Chapter Four

GOVERNMENT IN(TER)VENTION: FORMING A PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLANDERS AS DEPENDENTS OF A WELFARE SYSTEM

"...For many years officials and others interested in the welfare of the islanders [sic] have endeavoured to persuade all able-bodied men to engage in congenial employment, or work their own boats in a systematic manner... As we are endeavouring to gradually raise a strong healthy race to a higher plane, it is the duty of these people to take the utmost advantage of the facilities provided for them... In some quarters this procedure would be termed 'slavery'; but any person who possesses an intimate knowledge of the people and the subject will think otherwise. The islanders [sic] have not yet reached the state when they are competent to think and provide for themselves; they are really overgrown children, and can best be managed, for their own welfare, as a prudent parent would discipline his family." (Protectors Report 1915, cited in Gunter p. 83)

The words, contained in the Protectors' Report of 1915, encapsulated the thinking that underlay the Queensland government approach to the administration of Islanders. This was an approach that constructed for Islanders, the system that still, despite considerable changes, constrains and condemns them today – a system of welfare that confined them to a position of dependency on government intervention. It was borne out of the best of humane intentions, and considered to be in the best interests of Islanders. At the same time it was borne out of a way of thinking, that was unable to see Islanders in any other way than through its own logic and rationality, its own knowledge and understanding of the world. What was known and understood, by the administration, about Islanders and about what was in Islanders' best interests, emerged in a prefigured way, out of the broader
European worldview of civilised/uncivilised; native/European; and the hierarchy of the social development of races. This way of knowing and viewing ‘natives’ prefigured and pre-ordered any knowledge of Islanders gained in the field and in closer personal interactions with them. In this way of ‘knowing’ Islanders, the means of administrating and disciplining Islanders to conform to the demands of another system of regulation was always able to be justified, no matter what number of internal contradictions appeared over time in enforcing this system. This was, in another sense, the birth of a welfare system that Islanders were inscribed into as ‘dependent child’ in paternal relationship with Western governments.

In administering Islanders according to their own systems of knowledge and logic, governments accorded with external interests and not Islander interests. For example, the government that intervened to firstly regulate the worst excesses of intruding fishermen, who exploited and abused Islanders, achieved this by ‘protecting’ the Islanders via an enmeshing web of legislation. This legislation diminished Islanders’ independence and control over their lives but fully aided the capacity of pearling companies to reap enormous profits. The interests of pearlers and fishermen were upheld until those resources lost their profitability. In this way, throughout the administration of Islanders, we see Islanders’ interests considered secondary to the interests of intruders. Yet the rhetoric of the government has always been that their presence was to serve the best interests of Islanders and to the eyes of most non-Islanders perhaps this was seen to be the case. The presence of fishermen, missionaries and governments was an accepted given and Islander interests were managed within that accepted order. This allowed the genesis of the parent-child relationship that formed the basis of their welfare system, the effects of which are still evident in the present.

The theme of this chapter, then, is the same as has emerged in the previous chapters. The interests of Islanders can only be understood as secondary to non-Islander interests. Because this uneven relationship was pre-figured, the
government had no difficulty at all in justifying their policies as being in the best interests of Islanders. Their logic and rationale was self-fulfilling, for if the ‘parent’ holds the key to the door, then the ‘child’ cannot get out and move into the ‘unprotected’ adult world to develop the necessary skills for competence in that world.

The theme of this chapter may be the same as previous chapters but it is in the content of this chapter that we see the real manifestation and expression of the power/knowledge relations that emerged in the writing of the missionaries and the scientists. We see in the activities of government (and to a lesser extent religious) administration the emergence of the material relations between Islanders and non-Islanders. These relations are evident in the bodily regulation of Islanders in terms of their labour and movement and in the regulation of their finances and spending and all the restrictions and deprivations that these entailed. They are also evident in the more fundamental fact of loss of sovereign title to their Islands that occurred without their knowledge. These relations are also evident in the future that was envisioned by the administration for this society of people. This vision of the future of Islanders was that they should continue to live under paternal care but in a self-dependent community that was separate from other Australians. Bleakley, the Chief Protector, eloquently expressed this sentiment as late as 1961 when he said about the Islanders: “(t)hey are shrewd enough to know they would have nothing to gain by trying to take the tiller of their own canoe” (1961, p. 299).

However, this chapter is not just an account of the construction of the ‘dependent’ Islander, or of the secondary, or disadvantaged Islander, and the reality of what that meant for Islander people. It is an analysis of how the underlying epistemological framework, that is, the logic and knowledge that is employed to construct the ways of knowing Islanders, shapes what is possible and locks this in as common-sense and logical. It is also to expose that what is common-sense and possible for Islanders is shaped by many other factors.
beyond the knowledge and world of the Islanders, for example, by commerce and government. Ways of considering these issues fall within the same epistemological schema. These inform the interpretative framework by which all things are viewed by the government and which legitimates all their policy and practice. The possibilities that are excluded in this process appear illogical and impossible for consideration. The outcomes of applying pre-ordered knowledge have material and psychological implications for people and their lives.

This chapter also furthers the argument, already begun in earlier chapters, that Western administrators refused Islanders a position from which Islanders could uphold their own interests, and from which they could articulate their view of their position. They refused this to Islanders through the practice of viewing, of legislating, and of treating Islanders as secondary to themselves and their interests. In the process, Islanders were refused a position from which they could negotiate the changes occurring all around them in a way that did not deny them primacy in the region. They were refused a position from which they could negotiate their participation in the changing circumstances on equal terms that acknowledged their own extensive knowledge of their history, their environment, their beliefs, skills, intelligence and ability to adapt. Consequently Islanders were denied an independent identity, in the political sense.

The agency that Islanders did have with regard to their lives came to serve the interests of the administration first, as they were co-opted into the new order. This co-option was achieved by allowing Islanders limited and highly regulated participation in the new order, including a form of ‘self-rule’ which allowed individual Islanders and Councils of Islanders to assume the roles of government agents. Islander interests as viewed by Islanders were not completely silenced but were consistently able to be overwritten and re-organised to fit within the new interpretative framework of the Western system of administration. Instances of rebelliousness, of non-co-operation,
and of resentment and discontent are evident in accounts of this period, but none of these strategies would change the position of Islanders in relation to those who administered their lives. Islanders' capacity to fully understand what actions and standpoints on their part would or would not uphold Islanders' long-term interests was severely limited by their lack of access to education and the world of knowledge that informed the government position.

In many accounts (Bleakley, 1961; McFarlane, 1888; White, 1917; Barrett, 1946; Mollison, 1949; Raven-Hart, 1949), this period is viewed through a lens that tends to soften and blur. Such accounts posit events and actions firmly within by-gone ideologies, elevating the good intentions of administrations and downplaying, even ignoring, the harsh realities of the position of Islanders. In more recent accounts (Beckett, 1987; Ganter, 1994; Sharp, 1993), the position of Islanders has begun to be politicised. This has allowed for the emergence of analyses that focus on the array of external forces and factors that led governments to impose extreme measures of control over the entire population of Torres Strait Islanders. This control was enforced by administrators using the guise of protection, without being held accountable to the norms and values that governed their own lives, and those of other White Australians.

Islanders experienced this period of administration as a collective group. Regulation of 'natives' was uniform across all Islands and after 1934 extended to include the descendants of hitherto exempted South Sea Islanders. However, prior to external administration, Islanders were discrete groups, inter-related through trade and family connections, but independently organised along local family lines. In the face of externally imposed regulation a new and political group identity was forged by Islanders, that of the collective - Torres Strait Islanders. A clever administration took advantage of the diversity within this collective, promoting inter-island rivalry...
when it suited their cause. But in times of crisis, the unity of Islanders in the face of control could not be ignored so easily.

Sixty years after the commencement of protectionist policy, these once independent Islanders had few illusions about their position. They were the loyal and Christian subjects of His Majesty the King of England, though still unaware that they had lost the sovereign title to their own land to this King and his Crown. They worked for their living but didn't see their money and could not spend it as they wished. They had paid for their boats but were not free to use them as they pleased, nor did they have freedom of movement between their islands or beyond them. They had schools but were not able to proceed past a set year 4 level. They lived a close and strong community life on their islands with virtually no crime against persons or property but their movement in these communities was prohibited after 9.00 p.m. The officials who accused them of crime or misdemeanour also conducted their trials. They had no right to legal counsel, no right to appeal, and the onus of proof was on the accused. They paid income tax but could not vote. They could not marry outside their race without the permission of the Protector. Their mail was censored (Campbell et al., 1958). The department which administered them was a sub-section of the department which administered, as well, prisons, benevolent asylums, chronic diseases, inebriate institutions and the institution for the blind (see Sharp, 1993, p. 129). Their official status was that of 'inmates'. In reality, they were prisoners.

This state of affairs did not occur overnight. It began with the intent to gain government jurisdiction over the activities of the marine industry in the region in the 1860s. Over time, by restricting Islanders rather than fishermen, legislation would have enormous impact on Islander freedom. Eventually, the administration of Islanders would be little more than the management of their labour in the pearl shell industry, in order to generate the money for their governmental upkeep (Ganter, 1994). Not until the decline of the industry in the 1950s would the government begin to relax its control but the
paternal relationship between Islanders and the administration would endure for many decades beyond that (Beckett, 1987). The ongoing implications of this relationship, particularly in terms of dependency of Islanders on governments for assistance and advice are considerable. These implications are not clearly recognised by governments and not clearly understood by Islanders who still struggle to articulate their own independent position as they continue the long process of negotiating their relationship with non-Islanders.

The Beginnings: 1860s–1904

As inhabitants of a seaway, Islanders in the Torres Strait were long used to welcoming or defending themselves against visitors and were themselves travellers of considerable distances, both north to Papua New Guinea and south to Cape York Peninsula (Haddon, 1935; MacGillivray, 1852; Jukes, 1847). As early as 1792, Bligh and his men record the Islander’s desire to trade for iron (Sharp, 1993). In the 1800s the frequency of interactions between Islanders and non-Islanders appears to have increased sharply. This had much to do with increased traffic to the colonies of Australia and colonial activity in the South Pacific. But three events were to signal the casting of a net of external control over the daily lives of unsuspecting Islanders.

The first was the commencement of activity by the pearl-shell fishery in the Torres Strait in 1868 (Ganter, 1994). Not far behind were the missionaries of the London Missionary Society who landed on Darnley Island in the Torres Strait in 1871 (McFarlane, 1888). Following this activity the Queensland government moved its Resident Police Magistrate from the Cape York settlement of Somerset (established 1863) to Thursday Island in the Torres Strait in 1877.

When trepangers or bêche-de-mer fishermen moved into the Torres Strait it was to raid the resources of the seabed. There was no interest in dispossessing the natives of their land, though there were reports of shellers
raiding gardens, water sources, removing women and even murdering (Beckett, 1987; Murray, 1876; McFarlane, 1888; Beckett, 1987; Ganter, 1994). The industry based its practice on South Pacific models of trepanging operations (Ganter, 1994). This model entailed establishing shore stations using imported labour. Being familiar with the South Pacific, these European traders often brought their own experienced indentured South Sea labourers with them. Always considered a potential labour resource, Islanders were relegated to the marginal position of being largely a supplementary force, cheap and available when circumstances required them.

Six years after Charles Edwards established the first recorded trepang station in 1862, the first pearl-shelling began by Captain Banner from his bêche-de-mer station on Warrior Island (Ganter, 1994). The impact of contact was enormous. With seventy non-Islander employees, the local population was soon infiltrated and transformed both through depletion as a result of disease and through intermarriage. The patch of pearl shell at Warrior Island was depleted within a year of commencement of activity (Ganter, 1994). By 1870 five boats were pearl shelling. By 1875 the practices were the same but there were seventeen luggers on six island stations (Ganter, 1994). The more stations were set up the more South Sea island crews were imported to work them (Ganter, 1994).

Into this situation came the London Missionary Society in 1871. This enterprise, too, relied on imported South Sea Islanders to achieve its mission (McFarlane, 1888). The missionary McFarlane recognised the effectiveness of native agency in converting their ‘own kind’. His experience in the South Pacific had taught him “that our native teachers can get at the heathen of their class, and influence them in favour of Christianity, quicker than European missionaries” (1888, p. 138). In this way, the European missionaries became the managers of the whole project with South Sea Pastors carrying out the day to day ministrations to a growing flock.
Beckett (1987) reminds us that Islanders were not completely averse to the intrusions of missionaries. They had long traded with other peoples and incorporated non-Islander ideas and material practice into their lives. Sharp (1993) through long conversations with Islanders gives weight to the theory that Islanders were pre-disposed to take up the Christian message and therefore accept the presence of foreign missionaries as the bearers of these messages. This pre-disposition arose not just from their position as traders and seafarers, but also from their own religion and, in particular, at this point of contact, the religion of the Islanders of Mer. Islander priests retrospectively, at least, see the coming of the Gospel as the completion of their own traditional religious law - the law of Malo. This eastern island traditional law is likened to the Old Testament and was seen to operate like the Ten Commandments as a code of behaviour expressed in a list of thou shall and shalt not's. The teachings of Jesus were seen to be an acceptable extension of what had come before.

This is not the only theory to explain what appeared to be the rapid conversion of the population. Beckett (1987) suggests that having learnt that it was wisest not to attempt violence against Europeans, and that the missionaries were prepared to defend them against abusive intruders, Islanders were inclined to be amenable to their demands. He also suggests that the mission appeared to Islanders in the form of a cult which offered unprecedented wealth and prosperity, that is, that adherence to the demands of the missionaries would bring to the Islanders the same material benefits that the Europeans seemed to possess. And not least is that with a shared custom of reciprocity in social exchanges, Islanders were particularly amenable to interactions with South Sea missionaries. But it seems a difficult task to retrospectively analyse with any degree of certainty all the reasons that Islanders took to the missionary message in the way that they did. Or indeed if they all embraced it unreservedly or were caught up in forces that overtook them, that is, the overwhelming web of rapidly changing circumstance and intrusion. It is not the task of this account to deliberate on these reasons.
The salient fact is that this intervention changed forever the historical trajectory that Islanders had hitherto been on, and there would be no going back.

The success of the mission achieved more than religious conversion. It achieved the complete reorganisation of Islanders daily lives. Churches were built close to the beaches and good anchorages and villages established around the Churches. This enabled a close surveillance of Islanders daily, religious and moral lives. The punishments for transgressing moral and religious codes could be quite severe. Floggings, head shaving, and the stocks were known to have been imposed in the South Pacific (Beckett, 1987). In the absence of secular supervision in the Torres Strait, and in the absence of European missionaries at all villages, there were reports of overzealous South Sea Pastors administering floggings (Beckett, 1987). Islanders were forced to give up traditional practice that was deemed to be ‘disgusting and revolting’ but were able to retain some of the more ‘inoffensive’ practices, as well as incorporate a considerable amount of South Sea custom. They were inculcated with the concept of ‘shame’ through the requirement to clothe their bodies. The mission quickly inserted itself into and took advantage of the ‘gift economy’, the social practice of Islanders which wove reciprocity and exchange into the ordering of social and kin and trading relationships. Indeed, they soon became the main beneficiaries, with Islanders contributing to the expenses of the mission, the building of churches, villages, and schools (Beckett, 1987).

