

**Indigenous Epistemology and Wellbeing:
Universe referent citizenship**

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Kerry Arabena

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FOREWORD

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) is committed to align our services with the priorities of the Aboriginal community of New South Wales. The department's intention with this commitment is to incorporate the rights and interests of New South Wales Aboriginal people into our work.

DECC's wellbeing research project seeks to increase the Department's awareness of the Indigenous world views that underpin New South Wales Aboriginal peoples' approaches to their contemporary culture and heritage. In the Aboriginal world view, people and Country (including traditional land and seas) are an integral whole and the entire landscape has spiritual significance. Nature and culture are not separate, and the health of the natural environment and Aboriginal persons are intimately connected. Their wellbeing, therefore, is influenced by the health of the environment and the degree to which they can be actively involved in caring for it. One important outcome from the wellbeing research project has been the opportunity it has created for a critical and adventurous dialogue about government policy between Indigenous scholars and DECC.

Kerry Arabena is the second postgraduate student who has received a commission under the auspices of the wellbeing research project. We asked Kerry to write about Indigenous epistemology and wellbeing with a focus on New South Wales. Her work in the following paper draws on her recent research results from interviews with people about how they see and interact with the Universe, and how this might relate to DECC's conservation and environment responsibilities. Specific aspects she explores include how this concept of the Universe might apply to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities.

Kerry's approach is underscored by Indigenous perspectives, her paper references distinguished Indigenous scholars as well as ten interviews with Aboriginal people living in New South Wales. The central theme of Kerry's paper is the case for a paradigm shift; the adoption of 'Universe Referent Citizenship' as the conceptual framework that will promote holistic responses to climate change and other global challenges across all world governments and peoples. The sort of shift that Kerry seeks us to make is to place the Universe as the primary experience in order to move away from a 'human centric' way of being. The Universe offers us the largest context in which we live as human beings. Seeing ourselves as citizens of the Universe would place us in relationships of interdependence and reciprocity as opposed to ones of dominance and exploitation. Moreover, the spirituality of our existence would become a relevant aspect of governance and government policy making. Conceptualising this paradigm shift within the frame of citizenship challenges government to develop a goal orientated approach to achieve wellbeing where all facets of human life are considered within the context of their impacts on sustainability.

Kerry's willingness to work within a utopian frame of reference with the concept of Universe Referent Citizenship invites DECC to recognise that traditional Indigenous knowledge is more than the valuable heritage of Australia's Indigenous peoples, but can also be applied to the problem of creating a sustainable future for our planet. Kerry makes several recommendations in her paper; DECC has responded with a discussion paper that is available at <www.environment.nsw.gov.au>.

I thank Kerry and the Aboriginal persons who participated in her examination of Universe Referent Citizenship. Your words are fundamental to the Department gaining a deeper understanding of types of desires held by New South Wales Aboriginal peoples' for their environment, located inside humanity's broader 'Universe' of aspirations.

Jason Ardler
Executive Director, Culture and Heritage Division
Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW)

Terminology used in this Paper

In this paper the term ‘Aboriginal peoples’ is used to identify the First Peoples of Australia and refers specifically to the Aboriginal peoples residing in New South Wales. It must be stated that Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales are not a homogeneous group. In recognition of the diversity among the nations of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales, when possible, I attempt to acknowledge the specific identities of Aboriginal nations in New South Wales, distinct from other Aboriginal peoples that also live in New South Wales and in other regions across Australia.

When applicable, the term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s’ is used to refer to and recognise the two unique Indigenous populations in Australia. In this paper I alternate between the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’. The term Indigenous should not be read in this document as a term that fails to recognise the diversity and specific identity of Aboriginal peoples. Instead, I use the term to refer collectively to the first peoples of Australia, New Zealand, North America, and other countries around the globe.

‘Non-Indigenous’ is used to refer to the residents of those countries who do not identify as a member of the community of First Peoples of their respective countries.

In using the term ‘indigenous’, I am referring to a particular way of approaching knowledge, or a particular way of being in the Universe that validates that we are all indigenous to this Universe.

Acronyms

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
CHD	Cultural Heritage Division, Department of Environment and Climate Change
DECC	Department of Environment and Climate Change (New South Wales)
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NSW	New South Wales
TO	Traditional Owner

About the Author

Kerry Arabena is a descendent through her father of the Meriam people of Murray Island in the Torres Strait. She is a social worker with an extensive background in public health and community development. Kerry has served as a Ministerial Appointee on national councils and been representative on local, regional and international advisory bodies. Kerry has been Director of the Regional Governance Unit in the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination; Executive Director of Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and Reproductive Healthcare Services in Canberra; Apunipima Cape York Health Council in Queensland; and Pintubi Homelands Health Service in the Northern Territory. Kerry has coordinated population health strategies across northern Australia and developed an expertise in sexual and reproductive health. She has made contributions in Australia and the Asia Pacific region through agencies such as the World Health Organisation and the World Bank in cross-jurisdictional areas such as gender issues, social justice, human rights, violence, access and equity, service provision, harm minimisation and citizenship rights and responsibilities. Kerry is currently a Visiting Research Fellow in Social Health at AIATSIS and a Doctoral student in the Fenner School in the Faculty of Science at the Australian National University in Canberra.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was commissioned by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) Wellbeing Research Project which aims to demonstrate the importance of wellbeing in the development and delivery of cultural heritage and other programs for Aboriginal communities in New South Wales (NSW). This paper focuses on the potential for wellbeing by placing the human community in a direct relationship with the Universe. The Wellbeing Project had previously been working with a concept of the Universe as one of a list of social values, conceived of as ‘an acceptance of and protection of the welfare of *all* human beings and nature’. The paper draws on Indigenous philosophies and ecological knowledges about our place in the Universe and our constructs of citizenship and answers two questions:

- In what ways might government and Indigenous knowledge of cultural heritage places be contextualized in the concept of the Universe as developed by this research? And;
- How might this concept of the Universe apply to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities?

This project provided an opportunity for ten key informants (six women and four men) to conceive knowledge for the future by placing the Universe as the ‘primary’ in our lives. The information from these interviews was subject to a comparative analysis in order to make recommendations contained in this report relevant to cultural heritage organisations across Australia, to be considered when implementing programs and projects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The key informants were asked the following questions:

- What is your ideal of citizenship?
- What are you a citizen of now?
- What does the term Universal Citizen mean to you?
- What would have to change in order for you to be a Universal Citizen?
- What would you expect to experience as a Universal Citizen?
- What would it take for Universal Citizenship to be brought into effect?

In a Universe described by Aboriginal persons in Australia, the many components of nature become an extension not just of the geographic world but also of the human society. The Universe is similarly placed in international Indigenous literature. In honouring the integrity of their Universe as a whole interconnected life system, Indigenous peoples have learned over many generations to be in the world in reciprocal relationships with all things in their Universe, through cooperation, complementarities and interdependence.

A summary of the points raised by respondents in these questions shows that governments and their representative agencies need to work together and to assume joint responsibility for the community and its needs, particularly as human wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the earth’s ecosystems. An ecological approach to health is based on the recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the ecological systems in which people live. While health is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, not merely an absence of disease or infirmity, health could also be described as a state of wellbeing that results from a people’s success in collectively and individually managing the interactions between their physical, spiritual, biological, economic and social

environments. Health then, is the state of wellbeing that results from people living in balance with their finite biological and physical ecosystems.

Based on information from international, national Indigenous philosophies and from the answers given in the research process, two models have been developed to describe the Universe and how it impacts on and defines the lives of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales. The first model represents the holarchical relationships (holistic) that persons have within the constructs of the Universe – that is a non-hierarchical relationship with nature and other living and non-living systems. I refer to this state as the ‘first citizen state’. The second model demonstrates what happens when Aboriginal peoples experience colonisation. It is in this citizenship state that the hierarchical relationships between Aboriginal persons and others in society impacted not only on their health and wellbeing, but on the health and well-being of other living beings, living systems and of ecosystems for which Aboriginal peoples saw themselves as responsible. What needs to be reinstated is the holarchical relationship between all Australians with nature as the fundamental underpinning of human health and wellbeing in this country.

This is necessary because, not only have the First Peoples of the world been oppressed and suppressed by colonisation, all peoples are now trapped in the ‘culture of colonisation’. This is because the culture of colonisation is now affecting the living and non-living processes that give us life. The mal-development practices underpinning colonisation are disrupting the geological functioning of the planet to a level not previously known in the epic of the journey of the Universe.

These two models attempt to describe the position of Aboriginal peoples in connection with the Universe. These models could be used to inform government about how Indigenous knowledges of cultural heritage places might be contextualized in the concept of the Universe as developed by this research. Also, these models might inform how the concept of the Universe applies to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities. One hope is that Aboriginal peoples might know themselves in their first citizenship state, and from this position, share knowledge with the wider community.

Implementing these recommendations would establish a precedent in working toward achieving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the context of the Universe. To situate cultural heritage agencies with the key concepts discussed in this paper, the following recommendations have been made:

Recommendation 1: Define Universe–referent health and wellbeing

- Cultural heritage agencies might consider in future work a definition of health and wellbeing that incorporates Indigenous epistemologies of the Universe as an ‘interconnected whole’. What might be considered in the development of a definition of Universe-referent health includes placing the Universe as the ‘primary’ to remedy the thoughts and actions that have made human societies as independent as possible from the natural world, and to move away from ‘human-centric’ to ‘earth-caring’ and ‘Universe-referent’ ways of being.
- Invest in Universe-referent citizenship modes derived from Indigenous peoples’ worldviews and ecological knowledges.
- Invest in ways that enhance the collective human capacity to recognise and maintain the integrity of the biosphere in which we live. Defining human health and wellbeing requires human reinvention as members of a community of life

systems, to become reverent with the biology that nurtures us, and conscious engagement with ecosystems in sustainable, life-enhancing ways.

Recommendation 2: Develop principles and ethics that are Universe referent

Cultural heritage agencies have incorporated fundamental ideas that guide the development of principles in programs. All these guidelines inform policies that are acknowledged as key cornerstones in health and environmental health policies. Evidence of previous work in this area can be seen in major documents, protocols, and legislation.

- In conserving cultural heritage, agencies might consider the placement of the Universe in developing a set of principles that links human health and ecological processes in the State. The inter-relationship between the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples, their first and second citizenship state and the health of ecosystems can be more fully explored.
- To do this, cultural heritage agencies could consider assisting Aboriginal peoples across Australia to express their understanding of a 'Precautionary Principle' as a response to threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage. In seeking the participation of Aboriginal peoples, agencies should look to supporting the expression of cultural heritage by incorporating knowledge of Aboriginal peoples into strategies concerning ecological processes, conditions for conservation, and the need for biodiversity. Also important would be the implementation of strategies that reinvigorates custodianship and stewardship, and that consolidate the appreciation for the custodial roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and in fact that all Australians have in relation to land and water.
- Cultural heritage agencies could work with Aboriginal peoples to ascertain methods of engaging with and maintaining eco-system health and biodiversity to positively influence human health and spiritual wellbeing, and to assist Aboriginal peoples to develop an ethical framework formulated on the principle of a balanced Universe that focused on the protection of ecological systems. These ethics would necessarily focus on equity *within* generations (economic efficiency and environmental integrity) and *between* generations in which the present generation needs to consider how to maintain or enhance the full functioning, diversity and productivity of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Recommendation 3: Beyond the Physical

- Cultural heritage agencies might consider that some of the non-physical requirements for health and wellbeing also have ecological underpinnings. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, the systems of values and beliefs that define how we see the world and our places in it facilitates how we all might find meaning and purpose in life.
- Cultural heritage agencies might seek to recognise spirituality in policies and programs to remedy the thoughts and actions that have made human societies as independent as possible from the natural world. To achieve this, appropriate actions that might be considered include the development of curricula and materials for health and other related courses that focus on Universe-referent ways of being and reverence for the bio-spiritual spheres in which we live.
- Cultural heritage agencies might publicise activities that contribute to Universe-referent, earth-caring ways of being.

- Cultural heritage agencies might focus on ensuring access to accurate information about the factors that influence and affect ecological sustainability, spirituality and consequently health.

