

The Glittering Thread

THE 1954 ROYAL TOUR OF AUSTRALIA

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the
University of Technology, Sydney.

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certificate

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Jane Connors

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abstract

This thesis is a broadly-based historical study of the 1954 Royal Tour of Australia. In presenting an anatomy of this important but neglected event, it attempts to restore its place in history, to explain the nature of the enduring popular attachment to the British Royal Family, to examine the self-portrait that Australia presented to its Royal visitors in the post-war era and to investigate the political and cultural processes by which it did so. The primary theoretical aim of this detailed case study is to interrogate the means by which the State (represented by the Parliament and the state and federal bureaucracies, with the cooperation of the media) was able to secure the willing participation of an overwhelming majority of the population. The elements of this study are drawn principally from government archives, the vast media coverage of the day, extensive oral history interviews with participants, and academic literature in the areas of Australian history (with particular reference to the nineteen-fifties), popular royalism, popular culture, public memory, civic ritual and spectacle. It was my final objective that these elements and aims might be synthesised into an enjoyable, 'popular' account of this chaotic, surprising and memorable event.