Because of the effectiveness of using South Sea natives to evangelise the Islanders, integral to the LMS project was the training of Islanders to help take the Mission to the Papua New Guinea mainland. To this end McFarlane established the Papuan Institute on Murray Island in 1879 (Langbridge, 1977). Here he assembled promising young men and boys from different parts of the mission, speaking different languages, and at a central
station; and there, removed from their evil surrounding and family influences, teach them, making the English language and an industrial school prominent features in the course of their instruction. (McFarlane, 1888, p. 81)

As well, alongside the Churches schools were built.

In connection with these churches [Murray, Mabuiag, and Saibai] we have good schools, attended by nearly all the young people of the place, and a good many of the old ones too, all being anxious to learn to read. In this district they are now paying for their books, and making a handsome annual contribution to the parent society...

(McFarlane, 1888, p. 184)

The requirement of cash for these purposes led the mission to support, with reservations, the entry of Islanders into the cash economy of the marine industry. This fitted well with the mission’s inculcation of the Protestant work ethic. In this way it tacitly rationalised the imposition of the colonial order to its congregation (Sharp, 1993; Beckett, 1987; Ganter, 1994). The participation of Islanders in the marine industry did not, however, fit with the mission’s project of moral regeneration and protection of the Islanders.

Here then, in this early history, emerges a theme that appears again in the history of government administration. Their mission was to rescue heathen and savage souls, but the re-organisation of Islanders’ daily lives required money for clothing, for buildings, for the utensils of civilisation, to build schools and so forth. To earn this money Islanders were forced into the company of Europeans of ‘questionable character’, and thus brought nearer to the most debasing and degrading influences of Western civilisation. The mission sought to resolve the paradox of uplifting these savages in the moral sense by thrusting them into contact with the very immoral practices from which they wanted to protect them, by inculcating and policing a code for living that was far stricter than that imposed on any European. When the
Anglican Bishop White travelled around the Islands in 1914, prior to taking them over from the London Missionary Society he remarked on the severity of sentences of ex-communication for what he considered minor offences: the quarrelling between husband and wife, and drunkenness amongst others (White, 1917). Thus souls were to be uplifted by adherence to a puritanically strict moral code that could be enforced by the close surveillance of the Islanders’ daily activities. This was afforded to the missionaries and Pastors by the isolation of the Islander communities from European communities and in the beginning from the arms of secular administration. It was also assisted by a policy of maintaining as much segregation of Islanders from non-Islanders as was possible. And in the process, this project was aided by the Mission’s tacit support of a colonial order that relegated these souls to a lower position within this order than Europeans (degraded souls that many of those Europeans were by their standards).

Thus on two new fronts (labour and moral) Islanders became positioned along a continuum, scientifically constructed as developmental from savagery to civilisation (e.g, McFarlane, 1888; Haddon, 1935), but to all practical intent and purposes, a racial one. Europeans, originators of the construct, assumed their position at the top, South Sea Islanders with their longer relationship with and experience of European habits, language, morality and work ethics were regarded superior to the Islanders of the Torres Strait in ability and skill and thus assumed a position above them. Imported indentured Japanese labour would rise to take their place just below Europeans and in fact would require legislation to prevent the Japanese from challenging Europeans as the leaders of the pearling industry (Ganter, 1994). In time, the skills of Islanders, their conversion to Christianity, their inter-marriage with South Sea Islanders and their integration of some South Sea custom, would in turn differentiate them significantly from both neighbouring Melanesians and the mainland Aborigines. This would assure them of a higher position than both Aborigines and Papuans in this externally imposed hierarchy (Ganter, 1994). For the Islanders of Torres Strait, in both arenas, the activities and the
customs of the Europeans were greatly mediated by South Sea Islanders and their customs.

With the arrival of the third wave of intervention, the Queensland Government, and the expansion of both marine and missionary activity, this emerging hierarchy would be formalised in the legislation affecting 'natives'. Legislation was initially directed at the marine industry. Although annexation of the islands within sixty miles of the mainland occurred in 1872 for primarily strategic reasons, the 1879 annexation of the rest of the Strait seems to have been largely a response to the activities of the marine industry. Much of this activity was being conducted outside territorial waters in order to escape government jurisdiction. The 1872 Pacific Islanders Protection Act was enacted by British parliament out of concern over the abuses of the labour trade. Popularly known as the Kidnapping Act, it required vessels to hold special licences in an attempt to prevent the acquisition of Pacific Islanders as labour without their 'consent'. According to Ganter (1994) the legislation was vague and largely ineffectual but it did legitimate the presence of the Government. Its reference was to the employment of Islanders as crew and so it made no provision for employment in other capacities, effectively barring the use of South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders. An 1875 amendment to the Act overcame this problem and the 1879 Annexation extension enabled the government to travel around inspecting and regulating the activity of European fishermen.

The early interdependence of pearl-shell operators and government agents is evident in the Queensland Government enacted Pacific Islanders Protection Act 1880. Pearl-shellers were aided by government officials who themselves held fishery interests. They argued that Polynesians were higher on the 'civilised' scale as demonstrated by their experience and their ability to organise their own forms of bargaining power in the forms of labour strikes and refusals to work. In this way they were able to keep the experienced South Sea Islanders (Polynesians) out of the terms of the Act, and were not
required to train the Torres Strait Islanders in the skilled aspects of diving. This enabled the upward mobility of Polynesians as the differentiated Torres Strait Islanders (and Aborigines) became increasingly subject to restrictions. This Act was more specific in the terms of its protection detailing the provision of medical attention, living space and provisions (Ganter, 1994). It was quickly followed by the Pearl-Shell and Béche-de-mer Fisheries Act 1881 which enabled the government to obtain revenue through its licensing operations by requiring labour to be signed on through written contracts and signed off again in Queensland. Previously much labour had been signed on in Sydney or other places.

The double-edge of the sword of protection becomes more clearly evident in the Native Labourers’ Protection Act 1884. By requiring Queensland ‘indigents’, that is Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and Papuans, to be signed on and off and paid before a shipping master, and that they be returned home after twelve months, the government both extended better protection but restricted their employment (Ganter, 1994). This legislation emerged specifically in the context of the marine industry and the success of that industry in persuading the government to continue to exclude Polynesians from its terms illustrates its influence.

The next legislation concerning Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was the Aborigines Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act 1897. This legislation was comprehensive in its terms and was to all intents and purposes about managing the ‘problem’ of a dying race. Its points of reference emerged out of concern for the plight of Aborigines on the mainland but it was also initially intended to further restrict the employment of indigents in the fishing industry.

However, the expansion of government activity in the Torres Strait, in the 1880s and 1890s, in response to marine and missionary activity, coupled with the direct influence of the pearl-shellers was to be significant for the position
of Torres Strait Islanders in relation to this legislation, at least initially. In a significant victory for the pearl-shellers, the final draft of the Act did not make any reference to the employment of indigenous labour in the marine industries. However continued concern about abuses in the industry led to the 1901 Amendment that did make specific reference to the employment of Aboriginals. By stipulating the terms and conditions, including wages, of indigenous employment the government effectively prevented aborigines from negotiating their own terms of employment leading to considerable restriction on their participation in the industry.

However, the abuses of the industry cannot be ignored or understated. Both Ganter (1994) and Bleakley (1961) document some of the worst abuses. These included kidnapping, the putting to work of women and children, sometimes as young as six years, the sexual exploitation of women, abandoning them on Islands reefs or sandbars, defrauding them of the money wages due to them. But of most concern appears to be the exposure of Aboriginals to addictive substances by paying them with such. Sugar, tea, and tobacco were supplied as the basic necessities of existence but it was alcohol and the dregs of opium addicts pipes that Chinese used as payment for services that caused the most concern to authorities.

Torres Strait Islanders were exempted from this Act. This was due largely to the influence of John Douglas, the Government Resident at Thursday Island. His argument echoed the arguments of pearl-shellers and was supported by the Chief Protector. It was the same argument that the industry had used twenty years previously to exclude South Sea Islanders from the restrictions of government legislation. This argument, now afforded to the Torres Strait Islanders, was that Torres Strait Islanders were a superior race to the Aborigines and were better able to look after themselves (Douglas, 1899-1900; Bleakley, 1961; Ganter, 1994; Beckett, 1987). In this way labour was further stratified along racial lines and governed by different sets of regulations. The differentiation between the two groups, Aboriginals and
Torres Strait Islanders, was reflected in wage differentials from the time the Department began regulating the wages of Torres Strait Islanders. It was continued through different styles of management for the two groups, and culminated in the separation of the legislation with the 1939 Torres Strait Islanders Act. An official acknowledgment of what they were doing is evident in a statement of the Minister of Health and Home Affairs when he introduced the two separate bills of legislation in 1939.

We propose to deal with the Torres Strait islanders [sic] under an entirely different Act because they have proved that they are capable of doing a great deal for themselves and do not need the strict control that is exercised over the mainland aboriginals....The question whether our mainland aboriginal would not have done as well as the islander [sic] if he had been given the same opportunity is a matter of opinion, but the islander [sic] has had greater advantages than the mainland aboriginal, inasmuch as his territory has been preserved for him. (Hanlon cited in Ganter, 1994, p. 42)

In this stratified order another theme weaves itself through this administrative practice - the intelligence, interchangeably described as ability, or mentality or as the psychology of the 'native' or Islander. The position of Islanders depended throughout this period on European perceptions of their intelligence in relation to others. This influenced and rationalised administrative decisions about the degree to which they were to be allowed to participate in the new order and live independently and free. But another paradox emerged and one that was increasingly to frustrate the Islanders. To participate in the new order fully required both access to new knowledges and skillling in new practices. By restricting their labour, by controlling their finances and movement, and by limiting their education, the government effectively ensured their continued administration of Islander affairs, for without full access to the new knowledges and practices, Islanders would always be confined to a lower and more dependent position. Islanders then
had to prove their ability before they could be trusted with more control of their own affairs.

But it was not just through the formal legislation that the Government began to extend its control. It was as much in the understandings and the styles of individual Government Residents and local Protectors in the Torres Strait and their interactions at the local and personal level with both the LMS and the pearling industry that we see significant changes in the interventions in Islanders daily lives. The activities of the LMS did not pass unnoticed by the Queensland Government or entirely with their approval any more than the activities of the unscrupulous pearlers had. There was more than passing concern expressed about the harshness of the regime (Bleakley, 1961). However, it was not until the Annexation of 1879 that the Government Resident gained jurisdiction over all the LMS missions. As well, early Government Residents were not well resourced and to a considerable extent relied on and benefited from the early groundwork of the LMS. Soon after Annexation, the Police Magistrate, HM Chester, appointed ‘headmen’ to be his representatives on the islands, in the absence of sufficient government resources to position European government agents on the Islands.

In 1885 John Douglas, a former Premier of Queensland, was appointed Government Resident on Thursday Island. He remained until his death in 1904 and his actions and style of administration were to have significant historical effects in the Torres Strait. He regarded the Islanders as capable of exercising all the rights of British citizens, and [that] they ought to be regarded as such. They are a growing and intelligent people, and they want to be educated. They want to be educated even more than our people. They show an inclination for education that often exceeds that of our own white population. This is not an extreme statement. It is a true statement, which I can prove by facts, and I am quite sure that anyone who saw these people would be quite convinced that what I have said is true. (Douglas, 1899-1900, p. 35)
In 1892 he appointed the first of the teacher-supervisors to Murray Island and others followed this appointment in succeeding years to six islands. Although part of their brief was to instruct the children in the basics of English literacy and numeracy, these teachers were also the administrative arms of the Government and were selected less for academic qualification and more for administrative ability and common-sense (Bleakley, 1961). In 1899 he instituted a simple system of local island administration by elected councils of headmen with magisterial powers and village constables, thus introducing Islanders to the European idea of democratic procedure. This system was retained throughout the entire period of administration and provided the basis for the present system of self-management. It was hardly a form of self-rule as so often cited, the teacher-supervisor officially holding effective day to day control between the years 1911-1936 and the Protector holding the power of veto.

Douglas was instrumental in keeping Islanders out of the terms of the 1897-1901 Aboriginal Protection Act by arguing that they were quite capable of running their own affairs and of exercising their rights. However, after his death in 1904, Islanders were quickly brought under the Act, and deemed 'aboriginals' as far as the law and Government was concerned. No official explanation was given, though Bleakley (1961) writes that although some Islanders were managing their affairs well, many were not able to take care of themselves. South Sea Islanders remained exempt.

The marine industry, the Church and then the Government from Douglas' time allowed for local participation in the new order, though on terms that proceeded according to their own logic, that were already delineated by their own interests and sometimes subject to conflicts and struggle between those interests. In the marine industry Islanders were limited in the type of work that they could perform by the hierarchization of labour. In the Church, locals were allowed to participate in order to assist in the evangelisation of Papua New Guinea and later were allowed to proceed to the Deaconate to
administer to their own people mainly due to a shortage of Europeans. Through its system of elected Councils the Government allowed locals to participate in the running of their own affairs. The interactions between these three areas would both work in concert to tighten the control over Islanders and against each other to provide small spaces for Islanders to reassert themselves in the face of this control. In both Church and Government, Islanders contributed financially from the beginning and would be self-supporting except in time of famine, until the pearling industry collapsed in the 1960s. Their participation in the marine industry would earn them this money and their refusal to participate in it would, many years later, wield them considerable leverage in their demands for the removal of tight controls over their daily lives.

_The Tightening of Protection: 1904-1936_

In this period, the government 'protection' of Islanders which had begun in the 1870s as supervision of fishermen and their activities and then developed into a restricting web of legislation for Islanders, peaked in intensity and oppression as almost total deprivation of liberty by the 1930s. In the government’s thinking this was able to be justified by the future vision held for Islanders. Even in the 1960s, Bleakley, the former Chief Protector, thought that the paternal relationship between government and Islanders could last until the turn of the century. Thus Islanders need only contribute to their upkeep and need only be educated to fit the needs of village life. Unskilled work with low wages that were well managed on their behalf was deemed adequate for the government’s goal. To give Islanders more would give them ideas above their station (Bleakley, 1961). Continuing segregation from Whites accorded with the terms of the White Australia Policy and disallowed Islanders’ movement to the mainland and knowledge of the conditions of workers elsewhere.

How was this achieved? How were controls for 'protection' progressively tightened until Islanders were virtual prisoners in their own islands? How was
the policy of segregation and secondary status continually rationalised, upheld, even applauded, when it relied on keeping Islanders in a position of dependency by denying them access to education, knowledge, skills and material resources of the European world without which they would never be able to take care of themselves?

The three major forces of industry, Church and Government continued to give shape to the daily lives of Islanders during this period. But Government influence was to be in ascendancy and Church influence was to be increasingly frustrated by a government administration which was increasingly concerned about controlling the finances of Islanders by controlling their labour and their participation in the pearling industry as well as their articulation to traditional subsistence activities. In this quest they came into conflict and competition with both Church and the marine industry and generated considerable resentment amongst Islanders. And again we are reminded in the historical documentation of these times that Islanders were not necessarily averse to all the changes occurring (Beckett, 1987). They showed a willingness to participate and co-operate in all three areas but their struggle was to be that of how to have their interests recognised in the terms and conditions of their participation. It was to be a losing struggle for Islanders as non-Islanders continued to proceed according to their own logic and interests. But where there was loss for Islanders, there was also the emergence of a new position for them, one of renewed strength that derived from the collective formation of formerly discrete, separate and oftentimes competitive communities into one that became united in its grievances against an increasingly harsh regime.