Recommendation 4: The Need for Action

Some of the information in this report will require a different approach than previously invested in by government departments and Aboriginal individuals and communities. This will necessitate recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the ecological systems in which persons live, and our reliance on these systems for our health and wellbeing. The protection of cultural heritage, native title, land rights, repatriation of cultural and skeletal material, natural resource management, conservation of cultural heritage in densely populated areas, wild-resource use, and intellectual property rights are current focus areas for protection and conservation.

- While these foci provide important investigative areas that could support the practical application of cultural heritage work and achieve enhanced wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples, cultural heritage agencies might consider the ways in which these activities relate to and inform Aboriginal people and others about these activities promoting Universe-referent strategies and programs.
- Agencies might consider a forward-looking, goal-orientated approach (where the goal is the achievement of human health and wellbeing in the context of healthy ecosystems on which all of our health depends) so that all facets of human life are considered within the context of their impacts on ecological sustainability while promoting the ‘first citizen state’ and reducing the negative impacts of ‘second citizen’ states as described in this paper.

Recommendation 5: Investing in a systems view of the world

It is important that cultural heritage agencies invest in the development of Universe-referent strategies that are both continuous and coherent. It is difficult to address gaps in knowledge with theories that are developed within fragmented, reductionist disciplines. Knowledges developed within these disciplines are easily perceived by Aboriginal peoples as specific knowledges intent on isolating individuals rather than promoting inclusion. In the applications of these new sciences, worldviews are interconnected, interrelated systems including constellations of concepts, perceptions, values and practices that are shared by a community and direct the activities of its members.

- Cultural heritage agencies could set a precedent by orientating activities that recognise the systems of organised complexity in which humans constitute but one component.
- Agencies might consider the adoption of propositions that acknowledge the irreducibility of natural systems, the changes these systems undergo in changing environments, the capacity for Aboriginal peoples to promote cultural heritage activities that enhance the capability of Aboriginal persons to create healthy ecosystems across Australia. These propositions might take a systems approach in which nature becomes the interface between humans and other living beings.

Kerry Arabena
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INTRODUCTION

This paper was commissioned by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) Wellbeing Research Project which aims to demonstrate the importance of wellbeing in the development and delivery of cultural heritage and other programs for the Aboriginal community in New South Wales (NSW).¹ The Wellbeing Research Project was developed in response to a knowledge gap which hampered the practical application of cultural heritage work to the achievement of the government's goals. DECC – the Culture and Heritage Division (CHD), has invested in evidence based research activities including an analysis of the current Federal and New South Wales government policy concerned with Aboriginal issues; commissioning research in Indigenous Wellbeing; and facilitating a survey among Aboriginal people in urban, regional and remote areas of New South Wales. These activities address the knowledge gap and support the alignment of government cultural heritage approaches to the complexities in Aboriginal people's lives.

In this paper I focus on the potential for wellbeing by placing the human community in a direct relationship with the Universe. The Wellbeing Project had previously been working with a limited concept of the Universe as one of many social values, conceived of as 'an acceptance of and protection of the welfare of *all* human beings and nature'². Here I draw upon Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous peoples' place in the world and apply these findings to two questions:

- In what ways might government and Indigenous knowledge of cultural heritage places be contextualized in the concept of the Universe as developed by this research? And;
- How might this concept of the Universe apply to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities?

Of particular importance for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales is the capacity to practice, engage with, and promote Aboriginal cultures as unique and distinct from those that underpin contemporary mainstream Australian society. As Aden Ridgeway said when he was a Senator '... we want the same opportunities without being made the same' (Ridgeway 2005:5).

Aboriginal wellbeing is ensured through the protection of rights to tangible and intangible cultural practices and is seen to be culturally based, existing through an inter-generational continuation of cultural knowledges and practices (Grieves 2006:18-19). This heritage is a significant priority for the New South Wales government. The protection of cultural heritage, native title, land rights, repatriation of cultural and skeletal material, natural resource management, conservation of cultural heritage in densely populated areas, wild resource use, and intellectual property rights have been nominated as pertinent focus areas for protection and conservation (NSW Aboriginal

¹ The NSW Government priorities for Aboriginal affairs are health, education, employment, justice and housing. Government expenditure on these priorities aims to improve wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples in NSW.

² DECC is conducting a survey with Aboriginal people in NSW to learn about how 'wellbeing' or 'quality of life' is increased by a person's involvement in culture and heritage activities. The survey requires people to prioritise values that guide them in the course of their everyday lives. Other values considered by people involved in the survey include power, personal achievement; stimulation; independence; benevolence; tradition; respect; and security. The project recognizes that all of these values are equally important and every society in the world has these values, but that we prioritise them differently, both as a society and as an individual and that the priority that we give to values can change during our lives.

Affairs Plan, *Two Ways Together* 2003 – 2012). While these foci provide important investigative areas that could support the practical application of cultural heritage work and achieve enhanced wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples, the purpose of this paper is to provide information on Indigenous epistemology and wellbeing and our description of, and position in, the 'Universe'.

An axiom of this paper is that ours is a period when the human community is in search of new and sustaining relationships to the earth amidst 'an environmental crisis that threatens the very existence of all life forms on the planet'; Tucker and Grim (2001:xv) wrote:

While the particular causes and solutions for the crisis are being debated by scientists, economists, and policy makers, the facts of widespread destruction are causing alarm in many quarters. Indeed, from some perspectives the future of human life itself appears to be threatened ...

While the impending environmental crisis described in the international literature is not heeded by many Australians, there will come a time, when it must be addressed by the human community, including those of us who reside in Australia (Tucker and Grim 2001:xvi):

For many people an environmental crisis of this complexity and scope is not only the result of certain economic, political and social factors. It is also a moral and spiritual crisis which, in order to be addressed will require much broader philosophical and religious understandings of ourselves as creatures of nature, embedded in life cycles and dependent on eco systems.

Many Aboriginal peoples have asserted time and again that the methods of engaging with and maintaining ecosystem health and biodiversity are positive influences on human health and spiritual wellbeing. This view of wellbeing is consistent with those expressed by the World Health Organisation, an agency that has articulated the necessity for humans to achieve the basic determinants of wellbeing within changing and depleted ecosystems (WHO 2005:12):

Basic determinants of human wellbeing may be defined in terms of: security; an adequate supply of basic materials for livelihood (e.g. food, shelter, clothing, energy, etc.); personal freedoms; good social relations; and physical health. By influencing patterns of livelihoods, income, local migration and political conflict, ecosystem services impact the determinants of human wellbeing ...

Thus the manner in which humans interact with the ecosystem provides a basis for wellbeing in the context of a holistic, interdependent relationship with the natural environment, the Universe. Further to this, the ability for Aboriginal peoples to utilize their cultural heritages and knowledges to obtain food and other necessities, practice custodianship and provide support for the biodiversity of animals and plants in these ecosystems ensures a continuation of not only Indigenous peoples' wellbeing; but the wellbeing of a future Australian society.

This paper is presented in three Chapters.

In Chapter 1, I set out the concept of the Universe, repositioning the Universe as the 'primary' in all our affairs, reviewing international Indigenous philosophies relating to the Universe, and exploring the Australian context. In doing so, I advocate that ideas about the Universe and our place in it should be judged for their potential to make a contribution to increase understanding, acceptance and respect for ourselves (identity), each other and between peoples and 'place'.

In Chapter 2, I describe the methodological strategies used in this research including the interview process, the use of grounded theory, and the results of a

thematic review of the information derived from interviews with Aboriginal persons in New South Wales. I conclude this chapter with the collation of information derived from the interviews into two figures that demonstrate the place of Aboriginal peoples in the Universe and in the wider society.

In Chapter 3, I then discuss the possible applications of Universe-referent citizenship through agencies focussing on Culture and Heritage to address the knowledge gap and support the alignment of government cultural heritage approaches to the complexities in Aboriginal peoples' lives.

CHAPTER 1: THE CONCEPT OF THE UNIVERSE

Throughout history, people have always understood that we are deeply embedded in and utterly dependent on the natural world. In stories, songs and dances, cultures around the globe have celebrated being part of their surroundings. In a world where everything is connected to everything else, any action has repercussions and so responsibilities accompany every deliberate act. Acknowledgment of that responsibility has also been explicit in the rituals of every society. The acknowledgment of our 'being in the world', however, has been shattered in the past few centuries by knowledge underpinned by reductionism; Suzuki (2003:1) wrote:

Reductionism, the focusing on parts of nature to explain the whole, was repudiated by modern physics but continues to be the underlying assumption in most of biology and medicine ... [it] has fragmented the way we see everything and obliterated the rhythms, patterns, and cycles within which the parts operate.

As human numbers have exploded, more and more of the world's populations have spent their entire lives in a period of unprecedented growth and change. To them, this is the normal condition of humanity and it is expected – indeed demanded by those who know no other way. For people who have grown up with this rapid change, the literature about the Universe and our 'place' within it; is difficult to appreciate. Berry (1999:180) wrote that one of the significant roles for the Indigenous peoples of the world is not simply to sustain their own traditions, but to:

... call the entire civilised world back to an authentic mode of being. Our only hope is in a renewal of those primordial experiences out of which the shaping of our more sublime human qualities could take place.

While a radically different worldview, being 'in' the Universe or being 'Universe referent' incorporates the insights, the vigour and the necessary reverence to reconnect humanity with one of our most integral traditions of human intimacy with the earth (Berry and Swimme 1992:32). This is not a new idea. This connectedness with the Universe has been a fundamental feature of Indigenous philosophies and ecological knowledges across the world.

1.1 The necessity to place the Universe as the 'primary'

Establishing the Universe as the 'primary experience' is a central theme in Indigenous philosophies. That is, that the Universe, and all its elements is the 'primary' for the Earth's and consequently our own survival. The Universe is not merely understood in physical terms as an external, separate entity, but also that humanity is fused with the Universe: that the Universe is alive and manifests as a direct result of our thoughts and actions thereby energised and able to construct the proper moral and ethical code by which human beings should live. These codes are thought to have ensured sustainability throughout thousands of generations.

Similarly, ecologists say that recognition of the Universe as the primary is necessary for the Earth's survival, particularly in any discussions of human affairs. Berry (1999:3) wrote:

Obviously the Universe, the solar system and the planet Earth are the primary We have no immediate access to anything intellectually or physically prior to or beyond the universe. The universe is its own evidence since there is no further context in the phenomenal world for explaining the universe.

In this way, every mode of being in the phenomenal order is Universe-referent. The Universe is the primary value, the primary source of existence and the primary destiny of whatever exists in the phenomenal world. Re-establishing the Universe as the primary in all of our affairs enhances the consistencies between Indigenous spiritualities and ecological philosophies.

Placing the Universe as the 'primary' remedies the thoughts and actions that have made human societies as independent as possible from the natural world and moves away from 'human-centric' to 'Universe-referent' ways of being. Each person then is a mediator between the known and the unknown, between culture and nature, past and present, between ourselves, each other and the Universe, transforming it by his or her knowledge, skills and relationship with it (Berry 1999:3).

The Universe is placed as the primary in international Indigenous literature. Several themes that are evident include that the Universe is circular or spiral in format and these formations are reflected in nature (Deloria et al. 1999:46; Barnhardt and Kawagley 1999:117-140; Stewart-Harawira 2005:34). Secondly, that the Universe is profoundly interconnected, where each component of the Universe has a relationship with another component and cannot be viewed as separate (Leroy Little Bear 2005:9; Narokobi 1977). Also, there is an indication from the literature that the Universe is moral or has a moral purpose from which ethics can be derived (Deloria et al. 1999:46; Alfred 1999:43; Henare 2001:213-14). It cannot be argued that the Universe is moral or has a moral purpose without simultaneously maintaining that the Universe is alive (Posey 2001:5; Bookchin 2005:114; Napoleon 1997:118). In this way, the expression of life is seen in all plants, winds, mountains, rivers and lakes, and that spirits reside in living and non-living entities, therefore having a consciousness and a life. Other themes evident in Indigenous philosophies that demonstrate a connection with the Universe are that space determines the nature of relationships, and that time determines the meaning of relationships (Leroy Little Bear 2005:10; Dussart 2005:113; Booher 1998:314; Deloria 2002:15; Waiko 1982:270).

These themes unite Indigenous philosophers across the globe: the Universe is known as inherently dynamic, constantly changing in a process of renewal, and profoundly interrelated. These worldviews hold that human beings cannot 'mis-experience' anything; we can only misinterpret what it is we experience. In honouring the integrity of the Universe as a whole interconnected life system, Indigenous peoples have learned to be in the world in reciprocal relationships with all things in the Universe, through cooperation, complementarities and interdependence.

