

Reasons to remember:
**public memorials to
lived experiences of loss
in Australia, 1985-2015**

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Doctor of Philosophy
2017**

Certificate of authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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List of abbreviations

AAL	Aboriginal Advancement League
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ALAS	Adoption Loss Adult Support group
AFTER	Art From The Extended Region
APY Lands	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands
	‘An Gorta Mor’ is ‘ <i>An Leacht cuimhneachain Astralach I gcomoradh an Ghorta Mhoir I nEirinn</i> ’ or the ‘Australian monument to the Great Irish Famine (1845–1852)’
ASeTTS	Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors
ABS	The Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACPH	Australian Centre for Public History
HRC	Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly HREOC)
ASSI	Australian South Sea Islanders
AIATSIS	Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AVP	The gay and lesbian Anti-Violence Project
BRG	Blackwood Reconciliation Group
BTH	Bringing Them Home Committee (WA)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CLAN	Care Leavers Australia Network
CBERS	Catholic Brothers Ex-Residents and Student Services Network
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DCP	Department for Child Protection
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
EOI	Expressions of Interest
FACT	Forgotten Australians Coming Together

HIV-AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome is a disease transmitted in blood and sexual fluids. It has had a great impact on society, both as an illness and a source of discrimination.
HREOC	Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
MACC	Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee
MAANZ	Mosaic Association of Australia and New Zealand
PFFP	Parramatta Female Factory Precinct
PAHSMA	Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAV	Regional Arts Victoria
RQI	Reconciliation Queensland Inc.
SCARC	Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee
TRC	South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission
SCAAB	Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau
UAM	United Aborigines Mission
UAICC	Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
UN	The United Nations
VANISH	Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help
VBRRA	Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UWA	University of Western Australia
VVM	Vietnam Veterans Memorial
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Abstract

This dissertation is a study of public memorials that commemorate lived experiences of loss and trauma. The study is focussed on the Australian context but draws links between this and the broader transnational field of memory work related to loss and trauma. I argue that such memorials need to be considered as a distinct and new genre of memorialisation which has come into being through a cultural shift that privileges experience. They are influenced by post-war discourses of trauma, human rights and transitional justice. The dissertation traces a timeline of the emergence of these public memorials in the public sphere in Australia since the mid 1980s, first as community art projects and later as formal memorial projects driven by grassroots groups. Since the mid 2000s, governments at all levels have begun to support or initiate the creation of memorials to lived experiences of loss.

My thesis explores four different ways memorials are expected to do cultural 'work' in the present. First, public memorials are used by marginalised counter-publics to claim a space in the national story. Second, they are used to create spaces where survivors of human rights abuses can have their loss acknowledged and be given space to grieve. Third, they are used as acts of witnessing, to speak back into the dominant public sphere. Finally, and more recently, memorials have been created by governments as part of the widespread adoption of transitional justice mechanisms. Such memorials are seen as acts of symbolic reparation and are used to respond to claims of past human rights abuse on the part of the state. Seven case studies give an in-depth focus on particular memorial projects in relation to the theme explored in the preceding chapter.

This research project grew out of the realisation that a number of marginalised groups within Australian society were working towards or considering the value, for them, of a public memorial that would commemorate a difficult part of their shared history. I have sought to develop a research project that values the experience of those who have a direct involvement in the painful events commemorated, as well as exploring the meanings created by the memorial objects on their own terms. This work contributes to the growing body of literature on memory work in settler-colonial and transitional justice settings.