

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From: Julie Peters****Dated: 22 November 2024****Submission:**

I feel very distressed about the relationship between first nations peoples and the colonising peoples. I have deeply held values on social justice for all people; story, culture, and protection of cousin earth; lands, skys, waters, plants and animals. I believe it reflects very poorly on Australia the extensive entrenched disadvantage, poor health, poverty, and lack of opportunity suffered by first nations peoples when compared to the unearned and undeserved privilege enjoyed by many white individuals. undeserved privilege enjoyed by many white individuals.

I pass as white but I'm very aware that my father and many of his ancestors didn't. Even my mother described my father as swarthy. My mother has told me that when she was heavily pregnant with me, she suddenly became very 'worried' that I would be black, 'a throwback.' I'm not sure if she understood that a 'throwback' would require her as well as my father having coloured ancestors. Turns out my skin colour is about halfway between my parents.

My father was unofficially adopted, in 1919, so we're not sure of his heritage. But he certainly had 'cousins' who were first nations and his stepmother, Etherwarra Foy, was from northern Tasmania. She was a formidable matriarch, who everyone called Aunt/auntie. I've also been asked if my maternal grandfather was 'aboriginal'.

All I could say was that I didn't know. The official story was that he was English, Scottish, Irish. I can trace some of his white ancestors back to arriving in Australia in 1798 as missionaries. That's five generations for me. At five generations you have 62 ancestors, but I can only figure out who 16 of those 62 people are. I have no idea who the other 46 are.

Considering our family's time here it's conceivable we have unknow first nations ancestors. I strongly believe extensive truth telling and attempting to eliminate all discrimination and disadvantage is just and will lift us culturally. I have no idea how to achieve this. But I do think the first step is truth telling. I'm also very aware many white Australians believe they deserve the privilege they have had all their lives.

At one extreme they believe they defeated first nations peoples and deserve the spoils of war. I have heard some people declare "this is and always will be aboriginal land". But I have seen minimal attempt to change the status quo. They all expect to be able to continue to live on these ancient lands. This statement of ownership should imply colonising people and people of mixed race should be very keen to enter treaties and reparation discussions as well as ensuring first nations peoples can step up the Hierarchy of Becoming: from having the basic necessities, to physical, social and psychological health, to having genuine agency, to being able to make their lives works of art. Treaties also need to include health for lands, waters, sky and all living creatures.

Truth telling needs to include acknowledgement of millennia of environmentally sustainable coexistence with cousin earth, the cruel history of massacres, displacement, rape, destruction coexistence with cousin earth, the cruel history of massacres, displacement, rape, destruction of culture, the destruction of carefully curated lands and fisheries, the English-language renaming of place. I believe extensive and deep truth telling is the moral thing to do and is the first step to allow us to change as nations and to allow all to be full peers. This will allow us to face our everchanging risks to climate, lands and culture to the greatest advantage to all.

END OF SUBMISSION