These worldviews persist despite the fact that many of the places that are sacred to Indigenous peoples across the world are 'under assault'. What is decipherable from the literature is that even though the rituals that maintain sacred geography may shift and change, or political imperatives take precedence over ceremonial concerns, the end result for all the Indigenous writers is that the nature of relationships in the Universe are an existence tethered to specific sacred locations which can be retrieved, remembered, reshaped and reclaimed, even after lengthy periods of amnesia, taboo and neglect.

The Universe (as it is currently conceived of in DECC work) is portrayed as 'an acceptance of and protection of the welfare of *all* human beings and nature' (Carrington 2007:5). While this is adequate, the nuances contained in international Indigenous philosophical literature and in ecological knowledges provide a fuller explanation of the Universe and the nature of human relationships with and within it. The next section details the Australian context and how peoples have engaged with the Universe.

1.2 The Australian Context

For generations, Indigenous law and customary practices have shaped the environments across Australia, maintaining ecosystems in a state of managed equilibrium for over 50 000 years. No matter how profoundly the process of colonisation has impacted upon them, many Aboriginal peoples still describe land as an 'essence', something that is a cornerstone or a foundation to Indigenous wellbeing (Woinarski et al. 2007:4). In a Universe described by Aboriginal peoples, the many components of nature become an extension not just of the geographic world but also of the human society (Posey 2001:5). This extension is evident in the words of Smithy Zimran Tjampitjinpa (2006) from Australia's Western Desert who said:

The (Yanangu) law is like a human being, it works with Aboriginal people – Yanangu. Yanangu and the law is together. If that law is weakened, people get weakened and they feel they are weak because they have taken away power in the community.

In this way, the Universe and the law through which it is interpreted are acknowledged as a participant in that community, whose strength influences the society as much as when it is weakened. Peoples express their powers through Universal means and their capacities to practice their positions in the Universe. Rather than dealing with nature as an 'it' or 'thou' (to use Martin Buber's terms), the 'ceremonial validates the Universe as *kin*, personified as part of the community' (Bookchin 2005:114). Another example of the notion of the Universe as *kin* is a description of the role of the Earth as a mother, a giver of life more than an extension of human society. Riley Young (Rose 1992:207), a Yarralin man, spoke of the living earth as the giver of life:

Blackfellow never change him ... We been borning [in] this country. We been grow up [in] this country. We been walkabout this country. We know all this country all over ... Blackfellow been born on top of that ground, and blackfellow-blackfellow blood [in the ground] ... This ground is mother. This ground she's my mother. She's the mother for everybody. We born on top of this ground. This [is] our mother. That's why we worry about this ground.

The living Universe has a consciousness, is seen as *kin*, as a giver and sustainer of life and as a participant in the life of human society. The living Universe requires mutual respect among its members and a willingness of entities to allow others to fulfil themselves.

Being in and recognising a close relationship with nature remains a normal part of life for Indigenous peoples across Australia, including those who live in highly transformed, cleared and urbanised areas of New South Wales. In many Indigenous communities, knowledge of and links to land still remains strong, with many persons in regional and remote parts of New South Wales describing two of their adult roles as looking after the land, its plants and animals, and ensuring that their children know of the way they are connected to land.³

Australian-based ecologists have stated that a move away from this unique relationship with the landscape has contributed to the ecological problems now facing many parts of Australia, including New South Wales (Woinarski et al. 2007:4) The signs are increasing that that much of the country is not healthy. Some native plant and animal species are declining, at the same time as non-native plants and animals are increasing. Water is scarce, species are becoming extinct and there is an increasing debate and conflict over the best use of natural resources. These signs, some Aboriginal

³ Assertion based on comments from a NSW based respondents answers to a structured interview process that has contributed to the development of this paper. Principle investigator Kerry Arabena

persons have said, are the result of Aboriginal peoples not being able to look after country; an erosion of traditions and values.

Cultural heritage, traditions and values that preserve an inherent 'earth-caring' philosophy germane to our identity is often challenged by governments, policy makers and members of mainstream (colonising) society. Custodianship as a function of Indigenous societies has been eroded by the imposition of Anglo-European socio-material systems on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander socio-material systems (Arabena 2006:36-46). This imposition is an infringement on the most basic principle of human history; certain lands and seas are given to certain peoples and it is from these peoples that we must learn to survive, thrive and flourish (Deloria et al. 1999:46).

This is critical as Indigenous Australians are being made 'fit for modern Australian society' by reducing our cultural capacities, our knowledges and our experiences to extraneous baggage in Australian society at a time when it is needed the most (Arabena 2005:12). Traditional Owners (TO) across the country have articulated the need for a distinctive reality and a unique value in the context of land. Land, they have said, is the enduring reality and the enduring value, binding together peoples and religion, culture and livelihood (Gumurdul et al. 2006). When considered from this world view, land and sea is the bio-spiritual space from which Indigenous peoples identify the future. The principles of custodianship hold the capacity to harmonise activities within the requirements of the natural environment and familial obligations.

Many Indigenous persons in New South Wales however, are compelled to participate in activities to demonstrate a fitness for mainstream society and citizenship as defined by the nation-state. The current national Indigenous policy framework operates through a process that requires Aboriginal peoples to bind their lives to agencies external to their traditional bio-spiritual space and not to land. These agencies would have Indigenous peoples 'develop' their land and relate to other members of their community in financial, commercial and industrial ways that destroy the ecospheres in which we live. It is increasingly difficult to continue cultural independence in the context of 'place', not that of 'modernisation'. This could occur by prioritising our interdependence with the geographical, biological and spiritual components that constitute our known Universe however difficult it is to assert these practices when the imperatives are to adopt those that promote human-centric economies (that of the Colonisers) from Earth-centric economies (that of Indigenous peoples) to overcome our disadvantage (Arabena 2006:36-46).

1.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have sought to articulate the position of the Universe in Indigenous philosophical literature and ecological knowledges. The damage being done to ecosystems around the world is a motivating force for investing in the creation of new knowledges that reconnect humanity to the organic, natural world. Indigenous knowledges have remained steadfast in placing the Universe as the primary in all our affairs, maintaining ecological equilibrium that now seems so elusive to us.

In the next chapter, a Universe-referent citizenship mode derived from Indigenous peoples' worldviews and ecological knowledges is offered as a method to overcome further ecological degradation of the continent and to promote ways in which cultural heritage agencies and Indigenous knowledge of cultural heritage places might be contextualized in the concept of the Universe. I also introduce the methods of the research and the analysis of interviews with Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales, exploring what this might mean for Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous peoples' place in the world.

CHAPTER 2: THE UNIVERSAL CITIZEN

Citizenship has been a powerful feature of Eurocentric ideals in this and other liberal democracies around the world. Recently, the Australian government has implemented a 'citizenship test' to ensure that 'migrants have the capacity to fully participate in the Australian community as citizens and maximise the opportunities available to them in Australia' (Attorney General 2007). The official government website states that the citizenship test will 'promote social cohesion and successful integration into the community' (Attorney General 2007), the values and principles of which are (Australian Government 2007:5):

Shared to some extent by all liberal democracies; they have been adapted to Australia's unique setting, moulded and modernised through waves of settlement by people all over the world. These values and principles reflect strong influences on Australian history and culture. These include Judeo-Christian ethics, a British political heritage and the spirit of European Enlightenment. Distinct Irish and non-conformist attitudes have also been important.

What is absent from these values and principles is any reference to those that are concentric to the citizenship of the Indigenous peoples; whose lives were moulded in the context of the unique setting of the Australian landscape for hundreds of generations.

It should be stated that citizenship is considered a recent phenomenon for Australia's Indigenous peoples. In a referendum on 27 May 1967 Australians voted overwhelmingly that the product of Federation, the Australian Constitution, be changed to be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian society. These changes enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons to be counted in the reckoning of Australia's population, and gave the Commonwealth government the power to make laws for Aboriginal persons in the States concurrently with State governments. This referendum is often represented as having finally given Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples full citizenship rights.

These rights and duties had been denied to the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during Australia's colonial history. Professor Michael Dodson (2007:5), in an address to traditional land owners and native title holders said that:

It is 40 years since the referendum where the Australian people decided to include us in the census, so we were no longer part of the flora and fauna, and to empower the Commonwealth to make laws on our behalf. I think that the referendum was a symbol of hope that, finally, the Government might use its powers to protect and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but apart from the Land Rights Act of 1976, there was little evidence that the State has the capacity to support our aspirations, let alone recognise and respect our sovereign status.

In reality, citizenship has required Indigenous individuals to accept, reject or modify certain social models of 'independence', 'self-sufficiency', 'responsibility', and 'supervised modernisation' (Rowse 1998:4) so that 'Indigenous people of this country [can] look to their full enjoyment of the benefits and the bounty that Australia brings to all its citizens' (Howard 2005). In this way, the colonisers have, since the earliest decades of colonisation, ignored the existence of Indigenous societies or of Indigenous citizenship, which provided and continues to provide the first locus of social membership and identity for most Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) peoples.

While there are many rationales for separating Indigenous citizenship from other modes of citizenship, I have found that the separation persists to disallow 'the Indigenous' to imbue 'the modern', primarily because of the perception that Indigenous

peoples are non-modern peoples. For the human community to live 'indigenously' it would have to defy the progressive 'intent of modernisation' to which many industrialised countries subscribe. Modernization is widely viewed as enlightened living for those residing in industrialized countries (O'Brien and Penna 1998:14). At the commencement of the twenty-first century, it is a mode of living and value that transcends the natural law and communitarian traditions of Indigenous (non-modern) peoples. As many ecological problems are derived from the implementation of 'modernisation'; non-modern ideals and values could be those that could assist the human citizenry to re-engage with the significant environmental issues of our time.

What is considered in this Chapter is a citizenship model that connects 'the physical Universe to the living world, the living world to the world of society, and the world of society to the domains of mind and culture' (Laszlo 2004:8). I outline the knowledge that peoples have about the Universe, and how this concept of the Universe applies to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities.

2.1 Methodological Strategies used in this study

My research followed the ethical guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC 1999; 2003) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS 2002). Informed consent was obtained from all key informants in the development of these models.

2.1.1 Identifying Key Informants

Key informants were invited to participate in the project in the knowledge that it involved synthesizing Indigenous and ecological knowledges to develop Universe-referent models of citizenship, determine what might be achieved by them, and how these models might be accomplished.

Informants were informed that this was an opportunity to conceive knowledge for the future by placing the Universe as the 'primary' in our lives and seeing what Aboriginal peoples, other Indigenous peoples and ecologists think about this.

The information from these interviews was subject to a comparative analysis in order to discover theories of universal citizenship that might emerge.

The key informants for the project totalled ten persons (six women and four men) with whom an in-depth interview was held:

- Key Informant 1 is a retired man, aged between 60 and 66 years. He is an artist who had made a significant number of contributions to Aboriginal Rights in his 20s and 30s.
- Key Informant 2 is a single mother aged between 20 and 25. She is working in the public service after having completed an apprenticeship with the Australian government.
- Key Informant 3 is the mother of Key Informant 2; and is also working in the public service. Aged in the range 40-45, she is a single woman who provides care and support for her three daughters, and her grandchild.
- Key Informant 4 recently completed a ten month stint in an alcohol rehabilitation service. He is currently unemployed and attending AA meetings at age 35-40.
- Key Informant 5 is working in an identified position within a Legal Service. Aged between 35 and 40, she is a mother with three young children.

- Key Informant 6 is a manager in a Health Service. Aged between 50 and 60, she and her team provide primary health care to Aboriginal and non Aboriginal clients.
- Key Informant 7 works with Aboriginal Youth in a regional area of New South Wales. Aged between 25 and 30, he relocated from Sydney to be back on traditional country to assist young people in his region.
- Key Informant 8 is an Aboriginal Medical Officer. Aged 35 to 40, she has a young family and resides in another state.
- Key Informant 9 is aged in the range 55 to 65 and is involved in tertiary level education with a University at which he teaches Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- Key Informant 10 is an Aboriginal woman aged 50 to 55 who cares for her partner (who needs assistance) and is part of a group of Elders who get together for trips every few months.

