ethnobotany Workshop, Canberra, 15-16 May, 1976 (2 copies)

## Books and journal articles

### Item

- 2 'Queensland plants tested against *Staphylococcus aureus*', reprinted from *Australian Journal of Science*, Vol 10, No 3, December, 1947, p. 82
- 2 'Alkaloids in Queensland *Cryptocarya* Spp.', reprinted from *Australian Journal of Science*, Vol 11, No 1, 1948, pp. 26-27
- 2 'Alkaloids of the Australian Rutaceae', reprinted from *Nature*, Vol 162, 7 August, 1948, p. 223
- 2 'The blistering alkaloid in poison walnut', *Forest Products News Letter*, No 169, 1948 (photocopy)
- 2 'Alkaloid tests on herbarium specimens', reprinted from *Nature*, Vol 165, 11 March, 1950, pp. 411
- 2 *An Australian Phytochemical Survey, II. Alkaloids in Queensland flowering plants*, Melbourne, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, 1952 Bulletin No 268
- 2 'Nitrate content and toxicity of Queensland plants', reprinted from *Journal of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science*, Vol 18, No 3, September, 1952, pp. 164-167 (2 copies)
- 2 'An occurrence of aluminium succinate in *Cardwellia sublimis* f. *muell.*', reprint from *Nature*, Vol 171, 11 April 1953, p. 656
- 2 'Alkaloid potentialities of the Australian flora', reprinted from *Journal of the*

- Australian Institute of Agricultural Science*, September 1953, pp. 144-157 (reprint plus photocopy)
- 3 'Aluminium accumulation in the Australian-New Guinea flora', reprinted from *Australian Journal of Botany*, Vol 2, No 2, 1954, pp. 176-196
- 3 'A preliminary phytochemical survey of Papua New Guinea', *Pacific Nature*, October, 1955, pp. 430-441 (photocopy)
- 3 'Terpenoid chemistry: III. The essential oils of eucalyptus deglupta blume and e. torelliana f. muell.' by M. D. Sutherland, L. J. Webb and J. W. Wells, *Australian Journal of Chemistry*, Vol 13, No 3, 1960, pp. 357-366 (reprint)
- 3 'Some new records of medicinal plants used by the Aborigines of Tropical Queensland and New Guinea', reprinted from *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland*, Vol 71, No 6, 1960, pp. 103-110
- 3 'Australian plants and chemical research', offprint of a chapter from *The last of the lands*, edited by L. J. Webb, D. Whitelock and J. Le Gay Brereton, Milton, Qld, Jacaranda Press, 1969, pp. 82-90 (photocopy)
- 3 'The use of plant medicines and poisons by Australian Aborigines', *Mankind*, No 7, 1969, pp. 137-146 (reprint). This article is also accompanied by a letter from Webb to Sir Robert Price entitled 'scientifically valid uses of plants as medicines and poisons by Australian Aborigines: tentative examples'
- 3 'Eat, die, and learn - the botany of the Australian Aborigines', reprinted from *Australian Natural History*, Vol 17, No 9, March 1973, pp. 290-295
- 3 'Ethnobotany: the co-operative approach to research', *AIAS Newsletter*, No 7, January, 1977, p. 43 (photocopy)
- 3 'Ecological guidelines and traditional empiricism in rural development' by L. J. Webb and D. M. Smyth, *The Environmentalist*, Vol 4, Supplement No 7, 1984, pp. 99-105 (photocopy)
- 3 'Modern affirmations of ecology ethics', *Wildlife Australia*, Autumn, 1985, pp. 28-31 (photocopy)

#### **4. OTHER PAPERS, 1968-2001**

This series consists of correspondence, book reviews, journal articles, newspaper articles, notes and reports. They cover a wide range of Webb's interests including youth issues, environmental development projects, intellectual property, Aboriginal ecology and traditional indigenous knowledge.

## Item

- 1 **Development of Nurrabullgin.** Includes correspondence, 1991-92, notes and a journal article relating to the development of Nurrabullgin and the surrounding area and a report 'Outline for management and business plan over Nurrabullgin and surrounds known as Kondoparinga Station owned by the Kuku Djungan Aboriginal Corporation' (May 1992)
- 2 **Clump Mountain Youth Wilderness Healing Camp.** Includes correspondence with Joe McGuinness and Gerald Appo, Director of the Camp, 1994-98. Webb visited the camp in 1998 at the request of Joe McGuinness. The file also contains notes on the camp, a copy of Webb's report and a copy of 'Report on the third heal the healers gathering, Daradgee Environmental Centre, 9-12 April, 1998'
- 3 **Closure of Petford Training Farm.** Includes correspondence from Joe McGuinness and Barry Christophers relating to Petford Training Farm, 2001, extracts of statements on Petford from the Queensland State Parliament Hansard Reports, 1999-2000, and a journal article entitled 'A crop of dreams' which appeared in *Australian Geographic*, April-June 1994
- 4 **Intellectual property.** Includes a copy of a draft consultation paper 'Guidelines on research ethics regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural, social, intellectual and spiritual property' produced by the Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation, Research and Development, April 1995. The file also contains two letters and two journal articles relating to research and ethics in the area of traditional indigenous knowledge, 1984-96
- 5-8 **Aboriginal ecology and traditional knowledge.** Journal articles, book reviews and newspaper articles by various authors, 1968-96. File 8 contains a course outline and readings for a course entitled 'Caring for country: conservation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environments', James Cook University Tropical Environment Summer School, 14-25 February, 1995

## Box List

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Finding Aid compiled by J. Bradley, October 2002