Administrative practice in this period centred on the control and regulation of Islander labour in the marine industry. Whilst the LMS continued to administer the religious and moral aspects of life they had a continued interest in Islanders working for cash and an interest in mediating that interaction. The Government had an interest in developing self-supporting communities
so they also had an interest in controlling the labour of Islanders and an interest in mediating the influence of the Church which drained Islanders of much of their cash. Islanders showed a spirit of independence with regard to their participation in the pearling industry and the disposal of the cash that it earned them. The government developed a corresponding response of increased control over that independence, through the control of their finances and their personal freedom of movement and communications. Thus regulation that was initially rationalised on the grounds that Islanders couldn't take care of themselves extended itself to eventually ensure that Islanders would always be dependent on governments and would never take care of themselves.

Although government legislation bounded the actions of the marine industry and the extent to which the LMS and its successor the Anglican Church could interfere in the secular lives of Islanders, the legislation was itself open to the various interpretations of individual protectors and their Islander representatives, the teacher-superintendents. These interpretations were themselves often in response to fluctuating marine markets and the activities of missionaries and the Church, and even on occasion to the demands of the Islanders themselves. Adding further to the complexities are the differences in the particular circumstances of the communities. In neither their response to the demands of the marine industry and the administration nor in their degree of participation and co-operation, could Islander communities be considered a homogenous group. Added to this is the position of the descendants of South Sea Islanders who until 1934 were exempt from the terms and conditions of the Act excluding those who chose to reside habitually with Islanders on the reserve communities.

From its commencement, Islanders had always participated in the marine industry both as wage labour on Master Pearling fleets and on their own accounts to bring in the cash needed for the material necessities that the civilised and Christian life required - Bibles, school requisites, clothing
utensils, buildings etc. (Sharp, 1993). Community life could spare young men to work on the master boats for the long seasons. But the smaller boats that worked close to communities found it difficult to maintain any profitability, particularly in view of the 'slop-chest' debits that accrued during the season. These debits were not clearly understood by Islanders and were subject to much suspicion with many Islanders believing that unscrupulous merchants were ripping them off when they bought their provisions and traded their shell. Understandably it made them reluctant to work the boats except at times of high prices.

In response to Islanders' concerns, and his own concern over 'idleness' of the 'natives', the missionary Walker established Papuan Industries Limited in 1904. He had to resign from the LMS to do so, the LMS expressing concern that this level of commercial activity was a conflict of interest with the missions' aims. The LMS in refusing to antagonise the powerful trading companies, in particular Burns Philip who held the trading monopoly in the Western Papua district, argued against Walkers vision of a lugger scheme which would promote independent native enterprise. "If indigenes (sic) were started 'on the road to money making, they would be led to greed and avarice" (Ganter, 1994, pp. 69-70). This is the continuing paradox of the missionary project. The pursuit of civilisation required the pursuit of material commodities but such a pursuit could also lead to the path of moral destruction. Their response to this dilemma was once again to mediate the Islanders' access to the means of material progress lest it should interfere with their spiritual progress. A scheme which had them working for themselves, separated from the influence of White workers, seemed to Walker a preferable alternative to full-scale entry into the cash economy, or to the idleness that limited participation in the cash economy would bring. Despite objections his lugger scheme went ahead and the government set up a similar scheme for Islanders who were too removed from Walker's Papuan Industries Limited (hereafter PIL) on Badu Island (Beckett, 1987). Thus with government and private backing Islanders were afforded a space in the
industry in which they could work for themselves and their communities. They purchased their boats with loans, and paid them off with interest out of the earnings from their catches. They worked very hard to clear themselves of debt and the scheme was initially looked upon as achieving its aims. The PIL and the government both sold the Islanders’ produce and supplied provisions to Islanders to eliminate the risk of them being defrauded in both transactions by unscrupulous merchants, a practice that was difficult to monitor in a free market. These boats, worked co-operatively by island communities, were known as ‘company boats’. As well, PIL and Government encouraged the planting of coconuts for copra, a commercially viable crop at the time (Bleakley, 1961).

However, the scheme was not considered a success for long. Once the Islanders paid off their boats they ceased to work them as hard. In effect, now as owners, they preferred to use their boats as they wished, for travel and communication, for fishing and community life and, when they needed cash, for commercial purposes. They were inclined to work if prices and conditions were good but were not inclined to work them according to the economic model of maximum efficiency. This use of the boats was considered by the government to reflect the native psychology - they were indolent, lazy and unreliable (Ganter, 1994; Bleakley, 1961). It was not seen as an intelligent response to incorporate aspects of the new economy to fit with both the demands of their new ‘civilised’ life and the continuing traditional demands of subsistence activity.

By encouraging Islanders to work their own boats the government achieved another goal that was greatly supported by the LMS. This was the maintenance of separation of the Islanders from the White population. For most Islanders the only Whites they would come into contact with were those that had authority over them. But the insertion of Islanders into the cash economy in order to support their separate communities was not a simple matter for the government or the Islanders. The traditional subsistence
economy required considerable time and effort on the part of communities and it was prone to seasonal failures. If gardens failed because of neglect through commercial activity, then government would be forced to provide relief. The task of maintaining a balance between the two economies came to be directed through government regulation rather than by leaving Islanders to determine the extent of their participation in the commercial sector (Beckett, 1987).

However, as noted above, Islanders did attempt to regulate this themselves and this is evident in the differences between various Islander communities in the degree to which they participated in the cash economy. In the eastern islands, fertile soils resulted in extensive traditional gardening as a major part of subsistence along with fishing. However the more arid western and central islands relied more on wild crops when they were available and to a larger extent produce from the sea. They were also more prone to famine and seasonal 'hungry times'. To these western and central communities the cash from commercial activity to purchase store bought provisions such as flour was more attractive than to the Eastern Islanders. Thus on Badu, for example, where the PIL store was close at hand, and agriculture was a less dependable activity and famine more common, Islanders were drawn further into the cash economy. By remaining less dependant on cash for their subsistence, and by virtue of their isolation and the fertility of their island, Murray Islanders developed an historical attitude of independence and distance from the government. This was in stark contrast to the other extreme, Badu Island, whose success in the marine industry was a reflection of its co-operation and close ties with the government.

Government regulation of this imbalance was often of a persuasive nature but at times there was definite coercion. When government became frustrated with the Islanders' lack of co-operation the response was regulation. Legislation, and the interpretation of it, was to a large degree dependent on individual Protectors and their personal styles. Up until 1906, the Chief
Protector was not insistent on indigenous participation in shelling and had opposed a government proposal to take responsibility for recruiting for the pearl-shell industry. But a change in protectors saw a change in support for the idea. Local protectors held seemingly as much influence as the Chief Protector. Bennett and O'Brien, the first two protectors who oversaw the lugger scheme remained quite enthusiastic about it despite its shortcomings and also regulated the activities of Japanese captains and recruiting practices. Costin who followed in 1907, was not only less enthusiastic about the degree of participation in the lugger schemes but, as well, relaxed the rules of recruitment for Islanders on master boats knowing that this led to more exploitation and ultimately desertions.

It was also Costin who brought the Islanders completely under the Act by denying them cash to spend as they wished. Ostensibly to prevent them from buying alcohol on Thursday Island, he issued a bank account for all men signed on wages boats. These accounts could only be drawn upon at island stores as credit. For small cash withdrawals they had to gain the permission of the Protector. In this way Islanders were effectively barred from spending on Thursday Island, and their spending limited to the bare necessities of life as dictated to them by those officials who supplied the goods for their stores. This policy, endorsed by the Chief protector, didn’t go unchallenged in all government quarters. The Government Resident, Milman, who replaced Douglas, thought it unnecessarily harsh to enforce such a policy. The Chief Protector, in seeking to allay Milman’s concerns, stated that deductions varied from ‘boy’ to ‘boy’ according to intelligence (Ganter, 1994). However, even at this early stage public criticism and opposition was discouraged lest it lead Islanders to think there was any cause for resentment. Milman was effectively silenced (Ganter, 1994).

Costin also resisted any moves to further expand the lugger scheme. Even though they were useful in tiding over ‘hungry times’ they were not considered profitable. Thus began a widening of the division between the
PIL and the government schemes both in terms of their vision for Islanders and in terms of their co-operation with each other. Ganter reports that the PIL regarded Islanders as "fully autonomous entrepreneurs with property rights over their luggers" (1994, p. 76). The Protector on the other hand considered them to be:

wards of the state, not the fully responsible legal entities of a business relationship. In the eyes of the Queensland government, they had no land rights, no rights to their labour, and no rights of property. (Ganter, 1994, p. 77)

This meant that luggers, although bought and paid for by Islanders, remained essentially in trust for the natives. The government could assert, when questioned, that Islanders owned their luggers but by preventing them from disposing of their produce in a free market, or of being entitled to the proceeds, the Protector achieved effective control over them. Islanders, however, continued to view the luggers, once fully paid for, as their own property.

Thus just with the change of a Protector considerable restrictions were effected. According to Ganter,

[the government teacher at Mabuiag testified that indigenous people had become more restricted in their spending since Costin's arrival: 'when Mr O'Brien was here he paid half the money to them and they spent it themselves; but since Mr Costin came here he has altered that, and he had the handling of the whole money - he pays them what sum he thinks proper'. (Ganter, 1994, p. 77)]

As well, Costin tightened control over the Islanders who operated through the PIL thus making PIL operations difficult. He demanded to see PIL accounts to ensure fair operations and concluded that the natives were getting the better of the PIL. He tried to further erode them by persuading Islanders
that they could earn more working on wages boats. This was the difference in vision. Where the PIL sought to increase the Islanders separateness, independence and participation by learning to labour for themselves, the government sought to develop an efficient and competitive workforce that would keep the communities self-sufficient via contribution to the government that administered them. His actions occurred with the approval of a Chief Protector who was also keen to see the communities self-sufficient.

Although pronounced a failure by Costin, Islanders considered the scheme a success, despite variations in the degree to which they entered into the scheme. Islander communities also varied in their use of the money but on the whole used it to improve their material standard of living. On Saibai the proceeds went to house construction for all married couples; the Mabuiag community displayed their wealth by building a Church. This was the independence that Costin wanted to bring under government control.

Despite criticisms the scheme continued although the rules changed. The lugger scheme expanded in 1907 because of plummeting world prices that resulted in 200 Islanders being laid off work on the master boats. In 1911 the Protector formally substituted the power of the Mamus and Council to the government teacher. In this way the teacher, rather than the Council, could decide who and when should work the boats. Thus in 1912, the Protector could report that nearly all boats were in credit, adding

[t]his satisfactory position was not easily attained, as most of the natives do not worry about being in debt, and resented our efforts to place them on a sound footing. In course of time they realised we had no intention of being turned from the object in view, and resigned themselves to the inevitable. (Ganter, 1994, p. 82)

In 1912 the Island Fund was established. This involved the deduction of earnings to provide a fund that government could access in times of famine, that would contribute to the services on the Islands and that would look after the aged, the sick and those unable to work. In 1913 the Islander response to
such constant interference, led by the Murray Islanders, was a ‘disinclination to work’ on boats. Government interference and a lack of funds also contributed to the withdrawal of the LMS from the communities whose Churches were taken over by the Anglican Church in 1914. The Church lent support to Islanders by protesting at the rate of the deduction, 20 per cent, which was imposed even though workers were paying income tax to the Australian federal government.

The initial ‘supervision’, by the government, of the intrusive and often exploitative activities of pearl-shellers and missionaries had given way to ‘protection’ through regulation. That it was now being tightened by further legislation and practices designed to ‘discipline’ the ‘native’, is evident in the following abstract from the Protector’s 1915 report. It also indicates that Islanders were responding and struggling to maintain some degree of control over their lives.

The past year was marked by a strong feeling of unrest among the people, which manifested itself in refusals to work when good employment was offering, and, in a few places, by open disregard of departmental authority...They have a very good idea of the limits of our authority, and, while willing to obey all directions that can be supported by the Acts and Regulations, strenuously oppose attempts to improve their condition which are not within the four corners of legislation relating to aboriginals... For many years officials and others interested in the welfare of the islanders [sic] have endeavoured to persuade all able-bodied men to engage in congenial employment, or work their own boats in a systematic manner. In a few instance these efforts have been successful, but, unfortunately, in most places results are not encouraging, particularly so in the eastern group...As we are endeavouring to gradually raise a strong healthy race to a higher plane, it is the duty of these people to take the utmost advantage of the facilities provided for them...In some quarters this procedure would be termed 'slavery', but any person who possesses an intimate knowledge of the people and the subject will think otherwise. The islanders [sic] have not yet reached the state when they are competent to think and provide for themselves; they are really overgrown
children, and can best be managed, for their own welfare, as a prudent parent would discipline his family. (Ganter, 1994, p. 83)

But the value of community owned luggers was evident in times of plummeting pearl-shell prices such as occurred with the outbreak of World War 1. Islanders were able to bring in small amounts of cash by fishing for bêche-de-mer and as well used the boats to ensure their food supply. In 1915 they entered the trochus shell market and were able to work effectively, trochus being much easier to collect than pearl-shell.

However, resentment of the administration continued to build. With lower prices and more expensive maintenance, neglected boats, or insufficient returns by Islanders, were dealt with punitively by confiscating and reallocating boats to more profitable communities. In 1919 Protector Foxton reported Islander discontent over administrative control of their earnings:

> When it is pointed out that the compulsory banking deduction averaged, say 50 per cent at the most of the total wages earned, and of that deduction nearly 60 per cent was returned to the owner in clothes and other benefits, it will be seen that the hardship alleged is somewhat overstated. (Bleakley cited in Ganter, 1994, p. 85)

Discontent continued and in 1921 the Murray Islanders went on strike.

In 1922, the next Protector, O'Leary, effected the final stage of metamorphosis of the lugger scheme from that of a co-operatively owned scheme to increase Islanders' independence to a fully viable and competitive commercial enterprise, controlled and managed by the government. To achieve this, his role became that of a merchant as his administrative decisions reflected market considerations (Ganter, 1994). Most communities appear to have responded to this, good prices raised wages to the level of master boats,
and company boats increasingly operated further from home. Only Murray Island appears to have been reluctant to engage any further with the industry on the terms set by the government.

In 1922 Walker from the PIL retired and the goals of the PIL and the government once again became more closely aligned. Tensions between them eased and facilities were shared. In 1927 the PIL began training boat-building apprentices at a newly acquired boat slip on Thursday Island undercutting the competitive Japanese who held the monopoly. When markets fell in 1930, the PIL were unable to continue operations and their Torres Strait operations were bought out by the Queensland Government, using 8,000 pounds of Islander savings (Campbell et al.). The Protector became the Manager of this amalgamated Aboriginal Industries Board. Thus the 'protection' of Islanders was officially and without much pretence the regulation of their labour, control of their wages and their spending, as well as the control of their movements, to ensure the supply of labour stayed within the region.

Perhaps most Islander communities would have been prepared to accept the control of labour in return for this increased participation in the pearling industry had it coincided with increased participation in other areas of life. Success brought a certain amount of satisfaction as good prices were reflected in an increased prosperity to many communities. This prosperity was enabled by an Administration that began to see the sense in extending the availability of material goods to Islanders as this in turn provided a motivation to work (Beckett, 1987). Thus the formerly tight restriction on consumer goods became more relaxed, though the Protector still decided how much and which individuals were to receive what he deemed appropriate. Diving for pearl-shell became a way of life and part of a reconstituted identity. It was the only means of earning wages apart from very limited openings in the administration as store managers, teachers and health workers. Islander men thus had little alternative but to co-operate with the government over the
issue of labour. But the tightening of government control seeped through all levels of Islander life and was not just confined to labour. Where increased prosperity through their own labour might have opened up possibilities to become skilled in other areas such as the management of their money or improving educational levels so that Islanders could be eventually trained to look after their own affairs, the reverse occurred. The government instead tightened the regulations that governed daily lives ensuring their continued control. In restricting Islanders control over their earnings the government generated a festering discontent. But in restricting control over their persons, the government caused more than discontent - they caused untold pain and a deep-seated anger, and fertilised the seeds of revolt.