2.1.2 Grounded Theory

Using a ‘grounded Theory’ approach, ten Aboriginal persons from across New South Wales (in the fields of land rights, health and wellbeing, Indigenous education and sustainability) provided data from which theoretically relevant constructs of Universe-referent citizenship could be derived. Aboriginal persons who participated in the development of an aspirational model of Universe-referent citizenship were asked the following questions:

- What is your ideal of citizenship?
- What are you a citizen of now?
- What does the term Universal Citizen mean to you?
- What would have to change in order for you to be a Universal Citizen?
- What would you expect to experience as a Universal Citizen?
- What would it take for Universal Citizenship to be brought into effect?

2.1.3 Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review of national and international Indigenous philosophies and ecological knowledges was conducted to support the emergent themes as identified in the interviews with key respondents. The literature review confirmed the relationships between respondent nominated categories in the models, to verify identifiable categories and theories, or to compensate for other less-developed categories as proposed by the respondents in the emergent models.

2.2 Interview Results

In this section, I give an overview of some of the answers I received during this process; then, in the next section, I tease out the important thematic concepts that respondents used to describe citizenship, their identity, their connectedness to place and their aspirations for a future for themselves and their people.

2.2.1 What are your ideals of Citizenship?

Informants made these responses

All I see is every Australia Day that more new people get a citizenship. I don't see the concept of Aboriginal citizenship because it is a natural position of society. We are the true citizens, because we have an old culture, we have law, we protected land, we did a lot of things you know? We did a lot of things, as a society, it was hunter gatherer but it

was a society that was valid, legitimate, there are umpteen books in this country about our society. And for those who want to come, and become an Australian citizen well that's a different story, its about their position and it is a lost position because they come from a different place. They are in a different position because they come from another place. We are here! And we never ceded anything, so ours is not a lost position because we never gave it up. We didn't gain citizenship, because we never lost it. Do you see what I mean? We will always be the first citizens, because the great creator gave it to us. See? [Key Informant 1]

Having more respect of being an individual within your own ... whether it be culture or, it's in the workplace or, you know ... not necessarily an equal – oh yes, an equal and I suppose it'd be good if there was more of an understanding, I suppose, of different cultures, not only Indigenous, you know, different races ... [Key Informant 3]

My thoughts on that are premised on a set of values. Those values are honesty, trust, transparency, respect and the 'L' word love. We know the past history of Australia is based on things like dispossession and assimilation and it has been about dividing and conquering. If the concept of Universal Citizenship was going to be applied we wouldn't have that; we would have equality. [Key Informant 5]

My ideals of citizenship are a shared understanding and that means respect for each other as individuals and of groups with their cultural beliefs and their expectations. In terms of how people see the community or a community and want to belong to a certain group, I don't think there is one group who is any better, or more correct than any other. I think it is a big mistake when we talk about Australian citizenship, or belonging; or Australian values and 'mateship' and all that other crap ... It does not demonstrate that level of respect from one another and for our differences. So, while we can acknowledge our differences and we should rejoice in that diversity we should also respect many of the things about us that are the same. [Key Informant 8]

In this question, the respondents were able to articulate criteria upon which they formulated their citizenship constructs. Importantly, Aboriginal persons in contemporary societies in New South Wales (including those living in urban and regional areas) were able to construct their citizenship as something other than individuals singularly invested in the mainstream economy and society; rather, informants were able to articulate a way of engaging through collectivist approaches to living in their respective Aboriginal communities; in the wider society; in the environment and in the world. These collectivist engagement strategies assisted Aboriginal persons overcome the challenges and adversity experienced by many in their interactions with others in the State.

Inherent to this is the notion that Aboriginal citizenship is almost not spoken about because it is a 'natural state of being': Aboriginal identities cannot be separated from, or defined outside of the context of the nature from which it is derived and contextualised. In this way, the protection of nature is critical to the protection of the first identity (which is constructed as a natural, Aboriginal citizenship state) and is a necessary feature of the second identity (as constructed within wider society).

There is also a set of values that are embodied in Aboriginal citizenship. These ideals have seen the continuation of a holarchical Aboriginal citizenship mode for thousands of years that is based on concepts of respect, equality (or holarchical relationships between peoples and between humans and nature) and of restraint, not only in interactions between persons but also within our environment. This non-hierarchical recognition of equality in diversity positioned in nature allows for a 'caring of others' that embodies principles consistent with those contained in a first identity. As stated by Key Informant 6:

There would be some responsibility on all of us to look out for other people. This is the essence of humanity and this is important to express, we have a potential for love before we have a potential for war. Notions of individualism would have to change. People might ask if utopia or nirvana; is this the ideal world, but if we don't aspire to something that is good then we won't change. It might take 400-500 years to bring about but shouldn't we aspire to this? Shouldn't we aspire to a peaceful world? Respecting peoples spiritual and other beliefs would be consistent with a concern that every aspect of life in the environment be cared for and is treated well.

The challenge for Aboriginal peoples is to promote collectivist participation and action at a 'macro level', that is within the broader Australian population. As Key Informant 7 stated, the fact that we maintain our attention at a micro level (that is within families, between parents and children) is because we have become 'intrinsically involved in (micro-level activity) and it has been difficult to step out of, not because we don't want to but because of the lack of opportunities, or lack of capacity because of other issues (families, income, the need to live)'. Their ideals of citizenship are to have a full capacity to act as an individual and contribute to their own society. As stated by Informant 8:

We want safety for our families and our children; we want a healthy environment; we want the same opportunities; we want to be happy and we want to be able to live the types of lives we want to live. And I don't mean in terms of material excess; but having the resources to be happy and healthy. Does that sound too tree-huggy, touchy-feely?

In summary, the ideals of citizenship for Aboriginal persons interviewed in this study are:

- There are two distinct modes of citizenship that contain Aboriginal peoples' identities; the first mode of citizenship is a construct of 'self' in a holarchical relationship to nature and all that it contains; the second mode of citizenship is that in relation to others who reside on that country.
- There is a validity to both these modes of citizenship; Aboriginal persons are able to traverse both modalities in a real sense (if they are able to access country and sacred spaces; and still connect through land through other forms of cultural expression) and in an imagined sense (they may reside in urban setting away from country but are able to imagine themselves 'in country' in their first citizenship state).
- It should be stated that informants considered that their first citizenship mode (prefaced by holarchical relationships with others and all things) allowed them to be responsible for acting on principles that are inherently earth-caring. The hierarchical relationships defined by the second citizenship mode were perceived to be a constricted space in which to practice these principles.
- There are principles that underpin both sets of citizenship. The principles of collectivities, love, trust, respect, transparency and equality are more easily expressed in their first citizenship state; however, informants considered that they should be principles toward which everyone strived.

It is difficult to know when Aboriginal peoples decided on these types of ideals of citizenship, whether they developed organically, experientially, or whether these ideals are a collection of the intangible aspects of the cultural expression of a minority group in a dominant society. The ways and means of behaviour in Australian society are heavily influenced (consciously and unconsciously) by the often formal rules for operating in particular cultural paradigms and are particular to a particular climate. In this way, Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales have included social values and traditions, customs and practices cognisant in their experiences of 'first citizen' within

the aspects of human activity that make up their ‘second citizen’ state. The significance of physical cultural heritage artefacts needs to be interpreted against the backdrop of socioeconomic, political, ethnic, religious and philosophical values of Aboriginal peoples living in New South Wales who want to express their first citizenship state. While these intangible expressions of cultural heritage are more difficult to preserve, physical objects and locations nurture one’s sense of self and continue to be important for those residing in urban, regional, rural and remote areas of New South Wales.

2.2.2 What are you a Citizen of now?

Key informants responded:

There are differing levels of citizenship. I could be a citizen of Canberra; but what would that actually mean? I am a minority in Canberra. I suppose this is where we get into the multiplicity of communities we belong to and how they interact with each other: you can be part of the academic community, the community controlled community, the sporting community. I am a citizen of Canberra locally, of Australia and a citizen within the world. Some of how I am depends on my beliefs and values. Placing yourself in all of this is the important point here; I am a citizen of a number of different places and some of them I am an important citizen and in some of them I am not important at all. [Key Informant 9]

I actually don’t even think about being a citizen of this country. That doesn’t even occur to me. [Key Informant 8]

What am I a citizen of now? Um, I’m a citizen of the world that I create in my mind. And that is a world that goes beyond the geographical and political boundaries of Australia, and is multi-faceted. It’s multi-faceted and multi-levelled, if you like; identity is multi-faceted and -levelled. Sure, I’m a citizen of my Country within the geographical boundaries of what is known globally as Australia. Wiradjuri country – yes, I’m a citizen of that country, but I’m also a citizen of the broader district and region of that area, in the sense that the legacy of my grandfather’s actions, and then my parents’ actions, is that in that broader district around that piece of land we are known, my family is known. [Key Informant 7]

... My family, and my boys and my husband. You know, I try to protect them from things I see coming, things that might not be good; from other people’s rules. I am a citizen of all Aboriginal people; of ALL Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. Of all the mob across Australia; people who are united by injustice. We are all one mob in that sense. Pain. And then the inevitable realization that there is more pain to come because there seems like there is no solution to us having our own ideas about our own communities and what our citizenship should look like, and how we might be. Every day is pain, every day there is opportunities for healing. In our communities we have the healers, and the sick, and it’s quite important to think about our ideals of citizenship as something that keeps going back and forth between each other. Because we are trying to start healing from a from a place of blame; we have to try to restore in people a sense of citizenship so that we can take our place in the community in a way which helps us live again. [Key Informant 5]

This question was asked to assist informants frame their ‘sense of belonging’. Who do they belong to? Where do they belong? What would persons need to have in order to feel like they belong? The fluidity with which people were able to transform their citizenship states to match their experiences, contravenes the mono-cultured expressions of citizenship that permeate the rigid expressions of a singular type of ‘Australian citizen’. In these four quotes; we see that one is capable of simultaneously being:

- A citizen of Aboriginal culture;
- Able to define citizenship in a geographic and political space separate to; or ‘beyond the ideals of’ the nation-state;

- A composition of citizenship that is related to real, imagined and perceived places and that is not limited by the physicality of a person's location;
- An experiential citizenship where persons are united by a common grief, a common need, and a common emotional state and a commonality in a capacity for healing. In this sense, citizenship is framed by experience and need; and
- Accounts for past, present and future citizenship modalities; not in a lineal timeframe but within different generational and spatial constructs that are not readily accommodated by liberal democratic processes.

The delineation of citizenship is an expression of cultural heritage – the prevailing images, conceptions, representations, practices and placement of citizenship is within a cultural code that encapsulates what individuals perceive to be their collective cultural heritage. This view of belonging, then, transcends the tensions between the politics of identity and difference; it ventures beyond the liberal and communitarian ideals of citizenship, and is fluid enough to assist Aboriginal peoples to participate in progressive politics of inclusions and sometimes the regressive politics of exclusion. But overall, Aboriginal citizenship is marked by its diversity, plurality, nomadism and culturalism.

If colonisation was and is predominantly dispossessive, then the future of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales must be built on repossession. In repossessing land, children, authenticity and sovereignty, citizenship constructs that are conducive to further alienation are not politically or racially neutral and must be rejected or at least transformed. The process of colonial appropriation and Aboriginal peoples' repossession are transformations: what is appropriated is never what was lost, and, in the process of reappropriation, meaning and significance are further transformed (Sissons 2005:140). In answering the question 'What are you a citizen of now?', Aboriginal informants demonstrably are capable of both displacing class politics and regulating equality. Primarily, in the Australian context at least, the essence of 'being Indigenous' to the land (as opposed to being members of the nation-state) equalises everyone and alludes to the importance of emergent cultural heritage concepts.

This 'essence' was expressed quite succinctly by Key Informant 7 when he said 'Yeah, the more I have been working in this job I have been in around land, water and the environment, and around management of these issues. I find them at the heart or the core of being an Indigenous person.' What he saw as impediments to this essence, this core was 'The way you are compartmentalized, the way people try to funnel you towards a certain direction; that's what I really see as the barrier (to full participation in Aboriginal society and mainstream society both)'. Key Informant 10 was also able to state that she was a citizen of her mob first, and '... second of all, I'm an Australian citizen. I'm pretty proud to be an Australian citizen. I reckon it's a pretty good place'. But she took offence to the notion that we need to put aside our own allegiances for this amorphous, unarticulated thing that is an Australian citizen:

I'm an Australian citizen, because we've got very well understood and a long history. There's a site in the centre of my country where my great-grandmother was born right near, and it's 47 000 years, dated. Right? We're not talking about 100 years since bloody Federation, we're talking about nearly 50 000 years of these values, and of this sort of citizenship. And if there's an expectation that we should just give it away because someone else, some whitefella, thinks that we should be more allied to the Australian idea of citizenship, it's just absolutely ludicrous. Because we're a Ngunnawal first, we're an Australian second. It doesn't mean we're not proud to be Australian.

