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Stuart Macintyre

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Stuart Macintyre has been the Ernest Scott Professor of History at the University of Melbourne since 1990 and is a former president of the Australian Historical Association. His books include *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4* (1986), *A Colonial Liberalism* (1991), *A History for a Nation* (1994) and *The History Wars* (2003). He is the President of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

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For my daughters
MARY AND JESSIE
this is also their history

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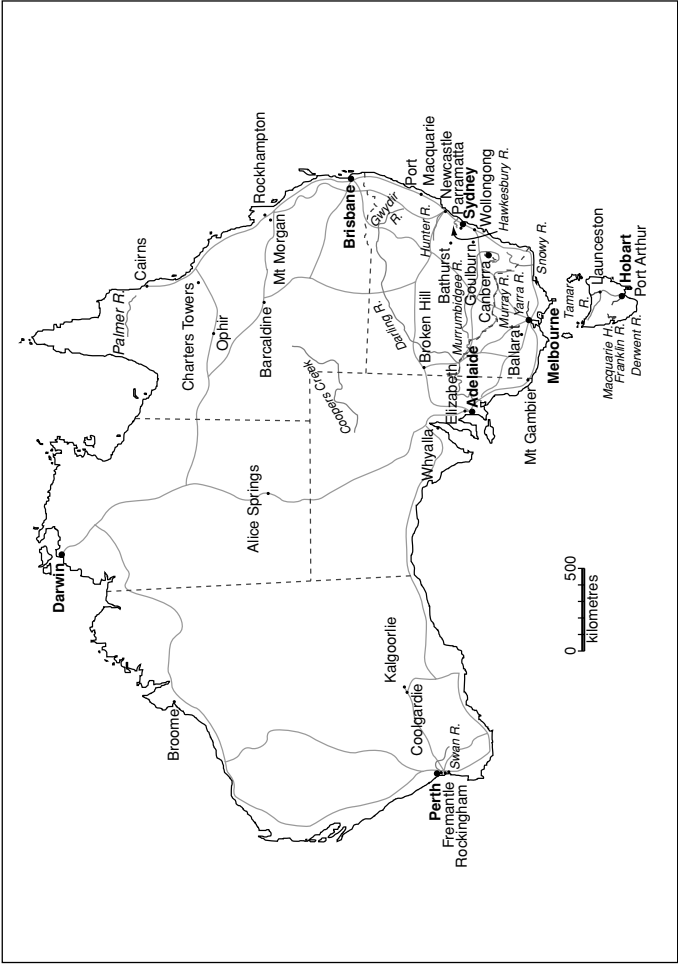
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A concise national history written for an international readership presents an opportunity and a challenge. The local reader looks for the familiar landmarks. The overseas reader, on the other hand, has little familiarity with them. A narrative history composed of the standard fare is unlikely to explain Australia to those who do not bring some prior knowledge to it; a roll-call of names will be of little assistance to those who have not encountered them before. I have endeavoured to assume little, and to paint a broad-brush picture in which the detail is subordinated to the characteristic features.

That in itself is hazardous. Specialists will scrutinise the text for inclusion of their concerns. Those who feel strongly about particular causes will take the amount of attention accorded them as an index of sympathies. Such weighing of proportions is inevitable and I am aware that my emphases are indeed indicative of my own understanding and inclinations. My purpose, however, has been to present a narrative that explains why its component parts have a place in the national story, and how they continue to generate discussion. I have tried to set Australian history within the larger history of which it forms a part, and to draw out comparisons with other parts of the world. These intentions are meant to serve the overseas reader who might have seen an Australian film or glimpsed the natural history of this country on television but finds it infrequently reported in current affairs. In writing it I have in mind the visitor who encounters the landscape and local usages but finds their connecting logic difficult to decipher. I hope that it serves to connect what they see and hear with a more systematic account of how it came to be.

I dedicated the first edition of the book to my two daughters, born in England, raised in Australia, and now divided between Melbourne and Vancouver, who too often had their father play the pedagogue and all along were instructing him in their interests and concerns. Both then and subsequently I gained a better understanding of this exchange, as well as subjects beyond Australian history, from my wife, Martha.

Stuart Macintyre
September 2008



Map 1.1 Australia: the main rivers, cities and towns