In 1921, the government relocated the Hammond Island tribe to remove them from the close and tempting proximity to alcohol on Thursday Island. Although the Islanders expressed a preference to move to Prince of Wales Island, the government chose Moa Island because it already had a school. They were moved under an armed police escort. Sharp cites an Islander who remembers:

...I saw my uncle that brave, just go and push all those white police who come out with revolvers...I was frightened they might shoot my uncle. So the police said, 'You jump in the dinghy you cheeky boy' and put a revolver to my chest and pushed me into the dinghy. The mothers and sisters all cry and go and take all their things and Badu and Moa people made grass houses at Poid, Moa. It was oh, big cry that night. (1993, pp. 139-140)

But along with the pain of such events there was the added burden of humiliation. Islanders increasingly needed permission for everything. For day to day matters they had to deal with the teacher/superintendents and these varied in their personal approaches as much as the Protectors. What could be endured if the Protector or teacher/superintendent was fair-minded and honourable in his personal dealing with Islanders could not be accepted if
they were not. In the early 1930’s, despite the hard work and increased earnings of Islanders in the pearling industry, the controls kept tightening. The callousness of the more restrictive laws and the incumbent Protectors’ disregard for the humanity and intelligence of Islanders inherent in his personal attitudes to them was to invoke the most serious crisis that the government had ever faced since they intruded into the lives of Islanders. Not only was travel between Islands restricted, it was necessary to have a permit. Without a permit, individuals could expect to be and in many cases were caught by the police, stood before the courts, and fined. Talking to or consorting with members of the opposite sex was prohibited. One Islander recalled,

Before the War when our people fall in love, younger people fall in love and police find them - if they meet together, kiss or walk about together - they must come to stand before the court. The law punished them by making their hair cut in two parts, shaved on one side. I was a boy then. I worked beside it. In the time of McLean. (Sharp, 1993, p. 143)

This same Islander was imprisoned for three months and given hard labour at the age of fourteen for walking back to the village in the company of a White girl whilst running a message.

It was, in fact, in most cases, Island courts and Islander policemen that exercised the letter of the law. How was it, in the face of such widespread community resentment, that Islanders were able to participate in the regulation of each other, to participate in their own humiliation? The Islanders’ predicament was a difficult one. The Council System was their only legitimate means for participation in any local administrative affairs. This mechanism was available to them only because it depended on the close personal supervision by the teacher/superintendents and the Protector. This was a structural expression of the accepted paternal relationship between Islanders and the Queensland government, a relationship defined on a racial
basis. It is the relationship we saw emerge in the writing of McFarlane and Haddon. It is a relationship carefully crafted and maintained as unequal.

In that such a relationship was established and rationalised on a premise of European superiority, it required continual moderation in practice to maintain the inequality between the two groups, for the relationship was unable to be considered, by the government, in any other terms. Thus we see at a time when Islanders were developing their skills in line with the new order, and increasing their earning capacity which could provide the means of material independence, that is the means to take care of themselves, the government moderated the other factors in the equation. Whilst earning capacity went up, other capacities were held constant or reduced lest the altered balance destabilise the status quo. Thus Islanders educational opportunities were not extended. They were to be denied the experience of handling their own finances, lest some be lost or squandered along the way, or worse that they might show themselves capable of looking after their needs. Their freedom of movement was reduced to make surveillance and control easier. Their interactions with non-Islanders were likewise monitored to keep them from gaining knowledge of the outside world, so that the inequities in the relationship could not be questioned. This was all measured to be in the ‘best interest’ of the Islanders.

Despite these restrictions Islanders were able to take their measure of the government. They were well versed in a creed that preached all men were equal before God. They developed on the one hand, a view of their situation as unjust. On the other hand, they had for fifty years lived a community life according to the moral code of the missionaries that demanded adherence to a work ethic, and to a closely regulated and disciplined daily life. This discipline, although purported to be discipline of the ‘self’, was effected by external regulation both by the public process of ‘shaming’, that is by the mockery of the transgressor by others, and the enforcement of regulations as expressed in ‘Island Law’ which were the by-laws of Island Councils.
References to these laws often cite their basis as customary law that existed and had been passed down from pre-contact time (Bleakley, 1961; Beckett, 1987). Some may well have been influenced by custom, such as resolution of land disputes, but much of this law appears to be rooted in the code imposed by the early LMS missionaries (Beckett, 1987). Some of the laws varied from island to island, but although decided by the Island Councils they were subject to veto by the Protector. Islander magistrates and policemen were able to enforce these laws but in more serious cases the Protector judged cases. In some instances, the Protector intervened to protect Islanders from the overzealouness of some of the Islander magistrates. Some of these laws, in the interests of supervision and discipline sanctioned gross invasions of privacy. For example, in the interests of health and hygiene all children were taken for a supervised swim each morning. As part of this morning discipline, Islander policemen also inspected each household to ensure breakfast was being cooked. Islander women complained to Bishop White that they objected to these officials lifting the lids of pots to inspect what was being cooked (White, 1917). Where moral regulation, enshrined in a regulated code that was part of civil law, was an accepted practice, the boundary between public and private seemed not to exist. That such laws would have probably been deemed unconstitutional under Australian law did not prevent the Queensland government and its agents from taking full advantage of the restrictions that these laws placed on personal liberties. Nor did it prevent particular agents, for example the Badu Island school teacher, Mrs Zahl, from tightening the laws and enforcing them harshly.

There is no detailed comparative investigation of the differences between Islander communities, beyond Beckett's analysis of Badu, Saibai and Murray Island in the 1960s, but the extreme harshness of the Badu regime may not have existed elsewhere. On Badu, in the 1930s, the dovetailing of the agendas of Islander Council and government teacher occurred with the emergence of a strong, dominating and competitive personality in the form of the Island's Chairman. Other islands may have, by virtue of the personalities of both
Chairman and teacher, been far more relaxed about how law was interpreted and enforced. Whilst the Council at Badu became entrenched and dynastic and oppressive, other Island Councils exercised their democratic will by changing the composition of Councils through their vote, whenever dissatisfied. But in time dissatisfaction with the government that controlled the Councils and the Act that gave them the scope to enforce this, became the target of dissatisfaction amongst Islanders. Thus whilst there was much internal politics this did not completely submerge the bigger analysis that Islander troubles were the result of government policy. And it was this analysis that was to unite Islanders in 1935-36.

Election of the Councils was hardly democratic, voting procedure varied. In some places boxes labelled with the candidates name were placed in the hall. Voters dropped a shell in the box carrying the name of their preferred candidate. This was done under the watchful eye of an Islander policeman whose presence was justified to ensure nobody came through twice. In other places voters drew a chalk mark on a board in the column under the name of their preferred candidate, once again scrutinised by an Islander policemen (Raven-Hart, 1946). Effectively, there was no secret ballot and the room for standover tactics or subtle coercion on the part of candidates was not closed off. This mockery of democratic procedure was paralleled by the veto on all decisions of the island Council by the local Protector and by the enormous influence of the teacher-supervisors. Thus island councils could raise, discuss, and reach decisions that were never responded to by an amendment to law. Island Councils thus operated as a rubber stamping system for the government. In some places they worked co-operatively and were rewarded with benefits and privileges not given to other communities. In other places relative isolation enabled them to quietly ignore directives. In other places there was no escape from co-operation but the price was increasing resentment and frustration.
But the most insidious practice of the government was, ironically, their benevolence. The governments’ relationship with Islanders differed from the one it had with Aboriginals. Missionaries had already effected the reorganisation of community life. Islanders’ land was not threatened by the advance of pastoralists and the means of subsistence survival was still available. Once the activities of pearl-shellers was effectively regulated the governments interest lay in containing the Islanders in the Torres Strait, and taking advantage of a marine economy to develop a separate, self-sufficient society of Islanders. A society perhaps with a degree of self rule but with no aspiration to be part of the wider Australian community (Bleakley, 1961). This was reflective of a White Australia policy and the notion of European racial superiority. The administration was secure in the knowledge that Islanders would remain where they were, contributing to their upkeep in an order that had been rationalised to Islanders since the time of the first missionaries. They afforded to Islanders a degree of benevolence that was generally not afforded to Aborigines on the mainland.

This benevolence expressed itself in the formalities and procedures of the effectively powerless island Councils and their interactions with the teachers and the Protectors. It was aided by the small population and the Protectors’ ability to know Islanders personally, to greet them personally, and to take care of their individual problems as if it were personal favour. It was refined to the extent that Islanders learnt that their relationship with teachers and Protectors influenced their access to government benefits and privileges. These might include access to free passage, to inside information and knowledge about White affairs, the degree of respect bestowed upon them and their families by Whites, their access to their savings, etc. It introduced friendship and intimacy into the relationship, and widened the avenues of regulation through friendly persuasion rather than force. It allowed the Protector to be seen as separate from his governments policies. It co-opted Islander participation in their own imprisonment (Sharp, 1993).
But where a dependence on the intimate relationship existed to ensure cooperation, so did the reduction of benevolence reduce the level of cooperation. Despite ongoing and building frustration and resentment Islanders united only after the appointment of an unsympathetic Protector. This was a Protector who did not treat Islanders as if they were intelligent, who did not accord respect. McLean was prone to throwing Islanders out of his office when they raised grievances. He tightened all the regulations and he used force. In 1934, the descendants of South Sea Islanders, who had since the beginning of legislation been exempted from the Act were now brought under it and subject to the same restrictions. This caused outrage and anger in this community and Islanders gained renewed support from South Sea Islanders. Between 1933-5 the Anglican Bishop also became publicly critical of the government administration and in his 1935 address to the Synod encouraged the idea of transferring Islander affairs to the Commonwealth government. Thursday Island shopkeepers (with a prudent eye on the Islander patronage long denied them) added to the rising moral support for Islanders grievances (Sharp, 1993). But although Islander discontent was rising to a crescendo in the communities, the government remained unaware of the severity of the situation. It was not until the post-strike investigation that the actions of McLean would come to official light. Although he would be dismissed to placate Islanders and redress the situation, the damage would not be able to be undone. Islander analysis of the situation would continue to see the abolition of the Act as the only eventual solution to their ongoing discontent (Sharp, 1993, Beckett, 1987).

In January 1936, the Islanders retaliated in response to this extreme control. They withdrew their labour from all government boats all over the Strait. It took the government completely by surprise. It was a major tactical feat, given the distances and the lack of modern communication technology of the time. It was a defining moment in the history of the Torres Strait people. It defined them as a collective - Torres Strait Islanders. It gave them national press that solicited support for them from White unions and White liberals.
It lasted for four months and one island refused the negotiated compromise that was eventually worked out. The Murray Islanders never went back to the government boats. Many years later, in the 1980s, they would continue this tradition and refuse the Deed of Grants in Trust Legislation drawn up by the Queensland government, as a step towards self-management. They would then turn their efforts toward contesting the legal concept of Terra nullus that had rendered their Islands property of the Crown. Their eventual triumph would be the legal and enacted recognition, in 1993, of title to their own Islands and the acceptance that Native Title may still exist in other parts of Australia.

The strike was eventually resolved through the efforts of O'Leary a former Protector. He investigated grievances and persuaded the government to allow some concessions to Islanders. McLean's assertion that the trouble was mainly caused by non-Islanders, including shopkeepers on Thursday Island and the Church, was to be dismissed as the primary cause as O'Leary's investigation uncovered the depth of resentment of Islanders. That it was so difficult to persuade Islanders to return to their boats, even with better wages and conditions, led O'Leary to understand that they were demanding something much more fundamental - the removal of the restrictions of the Act (Beckett, 1987).

O'Leary's style was the masterly refinement of patronisation that Sharp (1993) has captured in her detailed account of the strike.

He treated them 'as individuals of ordinary intelligence', capable of engaging in 'candid discussion' (Report 11 May 1936, p. 11)... Nevertheless 'appreciating their intelligences' did not preclude inducement and manipulation into accepting their lot as non-citizens in a continuing paternalist relationship: '...it should be the policy by sympathetic treatment of the aboriginals to induce them to recognise the benefit which they can obtain from the measures designed from their protection and assistance'. (Report 28, cited in Sharp, 1993, pp. 203-4)
O'Leary set up mechanisms that allowed the administration to achieve by indirect means, that is, by persuasion and co-operation, what the teacher/superintendents had become used to achieving through coercion and penalty. The iron fist of administration had been forced to don a new pair of soft gloves.

Concessions granted to Islanders came to be known as 'New Law'. The more controversial matters which concerned Islanders were conciliated during the resolution of the strike and were circulated amongst Islanders prior to a 1937 Councillors’ Conference which was left to resolve some of the more straightforward matters. Many powers of the teachers were passed over to the island Councils and this reorganisation resulted in repeal of the more oppressive regulations and relaxed restrictions on personal liberties. It also gave Islanders more control of the recruitment for boats, closer involvement in the sale of shell and the distribution of earnings. These laws were enshrined in the Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939, an Act which officially differentiated them from Aborigines. Resolutions were also put forward by Islanders that could not be acted upon by Islanders but which were matters to be considered by the Minister. These mechanisms, then, were to afford Islanders a renewed degree of independence in local government matters and an avenue for consultation with the Minister. The process was a two-way street as closer relations between island Council chairmen and the authorities meant that they relied on those in government for advice and knowledge of official matters. As well, final authority rested on the local Protector, and island Councils had to earn his trust by complying with policy and governing responsibly to his satisfaction.

In accepting the 'New Law' Islanders had conceded that there would be no end to the 'Act'. But the nature of some of their resolutions must have indicated to the government that Islanders had set themselves upon a course that would continue to pursue better conditions, more independence and the eventual repeal of the Act. Sharp (1993) points out that resolutions indicated
an ongoing determined pursuit of both equality and independence. These included the call for maternity allowances as were available to other Australians and that Islanders be trained to be 'pump divers' on par with the more skilled, more productive and better paid Japanese; a skill from which they had previously been excluded. They also included requests for secondary schooling, improved health facilities and even further control over island affairs.

But the root of the problem was never conceded - that of the control of the personal finances of Islanders. The governments' economic agenda remained intact. The paternal relationship endured the process of reform. The reform was limited to 'in house' reorganisation, the house itself remained as solid and as encompassing as ever. The interpretative framework through which the government viewed the Islanders' position had been challenged but the status quo remained unchanged. When Islanders realised that they would continue to be governed under the Act, one was heard to say: "We are in a closed box and wait for the lid to be taken off" (Islander to the Deputy Chief Protector in 1936; cited in Sharp, 1993, p. 181).

Temporarily pacified by the concessions, the Islanders may not have been content for long but a bigger event was to intervene and once again redirect their focus. This was the outbreak of the Pacific theatre of the Second World War. It was to have ramifications that the Queensland government could not control.