Aboriginal collaborators in this project saw themselves as Aboriginal citizens first primarily because they were able to articulate a spectrum of inclusive values and principles in which themselves, their families, their extended communities and then

those with whom they shared an ecosystem with were seen to be a part. What was difficult was the articulation of Australian (nation-state) citizenship values; referred to in the interviews as indefinable:

... Well, I mean, recently I guess we've seen some debates about what Australian values are, for example, and no-one's really able to articulate them. You hear all the jingoistic bullshit ...

... I couldn't describe to you what Australian values are. So it's difficult for me to articulate what an ideal of citizenship in the Australian sense would be ...

... I couldn't really tell you what the ideals of being an Australian citizen are, because I don't know what the core values of Australian citizenship are ...

... The thing about mateship is that it's exclusive. Like, you've got a gang of mates and whoever's outside of it, it's stiff shit for them. So this idea of mateship, that it's supposed to be some sort of all-inclusive egalitarian thing, is just bullshit, because it's not how Australia works at all ...

... Yep. Its amazing when you ask non Indigenous people where they are a citizen of now they say Australia. A lot of them cry when Johnny Farnham gets up to sing 'Still call Australia Home' and when Cathy Freeman won that race and did the dual flag thing? And the kind of horror that was able to illicit from people? ...

... It would be good if mainstream people could actually hear what we have been saying for the past 200 and how many ever years. They are the problem, we are the solution. They just don't get it ...

Aboriginal persons in New South Wales are clearly questioning the validity of messages that underpin their communities. The participants in this study stated that they belong to their own Aboriginal community and that of the wider community (the nation-state). They also have been able to state that the validity of the messages contained in Aboriginal (earth-centred) societies have more meaning for the entire human community in this country. Similarly, Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley (2005) in a keynote address to a conference contemplating gross national happiness said:

There is a growing dissatisfaction with the way in which human society is being propelled without a clear and meaningful direction by the force of its own actions.

In commenting on this statement, His Excellency John Raulston Saul (2005) agreed:

I firmly believe that the common sense, the intelligence, the intuition of citizens everywhere in the world is in different ways dissatisfied with what is thought to be mainstream ... What they don't have is a convincing central alternate thesis. I don't mean ideology—a convincing, central, alternate thesis which will capture their dissatisfaction and turn it into a plan for action. That's what they're missing and that very often prevents them from speaking in other than negative ways. When public figures say, 'The people complain but they don't understand,' what they're referring to is the incapacity of the people to speak out because they lack suitable discourse.

It is the job of we individuals, he went on to say, to find the discourse, the words, the language, that citizens can use if they want. While there are both philosophical limitations and human inevitability to be overcome, questions about belonging and purpose and meaning forces us to look beyond the conventional historical narratives of citizenship. This would allow for the transformation of citizenship states from anarchy to civility, from nature to civil society, from savage to respectable citizen. In doing so, we uncover open, hybrid forms of citizenship that connect different spaces, species, times and places that the potential benefits of Universe-referent citizenship become apparent. Being a Universe-referent citizen requires human reinvention as members of a community of life systems, to become reverent with the biology that nurtures us and to consciously engage with ecosystems in sustainable, life enhancing ways.

2.2.3 What does the term *Universal Citizen* mean to you?

I think a Universal Citizen will have qualities of protecting nature in its true sense and all the traditional natives of the land. And that's it. You know those people could be any colour, any nationality, white, black, whatever; they are people who have a consciousness about their own selfishness in a western world and respect others and who are doing something about it. That's a true citizen. It's my neighbour I am thinking of, my neighbour. [Key Informant 1]

Ohh, ge-e-e. For me, it's being around my brothers, after a get together or whatever, having a big feed, and there could be, like, family and friends coming too. And there can be like fishing, and, you know, like, being around the family and just going down swimming – but it all comes back to, I suppose, just sitting around with family and friends and having a few beers, having a good fe-e-ed, and just watching the kids. Excellent! [laugh] Um, at peace with the world ... [laugh]. [Key Informant 3]

But a Universal Citizen should be one who is able to move around the world and do so with respect for the peoples of those countries, particularly the indigenous peoples of those countries, and to understand and respect their beliefs. You don't have to practice the same beliefs, but you have to be able to understand and respect them, and that means that if they do something that may be different from yourself, you have to understand why that is different and then be able to respect it. But you can have difference. [Key Informant 8]

It means that you acknowledge those who came before you, those who are around you now and those who are yet to come. So yeah ... [pause] The Universe is big physically and it's also big chronologically, not only one bit. That's the Aboriginal way of understanding that generational thing. A Universal Citizen means you're just prepared to play your part on the positive side, do what you can, as opposed to sit there and complain about what you can't. And it's about realising that we all really belong to the same world, when it's all said and done. It's about realising humans aren't the be-all and end-all of the world. [Key Informant 4]

Universal, I have never had a desire to leave Australia, so I won't be leaving any time soon. I guess my Universe is where I was born, near Winton, NSW. I grew up in a small country town called Winton, the same place as Linda Burnie. My Universe is the country I grew up in. [Key Informant 6]

Indigenous peoples have asserted that our lifeways are underpinned by practices and understandings that are not readily explainable to, or accepted by, those outside of our communities that have been educated in Western knowledge systems. While Indigenous peoples sought to arrange their lifeways within the context of the natural environment, Western civilisation has rejected this particular context, and therefore must reject knowledges that are referent to it.

Similarly, ecological knowledges have been cast in opposition to the 'advancements' adhered to by modern Western culture and contemporary empirical science. Ecologists speak of organic relationships between society and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness, and that persons require a sympathetic understanding of the environments in which they live. Ecology has never been given the same epistemological status as explanation in modern scientific thought; its cognitive power is seen as inferior to that of the latter (Shiva 1989:32). The act of living and of celebrating and conserving life in all its diversity – in people and nature – seems to have been sacrificed to progress, and the sanctity of life has been substituted for the sanctity of science and development (Shiva 1989:xiv).

A necessity of any model of Universe-referent citizenship is to develop new ecological and Indigenous paradigms that create pathways for us to disengage from the lifeways underpinned by scientific and developmental aggressions to others that validate equality in diversity. What is critical are the creation of opportunities to engage

with and between activities that uphold the ethics of interdependence and complementarity.

The quotes from Aboriginal respondents acknowledge the need to come together with others who have set themselves the task of realigning the human community with nature. As stated by Key Informant 1, 'these people can be anyone, any colour'. There are new 'communities of becoming' that we can connect with to preserve a cultural heritage context.

The Universe and how citizenship is structured within these phrases suggests that the Universe is simultaneously a:

- phenomenon, a physically constructed space;
- place in which safety and security is a given;
- space in which all things are respectfully considered;
- respectful connection between all the diversities that exist;
- part of a journey that is fifteen billion years old;
- encompass the world and yet exist within a locale.

To be a citizen of the Universe you have to be competent in:

- Traversing other countries and cultures with competency;
- Recognising the connection and diversity of all things;
- Placing yourself in equal relationships with all other living and non-living entities;
- Being positive;
- Protecting the environment in which we all live;
- Having a consciousness about the largest context in which we live;
- Fostering communities of becoming that are also Universe referent.

Perhaps, the last words on Universal Citizenship should go to Key Informant 8, who said:

I have had a number of Elders say to me and from different Indigenous states and nations, I have heard Native Americans, other Indigenous mob say that the reason that globally; physically, culturally, psychologically, emotionally and socially why we are such a mess and we are in such chaos is because Indigenous peoples have been disrespected and dispossessed and removed. Their ancient wisdom and their custodianship and their rightfulness to be contributing to the health and wellbeing of the Earth and its people has been disregarded. That's the reason we are so unwell and why systems are in chaos; and it won't be until the rest of the world realizes this and they come back to the ancient people and they ask for our advice, and our wisdom and our expertise and our assistance to put things right, that the Earth will come back into balance. And that gives me chest pain; it's so beautiful and it is so right. Indigenous peoples have never said we own this; or this is ours, the connection most certainly is and the spirituality and our pride and our understanding of the absolute imperative and the importance of our connectedness and of our responsibility to care for that Universal spirit. Whether we are Aboriginal, or Torres Strait Islander or in Indonesia; or China or North America. That is one of the strongest consistencies between all Indigenous peoples that we are the true custodians, and we have that responsibility and that connectedness. So, that would be the Universal Citizenship core for me; it's about the understanding and the need to respect and care for and nurture the Earth in order for us to survive.

2.2.4 What would have to change in order for you to be a Universal Citizen?

To this question informants responded:

I think one way of doing this is to do it over the global internet to get people conscious about this business. Every young man and woman have got access to all this stuff, all these sorts of things exist and we should be giving them information in a global way, and immediately too. Because you just can't march in the streets anymore. If we talked about the species disappearing, and all the other things happening then you can change people's consciousness at the same time. [Key Informant 5]

More linkages with the community, as in on-the-ground, grassroots community. I think ... miss a lot of the stuff that I'm not connected to at the moment, living here in Canberra. It'll strengthen my wellbeing in that way – and also what I want to do within the community. Eventually I want to have, like, a self-confidence, self-esteem program for young youth. And just opening up doors, I think, for young fellas, whether they be male or female or whoever, and just give them those opportunities and know where to access those opportunities. I just see it as a need ... [Key Informant 2]

In each of the countries there'd have to be some form of agreement or treaty which allowed people to access countries and to leave countries at free will. That's probably the first thing. And the second would be to give people rights to be able to live in a country for an extended period of time, to be able to purchase real estate, to be able to vote in those countries if you so chose – although you can imagine you could stack a country's election ballot. That would be really going backward ... [Key Informant 8]

I have to confront my fears, and my ability to open my mind to somebody else. On the surface it looks like we're all very different human beings, in different cultures, in different nations – but that's only my fear about the 'other'. So for me to be a truly Universal Citizen I have to confront my own fear, about why I'm so scared of something that's different, and then be prepared to just open my mind, because in every single person you can learn something off them, and vice versa, if you're open to it. Now, I'm not saying I *do* that all the time, because there's lots of times when I just ... human nature, if you like, or just frailty, say ... It's just easier to slag off at people. [laugh] You know? [Key Informant 10]

... These Indigenous values should be Australian values, and they should be universal values. And if they were, then we'd probably be able to have a lot better longer-term level of thinking, and more respect for our kin that's on country ... [Key Informant 6]

Not only the first peoples of the world have been oppressed and suppressed by colonisation; all peoples are now trapped in the 'culture of colonisation' (Nandy 1983:63). This is because the culture of colonisation is now affecting the living and non-living processes that give us life. Colonisation, founded on the ecologically damaging principles of mal-development, is now disrupting the geological functioning of the planet to a level not known in the epic of the journey of the Universe. The communion that humans had with the bio-spiritual realms of the Universe has been denigrated, belittled and denied in the hunt for monetary profit, meaning that now the very Universe itself is vulnerable to colonisation.

There is a sense that colonialism has impacted on human and other life forms, on arable land, in rivers, oceans, springs, and other water ways, on other living species all around us. Our air has been colonised, the result of which is pollution; global warming is now a scientific fact even as advertising companies would mask these facts with the perpetuation of consumerism for profit. Becoming a Universe-referent citizen then is a process of decolonisation to become 'uncolonised'. 'Uncolonised' is the state in which people can reconnect with the Universe. In order to achieve this, humanity will need to step outside of the bounds of nation and politic and construct a global indigeness. While there are many ways in which this can be achieved, what is most necessary is the disengagement from and transformation of colonisation, liberating the essence of our Earth-centred modes of reality and value.