_The War and beyond: The disruption of Queensland Government control_

The war was to have ramifications for Islanders that even the government could not have foreseen. The war would not just bring massive disruption and re-organisation of life within the Strait due to military threats. It would also herald a changing world order. This order would see the post-war emergence of the United Nations as an advocate for human rights around the globe which would slowly force Australian governments to reassess the way
they treated Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. The post-war era would also see the decline of the colonial empires of European nations as the colonised pursued independence from their colonisers. The military experience for Islander men would bring renewed hope and confidence for them in the form of new skills and knowledge from the outside. But once again this hope would be frustrated by the slow pace of post-war reform.

The war brought about the evacuation of everyone in the Strait except the Islanders as the Japanese moved down through South East Asia and across the Pacific and threatened Australia by their invasion of Papua New Guinea. Islanders, as indigenous people, could not be conscripted, not being citizens. After some confusion as to what the role of Islanders was to be Islanders through a process of eliciting volunteers were brought together and trained by White officers on Thursday Island (Hall, 1997). Working alongside the White garrison, the hitherto isolated world of the Islands was opened up for the Islander soldiers. They gained the respect of their White officers for their discipline, their considerable skills and capacity for hard work, and their extensive local knowledge of sea, reefs, weather and seasons. They were not treated equally, either in terms of their pay, or in terms of the punishment metered out for breaches of discipline. Nevertheless, they formed friendships with White soldiers who were for the first time officially of equal rank, and gained much knowledge of the outside world (Hall, 1997). These men were generally older men, as younger men were sent to the centres of action. Sharp (1993) reports that, as unionists themselves, a number of them were supportive of Islander wishes to be free of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs (or DNA) and of their desire for equal pay. Islander soldiers went on strike for equal pay and conditions, and in 1944 their pay was raised to 2/3 of that of White soldiers. Whilst they might have to this point thought of themselves as slowly advancing under the policies of the Queensland government in a material sense at least, they discovered just how disadvantaged they were in relation to the rest of Australia. And astutely, some of their grievances over army pay and conditions were directed not at
the army but at the Queensland Department of Native Affairs who continued to control their money, although it was army pay and not in anyway derived from the marine economy. Their long held frustrations, resentments and grievances were affirmed by their White friends as a window on the wider world was held open.

The War introduced the Commonwealth government (the army) to Islanders as a higher authority than the Queensland government. It brought with it the public discourse of freedom, the principle that all soldiers were fighting for. In giving service and loyalty to King and country, the Islanders assumed they were fighting for their entitlement to be free, that is, that the idea of a 'free' world also included them. They returned to their home islands after the war with a renewed hope of 'freedom', now expressed in terms of 'citizen rights' (Sharp, 1993; Beckett, 1987). This renewal was strongly derived from a new view of themselves which emerged out of the development of new skills and knowledge, as well as an acknowledged respect and camaraderie and relationship with their fellow White soldiers. It gave them renewed confidence to pursue their freedom from the conditions of the Act.

However, after the war they went straight back to life under the Act, as the colonial order of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs reasserted its authority. But in their ongoing quest for freedom Islanders would eventually be aided by a changing world order and the emergence of the United Nations and its accompanying discourse of human rights. At the national level these discourses were expressed through post-war organisations, such as the Federal Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement, the Australian Communist Party, and the Australian Legion of Ex-servicemen and Women. At the international level such discourses brought increasing scrutiny of Australia's treatment of its indigenous people generally, eventually resulting in the direct involvement of the Commonwealth government in the indigenous affairs of the States.
Their quest for freedom would also be aided by the decline of the pearling industry. The regulation of Torres Strait Islanders had been closely tied to the regulation of their labour and marine resources. The demise of the industry, then, and the lack of alternate sources of revenue and labour would remove from the government their main justification for such comprehensive control over the personal affairs of Islanders. And with the increasing supplementation of dwindling wages by the extending of the arms of the welfare state, through federally funded and implemented schemes, the role and relative authority of the Queensland government would be further eroded though never withdrawn.

The Queensland government continued to administer Islander people and yielded no ground in the managing of their money. The marine economy, buoyed by an initial, though temporary, post-war prosperity, which, coupled with war time savings, provided for the rebuilding of neglected communities and fleets and allowed for increased personal spending. This activity initially delayed any overt expressions of discontent but with the decline of the pearling industry in the 1950s due to the advent of plastics, the administration came to recognise the inevitability of change. Whilst unemployment rose in the Torres Strait, the sugar industry and then the railways in Queensland were in great need of labour. The government responded to requests from eastern Islanders who were not involved with company boats to emigrate to the mainland. Here on the mainland Islanders were left to negotiate their labour in a free market and control their own earnings. Unless they got into trouble, they were no longer controlled by the government. Although confined to low wages by their lack of skills, they were generally paid the same as whites in these positions and could earn much more than they could in the Strait. Their children also had access to secondary schooling for the first time. The 'experiment' was successful with Islanders quickly gaining a reputation as 'good tropical workers' and sought after as such (Beckett, 1987).
Initially, the government with the co-operation of the island chairmen strictly controlled this migration. As the island population continued to grow and the marine industries continued to decline the government increasingly left the granting of permission to leave to the discretion of individual island Councils. Thus where men could be spared they were allowed to leave but on Badu, for example, where boats were still operating profitably and required crews, permission was rarely granted and those that chose to defy this were often exiled and denied permission to return. Thus although there was no exemption clause in the Torres Strait Islander Act, Islanders were increasingly free to leave the islands as their labour was no longer needed there, and as the means to support themselves was diminished.

For those remaining on the Islands the administration of their lives continued in the same manner. The 'protector' was now the 'manager' but he was still known personally and knew personally most Islander families. Though changes came to pass, such as voting rights in 1961 and 1965, and an increasing flow of information from the South, there was never again mass public dissent as had been expressed in the strikes of 1936 and during the war. But the disgruntlement of Islanders continued to be expressed amongst themselves as they struggled to develop a coherent voice with which to articulate their resentment at the slow pace with which social and political reforms continued to occur (Sharp, 1993).

As well, the paradoxes of earlier times continued, especially in the continuing paternalist relationship of the government with Islanders. Where Islander representation of issues relied on the ability of Councillors, the Councillors shared the bind of all Islanders, that of lack of education. But for the Councillors and indirectly thus, for all Islanders it became a double bind. Without the level of education or the English language with which to assess their situation in relation to the rest of Australia, the Councillors remained dependent to a large degree on the Minister and his agents, for their understanding of their situation and of the possibilities that were open to the
government. Thus those island Chairmen who were happiest with their lot were also those least likely to upset the government and more likely to persuade their communities that their faith should be with the government. They were also those that had the most to lose. Those with less reason for allegiance had virtually no alternative avenue through which to gain ground, except for the superficial flirting with non-Islander groups. Thus those communities, dissatisfied with their Chairmen could change the incumbent but without the unanimous support of other communities little pressure could be exerted. The one exception to this was the leverage Islanders were able to gain by playing off the federal and state governments against each other, such as occurred during the border issue in the 1970s. But this was over an issue that threatened to divide Torres Strait Islanders and leave them straddling the border of two different nations. In this case there was once again a clear position of unity (Beckett, 1987).

A clear discernible cleavage emerged in local politics along conservative.radical lines. Conservatives argued for caution, patience, co-operation and faith in the government; radicals continued to demand the end of the Act, further local control and in many cases self-government (Beckett, 1987).

This paradox was nowhere more evident than in the question of citizenship for Islanders in the 1950s and 60s. Despite the Islanders ongoing quest for freedom, their renewed call for citizen rights after the war was not encouraged by the government, despite support for it from other quarters. With citizenship, argued the government, came responsibility, and the government questioned whether Islanders were ready for the responsibility when their level of education was so low. Cautious Islanders deferred to this argument, many of them sensitive to their lack of education that had been one of their ongoing grievances with the government. However not all Islanders were satisfied with this rationalisation, as expressed in the following sentiment:
They say we can't get freedom till we better educated. But that same talk since before the war. When my father was councillor they ask more education. How long we been ask that thing and never got it yet? Torres Strait people never will get education while they under the Act. While we under the Act we'll always be down. (Beckett, 1987, p. 105)

Islander analysis continued to see the Act as the ongoing cause of their troubles but as regulation of personal liberties gradually relaxed, and conservative Councils seemed reconciled to the established order, other forces began to work (Beckett, 1987). In 1973 the newly formed Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs opened an office on Thursday Island and thus began a formal relationship with island Councils along the well oiled tracks put in place by the State government. As well, Islanders gained official representation in Canberra through the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee. With their monopoly on control now officially broken, the State nevertheless continued their administration. It was not until the 1980s that the issue of land control would be resolved in the form of the Deed of Grants in Trust legislation as a concession to self-management. Even then it would be a marked compromise on the part of Islanders and Murray Islanders would reject it altogether. Islanders would proceed down the path of autonomy and self-management, already delimited by the federal and state governments. And the structural mechanisms for achieving this would remain much the same as they had always been, via the long instituted local council system. The government would have power of veto over decisions and many Islanders would continue to feel frustrated by the rate of progress of reform.

Summary

The administration of Islanders, discussed in this Chapter, illustrates the material effects of the enactment of a particular relationship between Islanders and non-Islanders. The purpose of this Chapter has been to highlight the position of Islanders in this historical context. It has been an
attempt to show how the content of regulation of Islanders’ lives was constituted in their pre-figured relationship to non-Islanders. It has not been to dwell on the harshness of the regime or the events that describe it.

Rather, it has been to demonstrate that the possibilities for Islanders, who and what they could be, were constrained by the relationship that gave form and content to the external regulation of their lives by non-Islanders. Further, that Islanders’ regulation of themselves as they responded to this regime was both pre-conditioned by this relationship and by their own continuity with a different historical context. In this sense, the absence of the view of Islanders, as being in part, formed and remade by their responses to this intervention, in the theorising and understanding of who and what they are today, is a major and crucial omission. That is, the understanding of Islanders’ historical experience of this administrative regime does not belong only in the context of those times or in History. It informs and pre-conditions how Islanders’ understand and respond to current forms of intervention and it informs who and what they are today. The consideration of the Islander as subject in current forms of intervention cannot be adequately represented if it fails to include this element of historical experience in its representation of who and what Islanders are.
Chapter Five

EDUCATIONAL IN(TER)VENTION: FORMING NON-ISLANDER AGENDAS IN NEW TIMES

Tenebris Ad Luam - From Darkness to Light (The motto of Thursday Island State High School until 1985).

The Islander that was constructed and given representation in the historical texts was an invention constitutive of a pre-figured relationship to Western knowledge systems. Islanders emerged over the past Century only in relation to what non-Islander authors knew and understood of their own world. In not being able to understand the Islander in any other way, the full and politically active Islander who makes and remakes himself in relation to his own world and its order is lost, absent, if not submerged.

However, the various textual invention in itself changes little for Islanders. The Islanders are not transformed in text to be that constituted secondary Islander. The Islanders continue on their own historical path, making and remaking themselves in response to all circumstances. In that the daily circumstances of Islanders begin to involve the interventions of others it is then that the constitutive effects of the textual construction begin to emerge.

The invention of a particular relationship between Islanders and non-Islanders both rationalised and enabled the intervention of non-Islanders in the lives of Islanders in the ways that this historically occurred. As seen in previous Chapters, the missionaries could not have had grounds for re-organising the lives of Islanders in the way that they did, without first understanding Islanders in the way that they did. In their intervention, the
missionaries first constituted and then enacted a power/knowledge relationship based on our perceived state of development in comparison to non-Islanders. This enabled Islanders to be accepted and understood in a Christian/heathen relationship as 'noble savages' whose souls needed to be rescued from the depth of darkness and bought to the 'light'.

Likewise, the academic scholars constituted and enacted a power/knowledge relationship based on a comparison between civilised/uncivilised that enabled Islanders to be seen as legitimate objects of study and subjects of scientific disciplines. This enabled the Islanders to be understood by others as characterised by a 'savage mind' that explained the limited development of their primitive communities and way of life.

The administrative regimes constituted and enacted a power/knowledge relationship between 'them' and 'us' as one between parent and child. This enabled not just protection from abuse but the continuing denial of 'adult' rights in the form of personal and political freedom. The material effects of such subjection ensured the continuing dependency on the 'welfare' of governments even when political status was finally granted.

The historical and ongoing effects of constituting the Islander, as 'Other', in a 'them and us' relation is well understood in terms of Islander disadvantage in relation to other Australians. For twenty-five years government policy has attempted to redress the past practices of administrations that have been the source of material disadvantage.

But there have been other effects of this constitution that, I have argued, are not so well understood. This is an understanding that, in daily life, Islanders respond to the positioning effects of the knowledges and discourses that surround them and that inform and regulate their lives. Our historical experience is not just the linear unfolding of events that have given shape to the direction of our lives and cannot be given full representation as such. It is tied inextricably to our responses to the intervention in our lives that occurred
in these events. Given that this intervention has positioned us as something other than what we were, our responses have been invariably about defending our own view of ourselves and working to uphold ourselves in the face of often demeaning practices. This history has helped to make Islanders what we are today.

The history of our responses to the interventions in our lives is the history of Islander struggle. This history has not been lost. It is embedded in the consciousness and memory of Islanders. It is also evident in the historical records (e.g., Bleakley, 1961) and this history of Islander struggle has been recounted and given voice in more recent analyses of Islander history (e.g., Beckett, 1987; Sharp, 1993; Osborne, E., 1997).

However, the ways that the tensions between the representation of our experience and how we experience the ongoing effects of Western systems of knowledge and thought has not been clearly documented in terms of how we continue to respond to the discourses that surround and inform our daily lives. That is, it is one thing to document the historical struggle of Islanders as they responded to the interventions in their lives and to understand that struggle in hindsight from the standpoint of the Islanders. But it is another thing to understand how Islanders are positioned in the here and now, and how our responses to the discourses that inform our daily lives constrain or enable us as we seek to deal with the ongoing tensions that arise from our relationship to non-Islander standpoints.

It is easy to assume that because the relationship between Islanders and non-Islanders is currently understood as being premised on the notion of equality that the differentials of the relationship involve no ascription of value to one position over the other. The differential is presented as merely a 'description', in this case of 'cultural difference'. It is a 'fact' of the relationship. How can it be indicative of a particular power/knowledge relationship when both Islanders and non-Islanders agree to the terms of the relationship and when
the relationship does depict the ‘reality’ of the relationship? Islanders and non-Islanders have different languages, histories, cultural understandings, traditions and ways of viewing the world.

To understand how much more than mere ‘description’ the current understanding of the relationship between Islanders and non-Islanders as ‘culturally different’ is, it is helpful to understand the history of the current educational reform that is informed by this understanding of Islanders.

The Historical Context of Current Educational Reform

In the 1970s education in the Torres Strait finally became a focus for reform. This reform emerged from a context of general political change that had been slowly creeping forward since the end of the Second World War. This change brought some political reform in the 1960s, accelerating in the 1970s into a process that has brought Islanders in the 1990s closer to their goal of regional autonomy for the Torres Strait.