While those who took part in this project understood this to be the case, it was difficult for people to respond to this question. Some respondents thought that something 'big' (an environmental catastrophe) would have to happen. Key Informant 4 said that things would change if we recognised our respective duty of care to each other, the earth and all living things:

I think the world is hurting and I think it demonstrates this hurt in a number of ways. Droughts, famine, natural disasters are all things that are the Earth saying, 'Things aren't good.' Then as a society what do we do? Do we just go; oh well someone else will fix it? Or do we need to unpack this some more and try to understand why the Earth is hurting ... all the consumers and participants in this world; we have a duty of care to do something; don't we?

The duty of care and precautionary principles were evident in the informant responses, even if they were not stated explicitly. Key Informant 1 recognised that there were environmental catastrophes that provided opportunities for change; however, the full effects of these catastrophes were borne by those who were the poorest and most marginalised:

We always try to turn our eyes to human rights, but big things happen in the environment and knock us out all the time. How many twisters were there this year and look at the Tsunami? It was a super tsunami, it was a super wave. And who created that? We created all of that. Global Warming and all that, and Countries are going to really cop it. And sad to say it will be countries on the fringes, the big people will be protected. They will be able to move to higher ground. And the weak, well, we start again. Nature is abrupt. Nature is close to the weak, the weak are close to nature too if you know what I mean. I think we need to tell people how long it takes for things to come here. Like those pygmy possums, those poor little things, they go away and come back and their tree is gone, well where is it going to camp tonight? And that insect, well it might be only an insect to you but when you spray em, we can't eat them no more. They took hundreds and thousands of years to grow like that. Well what are we going to do? [Key Informant 1]

Any process of liberation from colonisation then must be to use language that constructs a synthesis of the knowledges that have been marginalised and underpinned by ethics that are universal and inclusive of the myriad of life-forms that exist on Earth. It is therefore necessary to reinstate terms that might explain concepts so they might be shared, and made 'common' by Indigenous, ecological, and ethical epistemologies. Together, these concepts inform what might be possible in conceiving new ways to approach living and life, health and wellbeing.

2.2.5 What would you expect to experience as a Universal Citizen?

... if we were Universal Citizens then we would be thinking not just about our work or our family we would be looking at the bigger picture. We would recognise that things are going 'wrong in the world'; we have war we have famine we have a continuing genocide in some places, natural disasters. If we had the ideal of Universal citizenship everyone would have a stake in it. Everyone would have a responsibility and a consciousness to do something about it. Rather than 'I'm just looking after me right now because that is all I can do', people would actually assist by changing behaviour within their lives: whether it be taking the bus rather than taking my own car, whether it's actually riding a bike; whether its recycling household products or giving money to feeding people who need it; volunteering time to do something. So we would have a stake in everything not just about ourselves. And we would look at the inter-connectedness of all those issues; we would understand them [Key Informant 8]

... Peace. Happiness. It would be a gift. It would bring a lot of memories, where we used to play as kids, how the whole town looked out for each other and even now; that's really changed. There has been a lot of unknown for me in the world. It is hard to find a place for that sometimes [Key Informant 6]

... I already think I am a Universal Citizen. I am co-existing in an unjust society and I feel at times, and that is a by-product of being with my people, you can see it in my people. And there is a collective responsibility as a tribe if you like, then there is the responsibility of self, and then decisions made about how we come together as a mob [Key Informant 5]

... I think so, because I actually think that it's the essence of human existence. And I think that while it's interesting that Western civilisation, let's call it, sees indigenous peoples as primitive, I think the reality is the other way round, that there's a very great truth that's well understood – I know by my mob and I would dare say by pretty much all other indigenous people in the world – there's a very fundamental truth that's known, and it's not known, or it's been forgotten, probably, by Western society. [Key Informant 9]

That the Universe is harmonic, coherent, interconnected and balanced are concepts readily expressed and explored by Aboriginal persons through this interview process. Dr Taiaiake Alfred, a Mohawk who is a professor in Canada, said that, prior to colonisation, indigenous peoples lived in 'sovereignty free regimes of conscience and justice that were based on the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature for hundreds of generations' (Alfred 2001:28). He concluded that it is important to return to these harmonic values in order to overcome notions of citizenship and universal rights that hold concentric to them Western notions of the individual. This is not to project a romanticised view of Indigeness as purity and the most natural way of being in the world. Many Indigenous writers acknowledge that there have always been those individuals in every society, including Indigenous societies, who harbour notions that do not bind people together.

In recent times, however, these harmonic identities have been strengthened and nourished through re-establishing and strengthening symbolic and practical connections between individuals, land and sea, and connections between ancient pasts and the present. What is hoped to be achieved through the reconciliation between Indigenous and ecological knowledges is an opportunity for a transformed view of citizenry – one that reflects non-individualistic beneficial membership in tribal and collective relationships with one another, the place and the community of life systems (Sissons 2005:19).

These responses reflect harmonic societal structures and systems based on an understanding of our place in the Universe. Expressed in these statements are the following principles of being in the Universe:

- Everyone has a sacred role to play in the unfolding of the Universe, because everyone has a stake in it (effecting people's morality and ethics);
- Our greatest individual efforts would be directed toward servicing the whole (relating to tribal living);
- We would change our behaviour to be less consumer driven and more ecologically aware (ecologically driven behaviour change);
- Understand ourselves to be deeply connected with all things and act accordingly (spiritual connectedness);
- Experience and express peace and harmony (holarchical relationships with nature and each other);
- Appreciate the principles of co-existence – with and between all living and non-living entities;
- Make decisions as a collective and through a process of consensus (a mechanism for justice);

- Understand that modernity contributes to dis-equilibrium societies (indicating a need for a new education system that values ecological sustainability over market profitability);
- The essence of human existence is not the pursuit of individual happiness; it is in achieving equilibrium in harmonic relationships with nature and society (being happy, rather than pursuing happiness – a new mindset?).

What is required, through the use of this type of universalism, is the negation of colonial languages and cultures and the re-formulation of freedom – the freedom to be uncolonised, to be Universe-referent. Liberation then ‘starts with the colonised and ends with the colonisers’ (Nandy 1983:63). As such, Indigenous peoples are the potential liberators of their oppressors, from their own oppression. The sentiments expressed as universal (meaning referent to the Universe) are to be applied universally; therefore these concepts cannot be expressed solely for the benefit of Indigenous peoples, but for all entities indigenous to the Universe.

As the respondents nominated concepts founded on the coherence and inter-connectedness of the Universe, the need for other mechanisms to redefine the human community as connected become apparent:

- A ‘moral compass’ is needed when thinking about the formation of Universe-referent citizenship. This moral compass could be characterised by mutuality, or mutual interdependence, in which sustainability and the integrity of ecosystems are paramount. In this way, humans have to develop ways of relating to living beings in that recognise the coherence of the community of life systems.
- A language that is founded on the coherence of the Universe, and not within colonial constructs. Coherence can be understood as connecting all time, all places and all spaces in the epic journey of the Universe. What emerges from liberating the language from Western colonial constructs is that (Puthoff 2000):
 - all of us are immersed, both as living and physical beings, in an overall interpenetrating and interdependent field in ecological balance with the cosmos as a whole, and that even the boundary lines between the physical and the ‘metaphysical’ dissolve into a unitary point of view of the universe as a fluid, changing, energetic/ informational cosmological unity.

Concepts describing the Universe as a highly integrated, coherent system are emerging in scientific fields, particularly in the new quantum physics. Perhaps the most dramatic of these originated in 1964 by a physicist, J S Bell, who developed a theorem in which, at a deep and fundamental level, the ‘separate parts’ of the Universe are connected in an intimate and immediate way (Laszlo 2003:298). Other theories assume causal connections between non-local events. Bohm’s implicate order theory described the Universe as an ‘unbroken wholeness’, a ‘that-which-is’ (Zukav 1979:323). All things, including space, time and matter are forms of ‘that-which-is’. The respondents clearly understood that a Universe referent citizenship framework founded on this coherence would require the foundation of new principles and mechanisms that can join peoples together. How cultural heritage agencies might incorporate such unifying principles is worthy of further discussion.

2.2.6 What would it take for Universal Citizenship to be brought into effect?

Informants responded:

I would say at the moment that it would take a lot of effort. It would take change of mindsets, changes in understanding, changes in the way people practice all those values, change in leadership ... I really do think it is how you were brought up. We would not expect a big reward for right behaviour. If that is your norm, if that is what you grew up

on then you do not expect a big reward for acting right, for doing the right thing. If you are able to instil that in your kids and grandkids then that is what they expect. If, come kids birthdays you buy them Xboxes and new shoes and they will get this and that ... If you give too much, then when is enough, enough? When is it too much? How will they learn what is right if they 'get it all, all the time? [Key Informant 6]

You can't get out the big people. You can't get them out. They are all the same. Once again it's about 'Yes I am the Boss now'; it doesn't matter if we had a change in Prime Minister. See, Rome didn't disappear in a day. Those ancient civilizations didn't just disappear overnight. But the people did it, they made the change. All that magnificent cultures were changed by the people. Small groups, it is more tribal in a sense. The tribalism of the past will make things happen, and it is this that will make the change. Small groups with the same ideas around the world doing things together and ideas expanding from that group. And I think it could happen. [Key Informant 1]

Well ... the people who are running our country at the moment! The political forces within our country at the moment would have to change. People's attitudes would have to change, that is so important. You can't move forward if your attitude is bad. If you have an attitude where you look after yourself and can't help anyone else then you cannot be a Universal Citizen. [Key Informant 2]

The will. I think what materialism offers is laziness in a way and you need the will to move beyond what it offers you and want to be able to find more. [Key Informant 7]

A lot of things that I cannot influence, unfortunately. A lot of that is currently beyond my control. A lot of it is attitudinal. The people who hold the power are the people who have the money and resources and as far as they are concerned the apex of their endeavour's is about more money and more resources and more power that comes with. So how does ordinary Joe (or Josephine) Bloggs like me engage and influence their attitudes and their practices? I have no clue where to start, in terms of those sorts of issues. I think great change requires great leadership and it doesn't necessarily have to be the peak of a multinational corporation in fact it won't usually come from that. It certainly needs to come from the people and from populations' and influencing how they understand, contribute and support It is a really hard question and I really don't know and it plagues me every day; what is going to be the most useful thing for me to do for the rest of my life? In order for Aboriginal people to survive in Australia and Torres Strait Islander mob, in order for Indigenous people's globally to survive and to prosper, what do I have to do? What can I contribute? And I know it does not have to be enormous, or large, and that I personally do not have to change the world nor do I expect to ... but that stuff keeps me away at night. When I look at my kids, I think about what I can do to make sure we move forward; to make sure there is something there for the next generation and the next generation and that there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who will have that pride, that identity and be able to maintain culture. Because that is what bothers me the most about our current system of government; health for example (just using one small example) excess morbidity and mortality from chronic disease and youth suicide; infant mortality, not providing good screening services for our mum's all that sort of stuff. One the one hand they see it as a systems issue; that there is not enough money in health. That's a very small part of it. At the end of the day it is about cultural survival. Because if they don't support us, if they don't provide us with the services we are entitled to as citizens of Australia if nothing else; and part of me thinks that they are quite happy with us dying etc. then will there be Indigenous peoples in Australia to carry on that cultural tradition. We are the oldest living culture on the face of the Earth. And would they allow that to be assimilated? That frightens me. [Key Informant 8]

A summary of the points raised by people in these questions shows that, like many who are confronted with the necessity to change, strategies have to reinforce the values that posit humanity in the context of the Universe; that there are individual and collective actions that need to take place; that governments and their agencies need to work together and assume joint responsibility for the community and its needs.

- Attitudinal change was seen as essential;
- The impact of materialism was seen to be a disincentive to change;
- The values underpinning and the leaders of change are important;
- That small groups of concerned people could achieve a lot;
- People's movements were still valid and the technology available makes it more accessible to people in this and other countries (Internet, My Space, You Tube);
- Cultural Survival is of paramount importance.

Respondents were able to articulate what needs to change, but not necessarily how to change it. It seems that modern citizenship in Australia rests upon a configuration of market, political and economic forces that have only recently come together in a way that damages the living and non-living contexts in which we all live. To promote shifts away from this configuration would appear to endanger the continued viability of modern citizenship and therefore may not be desirable to those who hold power, or who are heavily invested in colonisation. Human wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the earth's ecosystems. An ecological approach to health is based on the recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the ecological systems in which people live. While health is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, not merely an absence of disease or infirmity, health could also be described as a state of wellbeing that results from people's success in collectively and individually managing the interactions between their physical, spiritual, biological, economic and social environments. Health then, is the state of wellbeing that results from people living in balance with their finite biological and physical ecosystems. As evidenced by the responses to the interview questions Aboriginal identity is clearly an aspect of health in which there is a respect for air, water, soil and other living things.