Briefly, this changed path for Islanders commenced in the late 1940s when the Queensland government allowed for the first time, restricted migration to the mainland. In 1962, Islanders were allowed to vote in Federal elections and, in 1964, in State elections. In 1967, a national referendum gave the Commonwealth the power to enact special laws in reference to the affairs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. However, it was not until the election of the Whitlam Labour Government in 1972, when this government assumed moral responsibility for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and began to assert its primacy in the role, that significant changes and reform began to occur (Attwood, Marcus, Edwards, & Schilling, 1997). Perhaps the most overriding change in this period was the creation of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs which embarked on an energetic program of expenditure that led to policies and programs in areas of concern, such as law, health, housing, employment and economic development, and education.
These changes in the 1970s followed distinctive but overlapping eras in the policies that drove the management of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Initially there was in Queensland, a period of extermination between 1840 and 1897. This was not a legally sanctioned policy but little attempt was made to exact penalties against those guilty of killing Aborigines or Islanders. In 1897, under the *Aboriginal Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act 1897-1901*, the policy came to be one of segregation and exclusion and it lasted until 1965. During this period of segregation, there had always existed a practice of ‘merging’ Aboriginal people of mixed Aboriginal and European descent into the European community, generally to relieve the State of their upkeep and to provide cheap labour. However in 1939, when two separate Acts were legislated for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the principle of assimilation began to be ushered in, though it was not officially announced until 1956 and not legislated as policy until 1965 in the *Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Act 1965* (NISATSICFF Report). This principle did not apply to Islanders at all until the late 1940s, and then continued to be subject to considerable restriction until 1965. The principle of assimilation co-existed with the policy of exclusion, accommodating the desire of the government on the one hand to remove the aboriginal ‘problem’ from visibility and on the other to avoid the expense of maintaining those Aborigines who were capable of working and living in White society.

This period reflected the popular ‘common-sense’ thinking about ‘natives’ at the time. Segregation satisfied both those humanitarians who wanted Aborigines and Islanders ‘protected’ from the degradation of living on the fringe of White society and those who simply wanted them removed from visibility. Assimilation rested on the idea that ‘inferior’ cultural and tribal ways needed to be eliminated and Aborigines’ identity assimilated into the framework of the majority, that is European society, if Aborigines were to make progress. In Queensland, this policy was not based on the interest, ‘progress’ or ‘welfare’ of Aborigines as often claimed. Its basis was largely economic. Aborigines on settlements cost the taxpayer money, so
assimilation into White society was an answer (Kidd, 1997). For Aborigines it was enacted more by design and less by provision, being implemented largely by forcing people off the reserves and removing children from their parents, an arbitrary practice.

Although officially the policy of assimilation held sway in Queensland from 1965 on and prior to that in practice, intellectuals and concerned citizens had already moved on long before this. Out of an understanding of cultural relativism as a way of viewing cultural difference came the idea of integration, a policy already attempted in India by Nehru in the 1950s. Integration aimed to join or integrate different communities without completely submerging their identities. This principle recognised that there was much in Aboriginal and Islander culture, society, language and art, that was valuable, even superior to modern civilisation, that should not be destroyed. Advocates of this approach in Queensland, also argued that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders could “advance to full civilisation” (Campbell et al, 1958, p. 51) whilst retaining aspects of their own cultures.

The goal of integration which was being advocated and circulated, in the 1950s even before its predecessor the goal of assimilation was officially enacted in Queensland government policy, is an example of the overlaying of different intellectual schemas in relation to thinking about both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their problems. It also illustrates the deployment of them in contested ways in different sites, and the blurring of them that occurred at the nexus of policy and practice. It is also illustrative of the languishing of governments to do anything beyond ‘managing’ Islanders.

So, despite the official policy of assimilation, the burgeoning of research into Torres Strait education in the 1970s and increasingly in the 1980s would largely reflect the principles of integration, and reject those of assimilation and would exert its influence in the practice of schooling institutions. The official policy of assimilation in Queensland would be ongoing despite the integration
model, despite the emergence of multiculturalism as a model for the wider integration of immigrant cultures into Australian society in the 1980s, and despite the increased influence of the Commonwealth government into policy and practice with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

The initiatives, then, of Whitlam's federal government in the 1970s were the implementation of Labor Party policy and were a significant departure from the policy of previous federal Coalition governments, including post-referendum governments, as well as from the policies of State governments. Such policy itself had emerged from concerns about the status and conditions of Aborigines in Australia articulated by such groups as the Federal Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement (FCCATS!). (Torres Strait Islanders were included in this category but were much less visible in the Australian community, and were more an addend to the category of Aborigines and an afterthought in policy). This concern was driven from a general recognition of past injustice and the appalling conditions that many Aborigines endured and was to a large degree framed by two sets of intellectual understandings. One was a recognition that the 'native' population was 'human' and thus entitled to all the rights that that entailed. The second was that although the 'native' was no longer viewed, as 'beneath' the European, he was nevertheless 'different'. The first understanding was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which Australia was a signatory and was required to uphold, the second was derived from the concept of cultural relativism, which belonged to the discipline of anthropology. These understandings propelled change away from assimilation and along a path toward integration and then to self-determination, as the push for recognition of land rights developed momentum throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The Commonwealth government prioritised education as a means to improving the conditions and future of both Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Whilst the Queensland government continued to run the schools
in the Torres Strait, Commonwealth funds opened up new possibilities for Torres Strait Islanders. In brief, it provided previously denied education beyond Year 10, by enabling Islander students to travel to the mainland to receive their final years of education, at Commonwealth expense, until comparable schooling levels were provided in the Torres Strait. This option remains available for all Islander students who live on Islands that offer no secondary schooling. Special provisions, funding, and programs for Islanders to attend tertiary institutions were also initiated by the Commonwealth. Tied capital grants to the State government led to the upgrading of primary and secondary schools in the Torres Strait. It was not until 1985 that the Queensland Education Department took over all the Outer Island schools that had previously been run by the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement (and its predecessors like the DNA).

The reform program did not remain restricted to capital projects and wider access to schooling for Torres Strait Islanders. It also generated interest in the difficulties that students encountered in the schooling process itself. The enormous discrepancies in the achievement rates and educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students compared to other groups of the Australian population was a matter of both concern and interest for Aborigines and Islanders themselves, and for governments, educators and academics.

**Reviewing the Current Educational Research**

The influence of the changing ways of viewing the position of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in relation to the rest of Australians' discussed briefly above, is evident not just in the changing priorities for funding and infrastructure in Islander education. It is also evident in the research on Torres Strait Islander education. The schema of cultural relativism, which emerged into principles of integration and then self-determination, is the fundamental basis of much of the educational research.
Educational research in Torres Strait education was largely a reaction to the view that schooling, as experienced by Islanders prior to commencement of reform, was recognised as a 'colonial' or 'Western' institution that was monocultural, assimilatory and incongruent to Islander culture, ways of knowing, and values. Curriculum, likewise monocultural, was in general seen as often irrelevant and as inhibiting the capacity to augment conceptual development of Islander children. Pedagogical practices were recognised as culturally inappropriate and incongruent with Islander learning styles and cultural ways. The use of English as the language of instruction was also viewed as assimilatory and was both incognisant of the linguistic background of Islander children and of the role that language played in the cognitive and intellectual development of children.

This research on Torres Strait education over the last twenty-five years constitutes a small corpus. It emerged across the context of change discussed above and out of an historical background of neglect, exclusion and segregation, discussed in the previous chapter. It falls into three main categories: history, language and culture.

These categories quite obviously, reflect the ways that Islanders' educational problems have been schematised. Firstly, recognition that there has historically been non-Islander forms of education in Islander lifeworlds and that considerable neglect and shortfalls occurred in early forms of education. This aspect of the research literature provides a background context that situates the current low levels of educational outcomes as historically based, to some extent, and some explanations of that. Secondly, the recognition that the non-Islander education process is embedded in a different culture, uses different knowledges, different ways of thinking, expresses and upholds different values and that because this is dissonant with Torres Strait ways of knowing, values and culture, many problems are experienced by students in schools. Thirdly, the recognition that central to the Islanders difficulties in achieving equal educational outcomes is the language situation of Islander
students and the implications of that for teaching policy, programs and practice in the form of appropriate language curricula and pedagogy.

In all three categories, researchers have attempted to give representation to the Islanders' experiences with non-Islanders forms of education. The influence of cultural relativism as a way of conceptualising cultural difference and viewing the educational predicament of Islanders, and the principles of integration that flow from that, are evident in these types of representations. Representation has been given primarily by dichotomising the differences between Islanders and non-Islander forms of formal education for the purpose of developing a clearer picture from which to find ways to achieve more equitable outcomes for Islander students in relation to the non-Islander system of education.

It must be argued that all this research has been valuable, legitimate, and has added to understanding of the Islander position in relation to mainstream educational processes. The intention of any critique is not to diminish the work or the content of research. In their description and analyses, researchers have added much to the understanding of those involved in the delivery of improved education processes. In all that they do these researchers attempt to understand the complexities of the Islanders' position at the interface. The intention is to point to how the underlying relation engendered in the interpretive framework through which Islander educational problems are viewed, both carry over historical practices from earlier contexts, and continue to limit the ways we view the Islanders' educational position. It is also to show how in failing to theorise the Islander's historical position at the interface, as an element in the way they deal with tensions in the current lifeworld, a valuable part of the educational puzzle is missed.

In the accounts of earlier educational history (Finch, 1975; Langbridge, 1977), representations of Islanders' experience appears via the description of non-Islander practices, that is, the forms of education that missionaries and
government instituted and the effects of these on the educational outcomes of Islanders. Thus education is historicised in terms of its impact on Islanders and related through the actions of missionaries and governments who intervened.

A later history (Williamson, 1990), addressed the issue of representing Islanders in history from the perspective of non-Islanders. Williamson grappled with the very issue of contention in this thesis, that is, how to represent the complexity, the dynamics at the interface that shaped Islander historical experience. He tried to go beyond the revisionist approach of historians of Aboriginal history (e.g. Reynolds, Loos) which he argued still interpreted material from the Aboriginal side by the same criteria used to interpret that from the outside. He thus wrote a history of the schooling of Torres Strait Islanders that attempted to capture the dynamic interrelationships of factors that shaped both schooling practices and their outcomes. In this he recognised and charted the complexities of negotiations between the 'coloniser and the colonised' and in the process ascribed agency to the Islanders, rather than positing them as passive recipients of an imposed system. For example, Williamson was able to show that whilst Islanders called for 'proper' education, that this pursuit had minimal impact on outcomes. But on the other hand, whilst these expectations were unmet (Williamson, 1987a, 1987b, 1990), schooling as an agent of enculturation of Islanders into the colonial order was likewise not altogether effective. This type of analysis represents a shift in the documenting of histories of Islanders. It recognises that Islanders were actors in their own lives and that their actions and responses helped shape the outcomes of colonial interventions into their lifeworlds. It was also a shift that recognised that Islanders have a history beyond the accounts of colonial events.

Williamson's interpretative framework rested on assessing data by using internal referents rather than external referents as other histories had. In this way he claimed, theory emerged from the data - grounded theory - rather than
pre-conditioned. His primary referents were not predetermined, and the analyses emerged from the data and was "adjusted to the judgement and creativity of the researcher" (1997, p. 412) However, Williamson, like others before him, continues to give primacy to the State in his analysis, and fails to give primacy to Islander contributions (Nakata, 1997). The State is almost excused, given the constraints of distance, and policy and education elsewhere at the time, which it operated under; and Islanders are people who had "misplaced hopes".

Williamson's analysis illustrates both a departure from earlier attempts at documenting the history of education in the Torres Strait and a continuity with the epistemological constraints under which these histories are produced. There is a continued absence of the Islanders' political position, of a view of Islanders as politically interested and motivated in their negotiations. Williamson is right that it does need to be written that Islanders and non-Islanders are part of the process of schooling. But the actors involved must be considered as having a historical position, a political disposition that provides the foundations to what they say (in the data collection process), an epistemological locatedness that conditions what is possible by them. If not, the data is easily construed and recounts end up being read as an apology for the State and Islander responses read as being 'misplaced' and as part of the problem.

In this way, Williamson's history, although an attempt to do otherwise, continues to fail to adequately represent the experiences of Islanders in education because it fails to theorise the interface between Islanders and non-Islanders in a way that can account for the historical trajectory of Islanders. That is, a trajectory that was continuous with a view of themselves as political subjects trying to equalise their political position in relation to non-Islanders. This is not to denounce or singularly criticise Williamson's account, which is a shift forward from others. It is merely an example which demonstrates again
the constraints under which researchers operate and which go on to condition how both non-Islanders and Islanders read history.

Another example of the way these constraints work can be found in the surveys by Orr and Williamson (1973) and Boxall and Duncan (1979) of Islander educational experience. Both briefs required an investigation into existing conditions and organisation of the schooling sectors in the Torres Strait and recommendations for reforms to produce more equitable outcomes for Islanders. The dichotomy between Islanders and non-Islander forms of education appeared in these surveys via the sites of investigation chosen by the researchers. These included the learner and the curriculum, the different language situations, secondary schooling as a way into the wider world, teachers, programs, existing conditions and administration. These surveys recommended proposals for action as did Finch's (1977) historical account.

Orr and Williamson (1973) captured the harsh reality of educating Torres Strait Islander children in State schools wherein an almost unmodified Queensland curriculum was being delivered to children in a language that was not their own. In addition, it was delivered by either white teachers who had little understanding of Islander norms, values or language or by Islanders teachers with inadequate levels of English and teacher education. In a position paper, Williamson (1974) outlined the 'incongruence' for the Islander child as a learner in a school system based on 'white middle-class Australia' and its values. He argued that policy and reform makers needed to pursue 'different' educational goals, and that the difficulties experienced by the Islander children in current schooling situations would not be overcome unless there was "intensive research into the distinctive learning needs and motivations of these children" (1974, p. 60). Boxall and Duncan's (1979) survey was more extensive but included similar recommendations. These included a case for further research into bilingual education, Islander learning styles, and the developmental patterns of Islander children that would enable the authorities to develop programs that would reflect both the children's
local experience whilst at the same time opening up the world beyond the Islands. They also encouraged more community involvement and direction in programs to encourage cultural identity. Both these surveys indicated the need for upgrading of the training of Islander teachers.

These researchers, in establishing a position on the historical educational position of Islanders, drew on wider intellectual schemas for understanding Islander-Australian relations, and contextualised the educational process within that understanding, recognising the assimilatory nature of extant education processes and the implications of that for successful outcomes. They then recontextualised education in line with more recent schemas for understanding of Islander-Australian relations, that recognised Islanders as equal but different and the implications of this for schooling. These understandings then provided new parameters for viewing and discussing the Torres Strait educational context. These parameters reflected the principle of integration that allowed for the encouragement and maintenance of the Islanders' cultural heritage, whilst still working toward improved outcomes in the formal schooling system.

These parameters are also evident in the research on Torres Strait Islander education of the late 1970s and the 1980s (e.g., Osborne, 1979, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989c; Osborne & Bamford, 1987; Osborne & Coombs, 1987, 1988; Osborne & Dawes, 1989; Osborne & Francis, 1987; Osborne & Henderson, 1985, 1986; Osborne & Sellars, 1987). This research centred around the cultural mismatch between Islander learners and schooling practice and on the language situation of Islanders. It also attended to the education of teachers for the Torres Strait.

The schematising of 'difference' via cultural relativism is most evident, obviously, in the research that deals with the cultural mismatch between Islander culture and the non-Islander culture as expressed in the schooling process. Barry Osborne, the major contributor to this category, operated
from a theoretical position that rejected assimilation and integration policies as 'absorptionist' (Osborne, 1979) because he considered them as confining schooling practices within the dominant ideals and values which were ultimately very constraining for Islanders. His research reframed the interface position as a site of cross-cultural relations and opened up a field of productive research that investigated the cross-cultural dynamics of the interface as it was manifested in educational practice.