The next section is an articulation of the models of Universe-referent citizenship that could be used by Aboriginal peoples and by DECC to catalyse the formulation of effective approaches to achieving ecological sustainability and health and wellbeing through cultural heritage policies and programs.

2.3 Models of Universe referent citizenship

Based on information from international, national Indigenous philosophies and from the answers given in the research process, the following is a model to describe the Universe and how it impacts on and defines the lives of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales. In this model, individuals transition between the 'first' and 'second' citizenship states (Figure 1). In Figure 1, Aboriginal peoples are perceived as part of an holarchical, integrated system which is a Universe which is considered an adaptive and dynamic entity. In this system, Aboriginal people are seen to be equal with all the diverse interdependent parts that make a whole. The Universe is understood as simultaneously 'real', 'imagined', 'remembered' and 'returned' to. Aboriginal people have the opportunity to live in their Universe (real), are able to imagine their Universe when they do not reside in it; for others the Universe is the place they were born, the land of their ancestors, the place where they spent their childhood or the place from which they were removed. The earth is perceived as inherently feminine (as a mother); recognising the life giving and life producing capacities of healthy ecosystems. For all of the informants in the interview, their Universe's constituted 'the sacred' in their lives. The Universe is a system in which human beings are 'living beings', sharing a bio-spiritual system with other living beings. In this way, common characteristics are developed among entities from the same place. The purposes of culture and language then are to sustain those

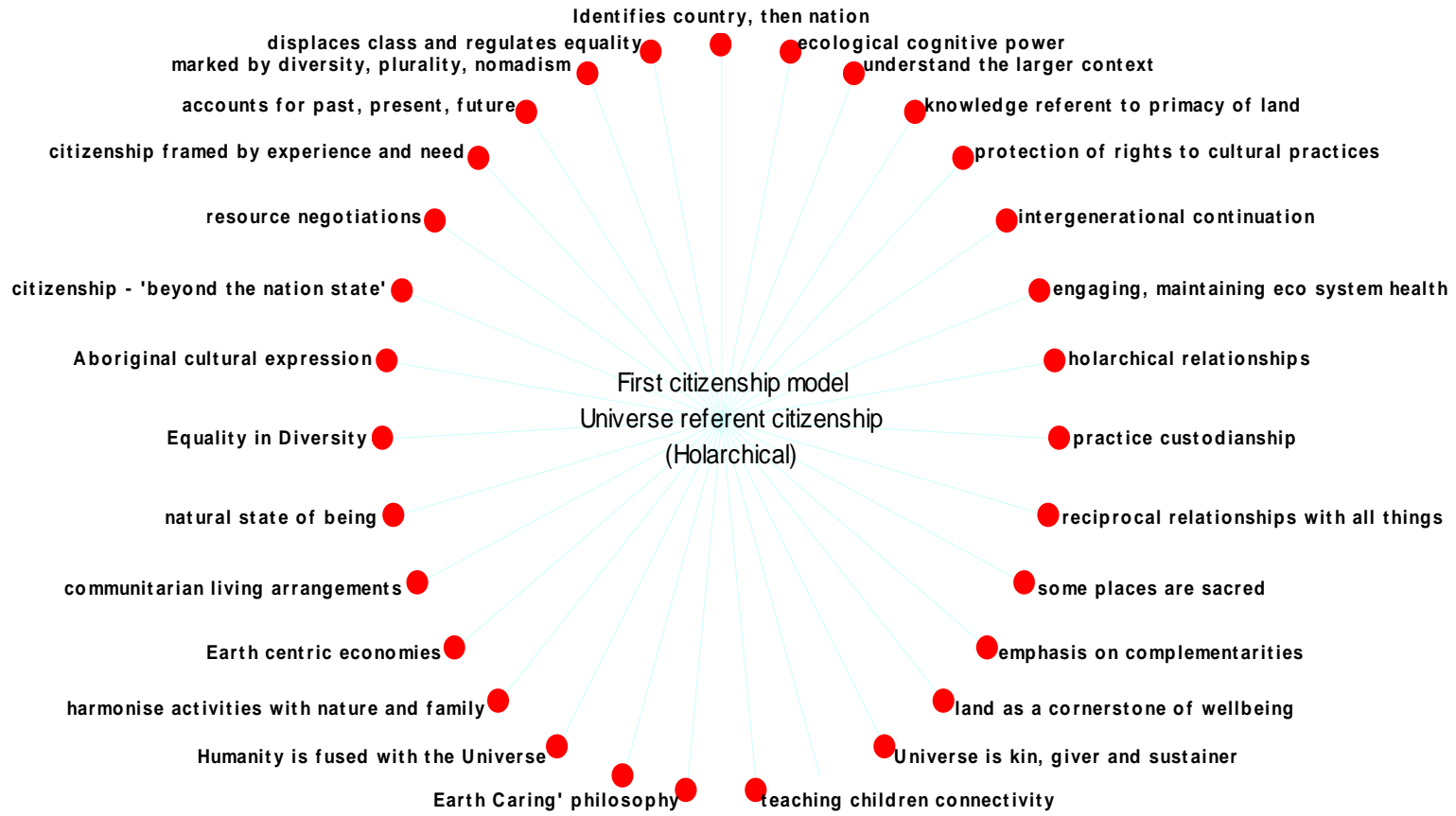


Figure 1: First Citizenship Model: Universe citizenship (holarchical)

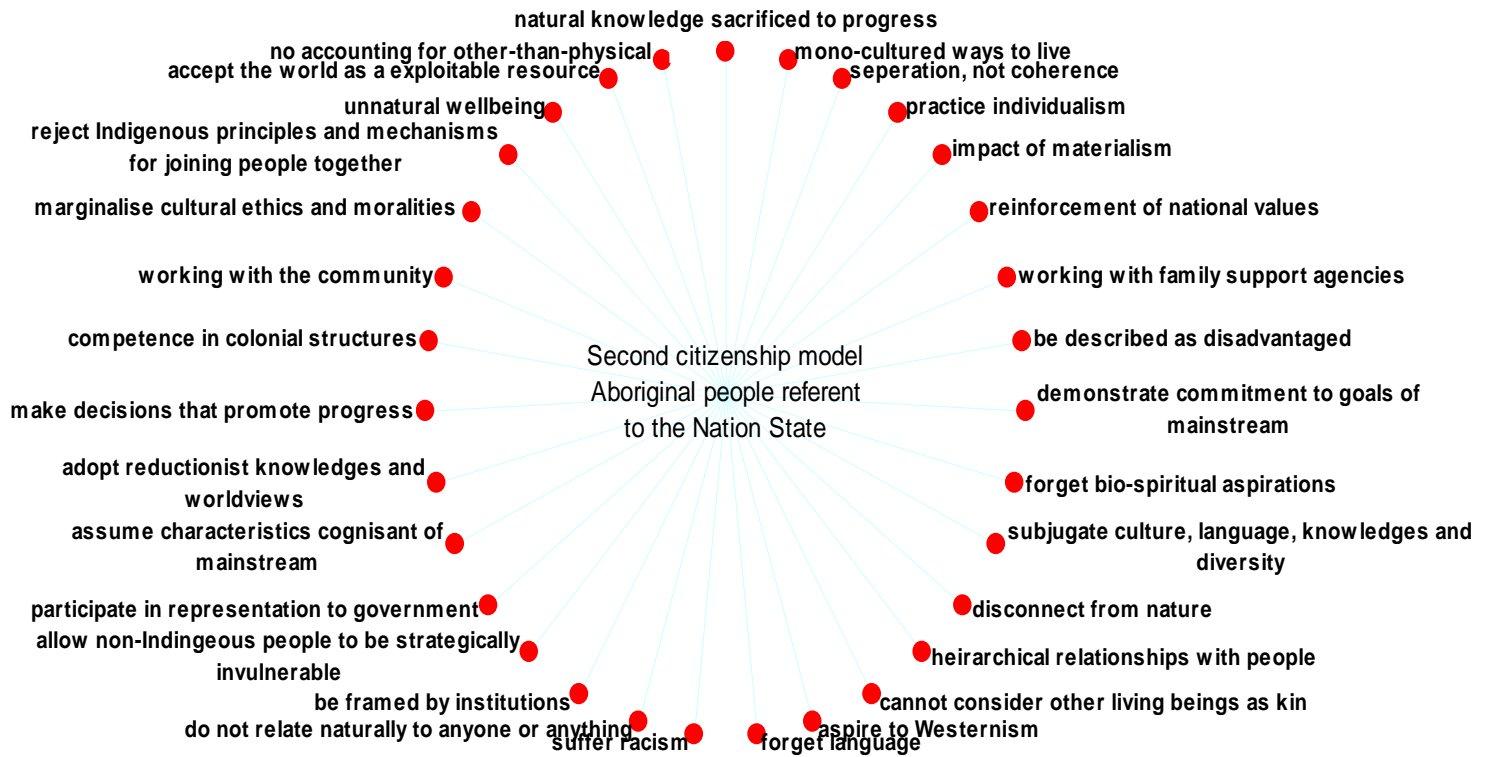


Figure 2: Second Citizenship Model: Aboriginal peoples referent to the Nation-State

common characteristics. The holistic vision of nature is one of harmony and dynamic balance, facilitating human intervention and interpretation. As first citizens, Aboriginal people had the freedom to choose one's path of progress, bounded by the limits of compatibility determined by and within the dynamic structure of the whole.

In describing themselves as citizens within the wider Australian society, Aboriginal informants positioned themselves as second-class citizens. It is in this citizenship state (Figure 2) that the hierarchical nature of the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and others who were disconnected from nature impacted not only on their lives, but on the lives of other living beings, living systems and the health and wellbeing for ecosystems in the State for which Aboriginal peoples saw themselves as responsible. What needs to be reinstated is the role of nature as the fundamental underpinning of human health and wellbeing. It is in this 'second citizen' mode that Aboriginal peoples experience colonisation.

These two models attempt to describe the position of Aboriginal peoples in connection with the Universe. These models could be used to inform government about how Indigenous knowledge of cultural heritage places might be contextualized in the concept of the Universe as developed by this research. Also, these models might inform how the concept of the Universe applies to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this Chapter, I have provided an overview of the respondents' answers to the questions relating to their position in the Universe, about aspects of citizenship and what Aboriginal persons identify as having to change in order to live in a Universe-referent way. I have described first-citizenship and second-citizenship modes of reality and value; one defined within holarchical relationships with all aspects of ecosystems, the other in relation to other people in the wider society. I have also included information about strategies needed to live in a Universe-referent way. In Chapter 3, I provide information on how government might be referent to the Universe in the development of policies and practices for the future.

CHAPTER 3: FOUNDATIONS FOR UNIVERSE REFERENT MODES OF LIVING

Previous chapters have demonstrated the inextricable link between the Indigenous peoples' knowledges, lifeways as understood in the construct of the Universe. I have argued that the Universe is a bio-spiritual space in which humans are considered as one part of an interdependent whole. Aboriginal peoples have expressed a vested interest in ensuring the integrity of ecological systems, and have stated that cultural heritage knowledges are essential to the healthy functioning of ecosystems and are an ethical responsibility.

In considering the future of Australia's biodiversity and associated natural values; Indigenous ecological knowledge, both traditional and contemporary has a distinctive and essential role in our everyday life. The wholeness inherent in Indigenous peoples' worldviews is recognised by both ecologists and ethicists as containing valuable lessons that, if accepted and applied, could overcome the extent to which domination shapes the thoughts and actions of people resulting in the current convergence of social and ecological crises that is affecting living and non-living planetary forces. These crises are perceived to be too all-encompassing to be resolved by customary modes of thought, 'the very sensibilities that produced these crises in the first place' (Bookchin 2005:106).

Aboriginal peoples' lives in Australia are structured and given meaning by a surrounding society heavily invested in the exploitation of our land and sea resources. Reasons for this can be attributed to demographics, economics and identity. In Australia, Aboriginal peoples have come from being the whole population to less than four percent of the population in just over two hundred years. Aboriginal peoples have experienced societal disruption and removal from country which remains vulnerable to the needs of people heavily invested in the extraction of fossil fuel resources; as are the multiplicity of species who share this country with us.