This line of research focused on ways to disentangle the Islander from the effects of earlier missionary and colonial educational projects that had neglected the cultural and linguistic diversity of Islander learners. Rather than attempt to equalise Islanders' relation with other Australians by imposing 'sameness' via the assimilation process, they offer and embrace 'difference'. Primacy in research then has to be given to the mismatch between universal representations of schooling and universal representations of the Islander who is different (e.g., Osborne & Coombs, 1982a, 1982b). These understandings of difference were derived from other disciplines, for example, anthropology (e.g., Osborne, 1986) and psychology (e.g., Osborne, 1982) and other domains, for example North American Indian (e.g., Osborne, 1989c; Osborne 1991). These understandings provide comparisons of cross-cultural experience and/or the findings of research which inform to some extent the representation of Islanders as they come to be the object of more recent research in education.

Osborne's body of research flowed from his earlier experiences as a teacher in the Torres Strait and his Master's thesis (1979), which was an argument for new strategies to prepare teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. His position was aligned with emerging multicultural models, and proposed that teachers be sensitised and informed by the knowledge of differences in Islander and Aboriginal cultures and languages. If they were also prepared with the right strategies, attitudes, high expectations and warmth, success would be achieved in both the affective and academic domains. He described
both socio-cultural and cognitive characteristics to heighten the awareness of
the dilemma of Islanders participating in the State's educational institutions.

Osborne and his colleagues did extensive research throughout the 1980s. His
body of research reflects a development of both his theoretical and
methodological positions and also reflects his involvement, as an educator, in
the preparation of both non-Islander and Islander teachers for the Torres
Strait region.

For example, following his thesis, Osborne's early research (Osborne, 1982;
Osborne & Coombs, 1982b) attempted to find out more about Islander
children's cultural characteristics. This early work was in the cognitive field
and sought to determine if Islander students were field-dependent or
independent and to use these findings to outline a variety of appropriate
teaching strategies. By 1986, Osborne was shifting away from the
cognitive/psychological domain into the ethnographic mode and this
crossover is seen in his work on Torres Strait Islander styles of
communication and learning. The section on learning styles is presented
under some familiar psychological headings: "sense modalities, conceptual
tempo, responsive mode, lifestyles in relation to learning, psychological
differentations" (1986, p. 7). The communication section in contrast is
presented under general headings to depict styles and forms of verbal and
non-verbal interactions between student and teacher and between student and
student: "oracy versus literacy, mocking and teasing, oral responses to
questions, things white teachers do which annoy Islander students, keeping
appointments and punctuality” (1986, p. 6).

By 1988, Osborne had begun to explore what teachers do in cross-cultural
classrooms as a way to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural encounters
in classrooms. This research (Osborne and Coombs, 1987; Osborne, 1988;
Osborne, 1989a; Osborne and Dawes, 1989) signalled a shift in his focus
from in-student’ explanations to ‘in-setting’ explanations of cross-cultural
dynamics. In moving to ethnographic methods he argued that they had a lot more to offer because they invoked important considerations of the social dynamics of 'what is happening' in classrooms.

This work also contributed to research into pre-service and in-service of teachers for the Torres Strait. His aim was to collect data to build a model to assist non-Islander teachers in cross-cultural situations (Osborne, 1989a). This followed a long list of papers that focussed on teacher preparation (Osborne, 1979; Osborne and Henderson, 1985, 1986; Henderson and Osborne, 1987, 1989; Osborne and Bamford, 1987; Osborne and Francis, 1987; Osborne and Sellars, 1987; Osborne, 1989b & 1989c). These papers also reflect his shift in theory and method over the period. In the 1985, 1986, and 1987 papers there was an emphasis on observing, documenting, and analysing real mismatches between Islander student-teacher and non-Islander teachers in classroom where practicums were undertaken. The perceptions of both teachers and Islander students were collected in order to improve cross-cultural understanding and communication in this particular situation.

This research extended to consider the difficulties experienced in mainland classrooms by Islander teachers who were viewed as highly successful teachers in their Torres Strait classrooms. Investigations (Osborne & Sellars, 1987; Osborne & Bamford, 1987; Osborne & Francis, 1987) were undertaken to identify potential mismatches between Islander teaching styles and teaching styles in non-Islanders settings. The purpose was to provide valuable information for pre-service and in-service education for both non-Islander teachers in the Torres Strait, where much could be learnt from the strategies of Islander teachers to relate local culture to the curriculum. Conversely its aim was to assist Islander teachers on practice in mainland schools to understand other teaching styles. And, as well to inform non-Islander teacher educators of elements in their training that were contradictory to the teaching styles that Islanders were used to.
Osborne (1989a, 1989b, 1989c) then moved to more sophisticated explanations of cross-cultural teaching encounters. In particular he sought to establish a theoretical position for a culturally responsive pedagogy (1989a), and took on the issue of power/differentials with outsider/insider relationships (1989b), and argued that the basis for such a position should arise out of an understanding of “fused bicultural people” (1989c, p. 16). In the first of these papers he drew comparisons between Islander and Zuni classroom studies and argued that although all ethnographies were context specific, commonalities could be drawn to ascertain whether they could provide guidance for policy-makers and practitioners interested in developing culturally responsive pedagogy. In the second paper he argued that socio-political considerations emerging from status-relationships between cultures “should be built into cultural-difference explanations of school failure and [be built into arguments for] achieving increased cultural responsiveness” (1989b, pp. 212-13). In the last of this series, Osborne (1989c) describes other complexities of classroom teaching in cross-cultural environments.

The argument here is that culturally responsive teaching practices are not simply borne out of an understanding of ethnic differences but out of an understanding of people who operate across different cultures. He contends that a culturally congruent strategy of teaching on its own engages in “ethnic modes” that do not recognise the world that bicultural people live in. In contrast to this, he introduces his notion of a “fused bicultural” position to bring into light, the interactive nature of bicultural people negotiating lifestyles at a point of difference between ethnic and Western ones. (In this he is attempting to articulate the very element of experience identified in this thesis as being crucial to understanding the complexity of the Islanders’ position at the interface).

From this Osborne argues for “culturally congruent teaching” (p. 17) strategies that lead to reinforcing fused bicultural people, and then proceeds to clarify what is needed by way of good teachers. He does this by
problematising issues that relate to simplistic notions of ethnicity - for instance, “native” background or being “black”. That is, in choosing teachers who would be best at the task of cross-cultural teaching situations, it is quite possible to argue that an “Anglo” who has been in the community for a while and can speak the language of the community may have advantages over an ethnic member of the community who lives in the “big city”. Osborne’s position here is not simply critique - his is one based on imperatives. When scholastic performances are still - low preferences must go to those most effective as teachers and educators regardless of their ethnicity.

Although Osborne has been the major contributor, there has been other research that generally supports his approach. Some work (Castley, 1988; Castley and Osborne, 1988) has focussed on community involvement and understanding community expectations as a way to reduce the gap between the school and the community. Some (Lominga, 1987; Kale, 1988; Lui, Clark & Watkins, 1988) has emphasised the importance of providing positive learning environments that are sensitive to the children’s cultural background.

A paper by a High School Principal (Topping, 1987) confronted the various positions on culturally different students, the priorities for traditional knowledges to be included in the curriculum, and the importance of English. He was critical of the simplistic understanding of Islanders’ position between two cultures as either in the traditional camp or the assimilated one. He argued that there is room for schools to synthesise values and knowledges from both cultures that will maximise choices for Islanders and enable Islanders to define their own identity. Whilst this is clearly the integration model, there is no clear model suggested for reforming the curricula to achieve such a position. The school is left to support the status quo: include cultural knowledge in the form of culture and language studies, and improve the teaching of English through the importation of Western models such as ESL and English Language Across the Curriculum.
Contributions by Islanders are interesting. Two of these (Gisu, 1985; Passi, 1986) make cases for the preservation of traditional knowledges and a role for them in the schooling process. By contrast an earlier interview, (Lui, 1974) argued that culture should only be used in schools as a way of involving parents and that the main purpose of formal schooling was to gain the English language and communication skills. These are two alternative positions held by Islanders in the ongoing debate amongst Islanders themselves about how to organise the schooling system to best respond to Islander needs. It is interesting to consider the effects of the increasing circulation of the cultural discourse on education, in the positions in these papers, but it is also speculative.

This type of research illustrates that Islanders' problems are viewed as the result of cultural mismatch and dissonance, and as a result of the imposition of the Western mono-cultural, monolingual system of education. A summary of Osborne's contribution to the field illustrates a number of significant points. Most interesting is the development of his theoretical and methodological position. Theoretically he grappled with conceptualising the interface as the site of intersection of two different domains, the Islander domain and the non-Islander domain. All his work sought to uncover the dynamics of cross-cultural relations in this intersection. Not until his 1989 papers does his theorising move closer to reflect more adequately the complexities of the interface. However, he fails to resolve the dichotomy of Islander/non-Islander relations even as his notion of “fused bi-culturality” attempts to conceptualise the interface, not as a site of a simple intersection of Islander and non-Islander, but as a more complex site that is conditioned by intervention from the outside.

Osborne also made a methodological shift in that he moved from ‘in-student’ explanations of cultural difference using a psychological model, to ‘in-setting’ explanations that relied on ethnography. All his work shows his struggle to provide fuller understandings of the dynamics that interfered in the education
process. Characteristic of his work was the purpose of providing a basis for practical reform in the education of Torres Strait Islanders and with providing practical strategies for teachers. His most notable contribution, apart from improving pre-service and in-service of teachers, was his influence in developing a language with which to discuss many of the issues in Torres Strait education. Much of the language in Osborne’s work is the language in circulation in educational circles in the Torres Strait. This includes terms such as ‘cultural sensitivity’, ‘culturally sensitive pedagogy’, ‘culturally relevant curriculum’, ‘culturally appropriate strategies’ ‘warm demanders’ and ‘learning styles’.

The schematising of ‘difference’ via cultural relativism and the principles of integration is also evident in the language research. This research emphasises the need to value and understand the linguistic diversity of Islander students. The dominant position (Orr, 1977, 1979, 1982; Cunnington, 1984; Kale 1987) argues that differences between the language of children entering school and the language of instruction account for some of the learning difficulties of Islander students. Whilst initially arguing against the exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction (Orr, 1977), Orr (1979) went on to theorise the dichotomy between Islanders and non-Islanders via the cultural-pluralism model and argued that this model was more appropriate because it prioritised the use of local languages as the medium of instruction and thus maintains ethnic identity. However, he further argued that because local languages do not provide access to the Western economy and its technologies a bilingual model was needed to allow for maintenance of identity and access to the Western economy. He proposed a program that began with literacy in the vernacular (either a traditional or a Creole language), followed by oracy and then literacy in English.

Others (Shnukal, 1984a, 1984b; Lominga, 1987; McDonald, 1988) recognise that Islander learners operate between different linguistic domains in cognitive and pedagogical terms and that the current programs in schools
failed to reflect this reality. They emphasised that language problems of Islander children were not due to cognitive or language deficiency but rather were a ‘transference phenomena’ (Shnukal, 1984b, p. 18) - a linguistic phenomena that occurs when second language learners correspond between language one and language two. The importance of valuing linguistic competencies of Islander students was highlighted. This research led to more acceptance of the validity of a role for Torres Strait Creole in the education process.

Three Islanders have contributed to discussions on the language situation of Islanders. Ober (1980) considered that linguists had become preoccupied with basic description and recording of languages and argued the need for ‘maintenance’ bilingual programs that included study in the vernacular in schools and for Islanders to play a crucial role in the process of delivery of such programs.

Gisu (1987) accepted arguments for the child’s first language to be used as the language of instruction in schools but raised concerns about which language to use. This question reflected the diversity of languages in the Torres Strait and was taken up by Nakata (1991b). Given that there were two traditional languages in use across the Strait and the Torres Strait Creole language, which one should be taken as the first language in any bilingual program?

This language research is notable for having failed to bring any resolution to the language dilemma that Islanders face in schooling. Despite strong advocacy by researchers for bilingual programs it is a proposition yet to be considered seriously by the Education Department. English remains the official language of instruction. The influence of this research as ‘expert’ knowledge, coupled with Islanders strong desire to maintain their own distinctive languages, has presented a model to Islanders that promises the delivery of English literacy whilst maintaining Islander languages. As well, it
presents a model that will help overcome the learning difficulties of students who must access knowledge in their second language.

Across the research, in all three categories, there is an engagement with a succession of opposing positions between school and community, curriculum and learner, teacher and student, the language of the student and the language of the institution, traditional knowledge and Western knowledge etc. Researchers have attempted to find ways to resolve the oppositions inherent in the Islander/non-Islander dichotomy. They have largely and consistently followed an integration model for viewing the improvement of Islander/non-Islander relations. In the education setting this involves ways of providing education in non-Islander knowledges whilst at the same time upholding and valuing Islander knowledges, values and languages. The research has focussed on overcoming the mismatch in these elements by developing culturally sensitive teaching strategies, by including, as much as possible, local knowledge to make learning more relevant to the Islander context and by advocating bilingual programs of language teaching.

This academic research has not dictated education policy. But it conditions Islander educational practice in a number of ways. Firstly, by emphasising the importance of particular issues in the pre-service and in-service of teachers, it infiltrates the practice of teachers as they seek to find ways to produce successful outcomes for Islander students. Secondly, it provides a knowledge base for departmental officers and thus influences their ways of understanding problems of Islander students. Thirdly, often in its process, it engages and consults with Islanders and in this way it provides for Islanders both the structure and the language for Islanders to understand their difficulties and participate in discussions and negotiations to resolve them. Thus it produces a community of speakers who circulate the language and transform the discourse of research into one of common and popular understanding. This operates between Islander parents, Islander teachers, Islander leaders, non-Islander teachers, curriculum writers, policy makers, and
academics across a number of disciplines - history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and education. The effect of this circulation has been a consolidation rather than an expansion, of the parameters available for discussion of the difficulties of Islanders as they experience non-Islander forms of education.

Thus the cultural paradigm which has emerged out of a changing historical and political context for understanding Islander/Australian relations has also become the primary means for viewing the schooling difficulties of Islanders. Researchers have developed the way that Islanders' difficulties with curriculum, pedagogy, language, and teacher preparation issues are viewed, and have largely constructed the language for talking about the issues. These positions are echoed and incorporated by Islanders in local education policy ( Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Committee, 1985), and in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Statement (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1989). The Queensland Department of Education, in its undertaking to adopt and support local policy, officially recognises the cultural difference of Islanders and the implications of this in delivering education to Torres Strait Islanders. Thus, despite resource constraints which limits commitment to rigorous programs of reform, the Department acknowledges and where possible works to incorporate understandings of the cultural difference of Islanders.

However, it is not simply the production of research based on this cultural agenda that continues to limit the ways that education difficulties can be discussed. To argue that alone would deny the changes and improvements that have so far occurred as result of the efforts of researchers and would overly implicate the effects of research. It is, however, the foundational principle on which the cultural paradigm rests that continues to limit the possibilities for understanding ways to improve education for Islanders. It is the simplistic division that situates 'us' in relation to 'them'. That is, the cultural paradigm is but another way to articulate the same division that
constituted our position at the interface historically and is now expressed through our cultural difference. It is in the bind that is the power in knowledge, that serves to reify old relations and that conditions future possibilities. This research and its effects is but an exemplar of how underlying epistemological schemas are taken up, given form, condition the possibilities, and produce effects in Islander lifeworlds.

Some Concluding Points about Educational Futures

It can be argued that in the main this research is struggling to articulate the difficulties, the complexities, the dynamics that Islanders' experience at the intersection of two incongruent domains. In this, researchers accurately describe many valid elements of Islander educational experience. There is no argument here.

The argument does not even entirely lie with the interpretive framework that gives form to the relationship between Islanders and non-Islanders. This is the schema of cultural difference. Cultural difference is a valid and accurate way of giving representation to this aspect of this relationship. The argument is that in the process of deploying this representational schema something else that is crucial to understanding the Islander position is submerged.

In trying to understand the complexities of the Islander position by deploying a simplified framework through which to view these complexities, Islanders are once again disconnected from their own experiential history. As well, researchers suspend their own connections to the very analyses that describe their own historical relationships with Islanders. The whole context in which Islander education is discussed is depoliticised, it is devoid of the politics of the players - Islanders, researchers and knowledge. The political position of Islanders in relation to practice is attached to the historical context and left behind. The current political position of Islanders engendered in this power/knowledge relationship is displaced to a different context - perhaps hung on those who hold different ideological standpoints, perhaps attributed
to the formal political process itself, perhaps only an outcome of continuing material disadvantage - but never acknowledged in the politics of Islander representation.

However, the power/knowledge relationships engendered historically between Islanders and non-Islanders continues to emerge from this schema through its positioning effects on Islanders. There are real effects which become evident in the way that educational issues are discussed and debated in the Torres Strait context. The oversimplification of the Islanders educational position emerges in the oppositions expressed in such relational terms as Islander/Mainstream; Traditional/Western; etc. This polarises debate within the educational and Torres Strait communities reifying the extreme positions as irreconcilable tensions rather than developing and extending knowledge and understanding in order to deal with the tensions. This is not an intention of the framing of the public discourse but it is the effect.

For example, proposals for bilingual models of language development are put forward as an argument to maintain Islander languages and overcome problems of transition between the first language and the language of instruction. These proposals were founded on the rejection of monolingual and monocultural approaches as being assimilatory in intent and causing learning problems in effect. This proposal for bilingualism is meaningful to Islanders because they are united in their desire to maintain their languages and they have long called for improved education in English. On the other hand, the many Islanders who continue to call for improved English literacy (to learn how the bastards continue to rob them) (Nakata, 1994) have difficulty discussing the issue outside of the bilingual model. The call for an examination of the methods of teaching English literacy skills is continually called back to its referent model namely, bilingualism. Those who do not adhere to the parameters for discussing language issues by seeking to explore other possibilities run the risk of being accused of not upholding Islander
traditions. In this way the issues of the roles of traditional language and English language in the education of Islanders are polarised in terms of two opposing principles – assimilation on the one hand, and cultural maintenance on the other. This is an effect of the first principles of a research paradigm based on cultural difference.

In the absence of any implementation of bilingual models in schools, but in the presence of new models for understanding the language difficulties of Islanders in schools, English only instruction proceeds unreformed. The new schema emerges in schools, on the one hand, in the form of separate, ad hoc, poorly planned and developed traditional language programs. On the other hand, English instruction pedagogy accommodates the need for improved English literacy skills for Islanders by the incorporation of non-Islander models developed for other contexts, such as English as Second Language programs and English Language Across the Curriculum strategies. In this way, the whole language dilemma is by-passed. There is no systematic plan to maintain Islander languages; there is no specific plan to deal with the problems of moving between languages, which Islanders do on a daily basis. There is no real reform in methods of teaching English literacy that is grounded in the language context of Islanders.

Two important issues are sidelined via the polarisation of discussions of the language issue. The complexity of the language situation of Islanders is still not confronted in any rigorous way in terms of devising a practical plan for language teaching. This is simply that there are four main languages in use in the Torres Strait and their dialects. These comprise the two traditional languages, Torres Strait Creole and English. This makes it difficult to implement a uniform bilingual model across the Strait and a practical nightmare to accommodate the four languages (three of which are oral languages) in school programs. Secondly, Islanders continue to strongly emphasise that low levels of English literacy maintain their historical disadvantage by limiting upward mobility in the education process and the
workplace (Nakata, Jensen, Nakata, 1994). The result is the continuation of management and supervision by non-Islanders and a continued reliance on the advice and understandings of non-Islanders. In not confronting this reality in Islander lifeworlds, the urgency for improved methods for teaching English literacies and knowledges has languished. One effect of the failure to confront these realities is the continued failure to achieve equal educational outcomes with other Australians and the inequities that that perpetuates.

But an equally damaging effect is the way in which the cultural paradigm works in silencing Islander viewpoints of their experience and viewing their problems via non-Islander understandings. Islanders themselves get caught up in the popular simplistic oppositions of assimilation/monolingual versus self-preservation/bilingual. Continued calls to prioritise the teaching of English literacies in schools is drowned in anxiety about losing language and identity and the teaching of local languages and the acceptance of Creole in schools leads to demands for more focus on English. The two positions operate as if they are mutually exclusive and other ways of approaching the problem are left unexplored except in the individual classrooms of teachers who constantly seek ways of overcoming the learning difficulties of their students which emerge from the language situation in the Torres Strait. And, as well, except in the continued practice of Islanders to respond to the ongoing positioning effects of these ways of knowing Islanders.

In these ways, current educational research on Islanders not directly but by default, has reified the simplistic oppositions of 'them' and 'us' in commonsense understandings of Islander problems. In this it conditions and limits the possibilities for other understandings and positions Islanders in its discourse in a limiting way. It exemplifies a mode of intervening that appropriates the Islander people into an ontological world that only exists in relation to non-Islanders – the history of the Islander people as constituted in the Western order of things is indeed one that is inherently different from non-Islanders and literally different to Islanders.
In the current process of understanding Islander situations in schooling, the Islander as subject is only theorised in a pre-figured way - as culturally different. The history of the formation of the Islander subject in Western knowledges and understanding, which provided the basis of their 'management' and much of their experience, fails to appear in the theorising of the Islander in schooling. It is as if Islander historical experience has only incurred cultural loss. What of political loss? What is the subjection of a whole society of people if it is not the loss of political autonomy? Are our experiences to be trivialised by being further denied, further refused.

What is submerged, and from the Islander point of view denied, is the ongoing presence of Islanders as participants in their own history. Islanders responded to intervention in what is now a long practiced process of dealing with the tensions inherent in their position at the intersections of different domains. They made and remade themselves in this position, they deployed certain strategies to uphold their own interests, to continually affirm their presence, to provide continuity with their own historical past. They transformed their customs, many have transplanted their customs. Despite all the loss, they remain the cultural entity expressed in the current schema of cultural difference.

But understandings of the Islander subject are severely limited by this schema. For Islanders are also other things. They are Australian. They live under and are regulated by Australian law. They deal with all the problems of modern life. They seek employment, they struggle to pay mortgages, they worry about health, they provide for their children. They enjoy recreation, they belong to clubs, they raise money, and they care for the aged. In all of these daily activities they contend with the tensions that form between their own historical experience and the discourses of Western domains that have historically positioned them as secondary.
In this process, their experience is one of always reading the world that reads them as Other. It is a position derived from the continual defence of what one is, against what one gauges one to be by the treatment of others and in the discourses of others. It is the uptake of a position in response to being positioned by others. It cannot be represented in any simplified form. Our responses have been both enabling and constraining. They have involved varying responses to varying circumstances. Effects have sometimes been negative and sometimes positive. There is no prescription for response.

But if we could theorise this historical experience into a representation of us as active and political, through our ongoing tension with the Western knowledges and discourses that position us in daily life, we may shift our perspective to gain an alternative view of the Islander student as learner. This is a shift that necessitates recognition of the Islander student as belonging to a lifeworld that has emerged from and been constituted by the inscription of Islanders into a particular historical relation with non-Islanders.

This ‘re-invention’ of the Islander student opens up new possibilities for intervention in the educational process. We are able to theorise a student who requires a particular sort of education in order to understand the world in which he/she lives. Not only is there a shift in the broad philosophy of that education but as well there is a shift in the outcomes of that education. From this we have an intervention process that forms around the needs of its client, out of the historical and educational context, in the same way as it always has, but for different ends. The end is not to construct a curriculum to balance the tensions inherent in the cultural interface. Rather the curriculum and pedagogy builds around the necessity to recognise the relationship between its client the Islander student and the Western forms of knowledge production as a way of understanding their world and dealing with the tensions of the interface. Instead of upholding a schema which works to hold Islanders to a secondary construction of ‘Other’, there emerge possibilities for Islanders to respond to the interventions in their lives in ways that will
validate their historical quest both for continuity with their past and for control of their futures without the unresolved tensions of the current debate.

Through such understandings, intervention can be seen for what it is - well-intentioned, often positive, conducive to change. But an understanding of the power/knowledge effects which constrain Islander responses and work to maintain the particular relationship engendered, if understood, allows for better understandings of Islander positions. This should provide the conditions for broader, less restrictive discussions of the relevant issues and ultimately less refusal of Islanders.

Islanders will always be in a particular relationship with non-Islanders. Like people everywhere, they will not always be in control of what frames the way their position is understood. But with an understanding of how they are positioned in this process, they can then position themselves more effectively, and build their own discourses to articulate their standpoint and thus condition the possibilities for their future in a way that is clearly understood by others.
In the Preface to this thesis, I referred to my growing awareness of the uneasy relationship between my lived experience and that ascribed to me by the texts produced about Islanders, that had emerged during my work experience and in my undergraduate studies.

In this thesis I have investigated this relationship. For me, this has been much more than an intellectual exercise. It has been a personal journey that has brought me to a place where I not only have a better understanding of my position and the position of Islanders, but a position where I feel much more secure about myself, in the personal sense.

It may be arrogant to say that I believe that few non-indigenous Australians understand the degree to which the current generations of indigenous Australians feel the burden and pain of the past. But I do not think it arrogant to say that I believe few understand the depth of psychological torment and fragility that many individual indigenous Australians live with on a daily basis.

I cannot overemphasise the relief I have experienced at the personal level through the understanding I have gained at the intellectual level about the historical and ongoing tensions that Islanders have been dealing with in their daily lives since Contact. In this sense the path to understanding has been a journey of the mind, both intellectually and psychologically. The history of indigenous/white relations in this country is not just one of material effects. It screws people's minds. It screwed mine. It engendered tensions that at times were so contradictory they were just too hard to resolve and almost impossible to bear.

The understanding I have gained through this study of how the historical Islander/non-Islander relationship has been engendered and brought to bear
on the understanding of and management of Islander lives and carried through to the current theorisation of our problems, has released me personally from a life of endless confusion and frustration in two major ways.

It has provided me with enough historical and epistemological knowledge to understand fully that my forbears and I were not responsible for our predicament. I am not too proud to say that somewhere deep inside the psyche has been a persistent dark thought that whispers that something of what we were must have warranted this historical treatment. Despite, the fact, that like most Islanders, I have never rationally believed this and was raised to both defend and project my presence, our historical subjection must have internalised itself in some deep recess of my mind.

From the reading of the historical records from our standpoint, Torres Strait Islanders emerge in my view as an amazing group of people – intelligent, knowledgeable, and gracious and consistent under intolerable pressure, deserving of the respect they have always sought. More than anything, we have responded in ways that have enabled us to remain our own people.

This study has also provided me with enough understanding of the forms and processes of intervention to understand that these interventions cannot be construed as the deeds of ‘evil’ white men. To understand this in the historical context helps me to channel my anger in more constructive ways. There is no sense in focussing anger at individuals, past or present, whose actions are generally well-intentioned, however much it feels justified. It makes no sense to cleave the white world up into those that are good and those that are bad. It makes more sense to understand the constraints under which current discourses on Islanders operate, discourses that we also contribute to, participate in and circulate, and to respond to and ask questions of these. In that way, processes for understanding different positions are brought to the fore. By the same token this means that the forms and processes of historical intervention are not exonerated by tying them to their
historical context and viewing them as belonging to the past. Their forms are clearly implicated in current contexts and thus remain to be acknowledged and dealt with.

As an outcome of this study, I am able to see more clearly how we are all caught up and in constant tension. The task is not to pursue some ideal equilibrium but to articulate what informs the tensions. In this way, I have been able to separate the personal from the political for long enough to rise above personal anger and deal with issues more intellectually. This is a significant personal breakthrough because like so many indigenous people I experience the personal as political and the political as personal. Thus in all my personal interactions, for example, the loss of an argument has often meant either the loss of self, or the loss of a relationship. Either way it has been destructive.

But I have not been able to get to this position personally without having understood just how I have been positioned historically and how I am still positioned on a daily basis by others and the discourses they form around me, particularly in terms of how they argue against my position or defend their own.

It is a relief to be able to say: “I know who the missionaries were, why they came, and why they did not go home.” The tensions I have experienced between the religious message and the actions of missionaries and current Church hierarchy is understood, able to be articulated and explains a lot to me personally about my own responses. I have a position on them, and I understand better my position in relation to them. I can articulate my feelings, I can feel less troubled about my relationship with God.

It is a relief to be able to read the Haddon collection without the unease that I previously had. I wanted to have the historical knowledge but I didn’t want to read about myself as a ‘savage’, it seemed such a betrayal of my ancestors. It helps to know that these scientists struggled to find ways to conclude we
were at a lower stage of mental and social development when some of their
data even indicated the reverse. But it is not the glimpses of instances of
superiority that boost my sense of self. It’s that I can read and understand
what they were doing and how they arrived at their conclusions. It is to know
that they had limits to their understanding just as I have.

Likewise an understanding of how our ‘Protection’ was grounded in the
construction and enactment of a parent/child relationships explains much to
me about our current difficulties in making the transition to self-management.
It also explains why my family’s decisions and struggle were not enough to
overcome the constraints of their regulation. It confirms that my
grandfather’s response was intelligent, independent and an expression of the
way he confronted the tensions of his relationship to the regulatory and
economic order. It does not mean that he betrayed his traditions and his
heritage which has sometimes been implied to me by people who have
wanted to suggest that I’m not really an Islander because of my family history.

In all this understanding of what others did to Islanders historically, I have a
better understanding of who and what I am today.

I know I am a good Islander parent even when I don’t teach my own children
to dance and sing because I know that the guilt I have been made to feel
about not teaching my children to behave as ‘cultural’ Islanders is a product
of others’ representations about what Islanders are and should be.

I know that the way that I have personally dealt with the Islander/non-
Islander tensions in my children’s lives has resulted in their success at school,
even though I have been seen to neglect their cultural education. I know that
by succeeding in the State finals of the National History Challenge by
researching the topic “Torres Strait Islanders at War” my 14-year-old
daughter has just as significantly given valid expression to her heritage as she
would through any cultural activity.
I know that my children's insertion into the Islander/non-Islander relationship and the tensions therein has exposed them to different tensions from the ones I have experienced, just as mine have been different from those that my grandfather had to contend with. Like my grandfather I know that there are risks to be taken, and positive and negative effects in all my decisions.

But I know that I would rather deal with the negative effects of my own considered responses to the tensions and the complexities inherent in my children's position than allow them to blindly subscribe to an identity that is itself the positive effect of a negative and secondary construction of them in History as Other.

I feel an enormous weight lifted from me by understanding all this. I feel that I understand enough of my history to understand myself and move on. I feel that my task as an Islander parent is to ensure my children develop the skills necessary to live independently and in control of their own trajectory, mindful of the position of others. This makes me an Islander, this hold me to a tradition. This is my heritage.