From Aboriginal creation stories and other ancient religions to the work of generations of artists, poets, musicians and storytellers, nature has been the foundation of human cultural identities, spiritual practices and creative expression throughout the ages. The country's cultural diversity is rooted in its vast biodiversity. According to Vandana Shiva (1989:58), a scientist and agricultural activist in India who has been instrumental in advocating the importance of indigenous plant diversity, 'the co-evolution of culture, life forms, and habitats has conserved the biological diversity of this planet. Cultural diversity and biological diversity go hand in hand'.

Just as genetic diversity allows a single species to survive in the face of changing conditions, so diversity of traditional knowledge and cultures has been at the root of the development of Australia. As Suzuki (2003:4) has stated:

Australians – from the Aboriginal peoples to immigrants from every country of the globe – have adapted to environments as diverse as the coastal rainforests, grasslands, the and inland and mountainous areas across our continent. Our diverse Indigenous, ethnic, linguistic and regional cultures, combined with the biological wealth, lay at the root of our identity as a people and a country.

More often than not, the decline of human communities is directly related to the health of ecosystems on which these communities depend. In this way, cultural diversity is an extension of the biological diversity we see in our country's ecosystems and essential for the future of biodiversity in Australia. The waves of immigration have contributed to Australia's cultural diversity; however, we have not had the

corresponding ecological benefit, because the ways in which migrants are expected to live and expect to live is within a system of beliefs about the Country that are predicated on exploitation and not within an Aboriginal paradigm.

In order to accommodate the Universe in future work, this Chapter details what activities culture heritage agencies might undertake to support the alignment of government cultural heritage approaches to the complexities in Aboriginal peoples' lives.

In introducing the concept of a coherent Universe, it is difficult to identify separately the means of meeting environmental, social and economic needs for health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales. There are too many degrees of interaction and overlap between these needs. Recognising the artificiality of any such separation, cultural heritage agencies could attempt to focus on placing the Universe as the primary. What could then be developed are an interrelated set of values, principles, ethics and strategies that become a foundation for future work in the field of cultural heritage.

This paper was developed to respond to these two questions:

- In what ways might government and Indigenous knowledge of cultural heritage places be contextualized in the concept of the Universe as developed by this research? And;
- How might this concept of the Universe apply to expressions of Indigenous identity, the sharing of knowledge associated with that identity, and the use of that knowledge by individuals who experience Indigenous identities?

These recommendations have been made to situate culture and heritage in a particular relationship to the key concepts discussed in this paper.

Recommendation 1: Define Universe–referent health and wellbeing

Cultural heritage agencies across Australia might consider a definition of health and wellbeing which incorporates Indigenous epistemologies of the Universe as an interconnected whole in future work. What might be considered in the development of a definition for Universe-referent health and wellbeing are the following:

- Placing the Universe as the 'primary' remedies the thoughts and actions that have made human societies as independent as possible from the natural world and moves away from 'human centric' to 'earth caring' and 'Universe-referent' ways of being.
- A Universe-referent citizenship mode derived from Indigenous peoples' worldviews and ecological knowledges could be a method to overcome further ecological degradation of the continent.
- Optimum health is dependent on the collective human capacity to recognise and maintain the integrity of the biosphere in which we live.
- Being a Universe-referent citizen requires human reinvention as members of a community of life systems, to become reverent with the biology that nurtures us and to consciously engage with ecosystems in sustainable, life enhancing ways.
- The living Universe has a consciousness, is seen as kin, as a giver and sustainer of life and as a participant in the life of human society. The living Universe requires mutual respect among its members and a willingness of entities to allow others to fulfil themselves.

Recommendation 2: Develop principles and ethics that are Universe referent

Cultural Heritage agencies have incorporated fundamental ideas that guide the development of principles in programs. All these guidelines inform policies that are acknowledged as key cornerstones in health and environmental health policies. Evidence of previous work in this area can be seen in major documents, protocols, and legislation. In conserving cultural heritage, these agencies might consider the placement of the Universe in developing a set of principles that links human health and ecological processes in the State. The inter-relationship between the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples, their first and second citizenship states and the health of ecosystems can be more fully explored. To do this, cultural heritage agencies across Australia could:

- Consider assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to participate in the development of a Precautionary Principle as a response to threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage. In seeking the participation of Aboriginal peoples in this development, cultural heritage agencies could support the expression of cultural heritage by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This would include utilizing knowledge of Aboriginal people to participate in strategies considering ecological processes, conditions for conservation, the need for biodiversity and reinvigorates custodianship, stewardship and appreciation for the roles and responsibilities in relation to land and water.
- Work with Aboriginal communities to ascertain the methods of engaging with and maintaining eco system health and biodiversity to positively influence human health and spiritual wellbeing. While a radically different worldview; being Universe referent incorporates the insights and vigour and the necessary reverence to reconnect humanity with one of our most integral traditions of human intimacy with the earth.
- Cultural heritage agencies could assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop an ethical framework formulated on the principle of a balanced Universe that focused on the protection of ecological systems.
- These ethics would necessarily focus on equity *within* generations (economic efficiency and environmental integrity) and *between* generations in which the present generation needs to consider how to maintain or enhance the full functioning, diversity and productivity of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Recommendation 3: Beyond the Physical

Cultural heritage agencies might consider that some of the non-physical requirements for health and wellbeing also have ecological underpinnings. Our culture, the system of values and beliefs that define how we see the world and our place in it determines how we find meaning and purpose in life⁴. An emerging theme of from the surveys is that spirituality is a key element of wellbeing⁵. The necessity to recognise the spirituality in policies and programs might be addressed by placing the Universe as the ‘primary’,

⁴ The Wellbeing research project use of the term “value” is in accordance with the discipline of Psychology and popular usage, where “values” are thought of as social and ethical concepts that guide behaviour.

⁵ The Cultural Heritage Division in the Department of Environment and Climate Change has conducted a survey with Aboriginal communities to gather information about the relationship between values, identity and engagement with cultural heritage in which participants were asked to place a set of nine values in a personal priority order. Spirituality was a key theme in this process, which involved over 60 participants.

remedying the thoughts and actions that have made human societies as independent as possible from the natural world. Placing the Universe as the primary moves policies and programs away from 'human centric' to 'Universe-referent' ways of being. The Universe becomes the 'phenomenon', the 'construct', and the 'relational space' in which humanity are bio-spiritually connected to all living and non-living forces (Sharp 1993: 50). In this way, physical health is also integral to the maintenance of psychological health and wellbeing. The following might be considered appropriate actions from cultural heritage agencies:

- Develop curricula for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and other related courses that focus on Universe referent ways of being that highlight the pressures of the moment, ecological sustainability practices and being Universe referent.
- Develop materials for these types of curricula development activities.
- Publicise activities which contribute to Universe-referent, earth caring ways of being.
- Ensure access to accurate information about the factors that influence and affect ecological sustainability and health.

Recommendation 4: The Need for Action

Some of the information in this report will require a different approach than previously invested in by government departments and Aboriginal individuals and communities. This will necessitate recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of the ecological systems in which people live, and the reliance on these systems for our health and wellbeing. The protection of cultural heritage; native title; land rights; repatriation of cultural and skeletal material; natural resource management; conservation of cultural heritage in densely populated areas; wild resource use and intellectual property rights are current focus areas for protection and conservation. While these foci provide important investigative areas that could support the practical application of cultural heritage work and achieve enhanced wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples, cultural heritage agencies might consider the ways in which these activities relate to and inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons and others about these activities promoting Universe-referent strategies and programs.

The Universe has been conceived of as 'an acceptance of and protection of the welfare of *all* human beings and nature' in work already commissioned by DECC⁶. This paper has focused on the synthesis of Indigenous philosophies and ecological imperatives to place the Universe as the primary as one method to underwrite strategies for living into the future. Cultural heritage agencies might consider a forward-looking, goal-orientated approach (where the goal is the achievement of human health and wellbeing in the context of healthy ecosystems on which the health of all of us depends) so that all facets of human life are considered within the context of their impacts on ecological sustainability while promoting the 'first citizen state' and reducing the negative impacts of 'second citizen' states as described in this paper.

⁶ DECC is conducting a survey with Aboriginal people in NSW to learn about how 'wellbeing' or 'quality of life' is increased by a person's involvement in culture and heritage activities. The survey requires people to prioritise values that guide them in the course of their everyday lives. Other values considered by people involved in the survey include power, personal achievement; stimulation; independence; benevolence; tradition; respect; and security. The project recognizes that all of these values are equally important and every society in the world has these values, but that we prioritise them differently, both as a society and as an individual and that the priority that we give to values can change during our lives.

Recommendation 5: Investing in a systems view of the world

It is important that cultural heritage agencies invest in the development of Universe-referent strategies that are both continuous and coherent. It is difficult to address gaps in knowledge with theories that are developed within fragmented, reductionist modalities. These are easily perceived by Aboriginal persons as specific knowledges that isolate peoples rather than disciplines that promote inclusion.

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the breakdown of the mechanistic theory (breaking things down to parts – the world as a machine) within the sciences due to the advances made in the field of relativity, and of quantum theory in microphysics (Laszlo 2002:9). In the applications of these new sciences, worldviews are interconnected, interrelated systems including constellations of concepts, perceptions, values and practices that are shared by a community and direct the activities of its members. These new systems can provide the clues, the metaphors, the orientations and even the detailed models for solving critical problems on this precious but increasingly crowded and exploited planet (Laszlo 2002:13). Cultural heritage agencies could set a precedent by orientating activities that recognise the systems of organised complexity in which we are one component.

In this way, cultural heritage agencies might consider the adoption of propositions that acknowledge the irreducibility of natural systems; the changes these systems undergo in changing environments, the capacity for Aboriginal persons to promote cultural heritage activities that enhance the capability of Aboriginal communities to create healthy ecosystems across Australia. These propositions might take a systems approach in which nature becomes the interface between humans and other living beings.

CONCLUSION

The importance of achieving ecological sustainability for human health and survival should make it a Universal objective of DECC and other departments of state. Although the Cultural Wellbeing project surveys show that people are concerned about environmental issues and support for achieving economic development and environmental protection, only relatively modest efforts are being made in Australia to develop and employ sustainable approaches (Greene 1995).

DECC has identified a need for government policy to respond to the integrated nature of cultural heritage activities for everyday life. The challenge for the Department has been identified as the alignment of policy approaches with the more complex approach taken by Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander informants, in over thirty interviews (of which ten were conducted with Aboriginal informants from New South Wales) were able to identify the coherence of their Universes. In recognising this coherence, people were able to iterate their primary position within ecosystems, integrating their identity and their experiences in a fluid transition between their first citizenship and second citizenship state.

There is a validity to both these modes of citizenship; Aboriginal persons are able to traverse both modalities in a real sense (if they are able to access country and sacred spaces; and still connect through land through other forms of cultural expression) and in an imagined sense (they may reside in urban setting away from country but are able to imagine themselves 'in country' in their first citizenship state).

What informants were able to communicate is a sense that colonialism (resulting in a disconnection between humanity and nature, and a subjugation of 'natural knowledges') has impacted on human, other life forms, and our environments.

Becoming a Universe-referent citizen then is a process of decolonisation to become 'uncolonised'. 'Uncolonised' is the state in which a people can reconnect with the Universe. By stepping outside of the bounds of nation and politic and constructing a global indigenusness, we can transform colonisation and liberate the essence of our Earth-centred modes of reality and value.

DECC has important work ahead, which may position the department as an industry leader in Australia. By adopting the cultural heritage framework as a government policy, and creating conditions in which program beneficiaries are given an opportunity to consider the implications of becoming Universe referent, DECC will have a framework to underpin actions into the twenty-first century that value not only Aboriginal peoples, but also work towards the establishment of healthy ecosystems in which human health is achieved.

We are natural systems first, living things second, human beings third, members of a society and culture fourth, and particular individuals fifth (Laszlo 2002:21). In being Universe referent, we can make our own classifications along such lines. In any case, we know ourselves if we know basic characteristics of organised nature in which all of us, and all that we need to survive, and that which we need to survive, turn out to be very close acquaintances.

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