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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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994

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[More information](#)

For my daughters
MARY AND JESSIE
this is also their history

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
1 Beginnings	1
2 Newcomers, c. 1600–1792	16
3 Coercion, 1793–1821	35
4 Emancipation, 1822–1850	53
5 In thrall to progress, 1851–1888	86
6 National reconstruction, 1889–1913	122
7 Sacrifice, 1914–1945	156
8 Golden age, 1946–1974	200
9 Reinventing Australia, 1975–2008	243
10 What next?	302
<i>Sources of quotations</i>	309
<i>Guide to further reading</i>	326
<i>Index</i>	339

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

2.1	Aborigines in canoes	<i>page</i> 24
2.2	An Aboriginal woman	25
2.3	The ascension of Captain Cook	26
3.1	Two Aboriginal warriors	40
3.2	Rum Rebellion	45
3.3	Bungaree	50
4.1	Violence on the frontier	63
4.2	Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines	64
4.3	George Robinson's Conciliation of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land	66
4.4	Aborigines in Sydney, 1839	68
4.5	Colonial redemption	75
4.6	Colonial Arcady	77
5.1	A group of diggers	88
5.2	Aboriginal ceremony	107
5.3	Shearers	109
5.4	News from home	113
5.5	The Exhibition building, Melbourne, 1880	119
6.1	The Maritime Strike	124
6.2	Henry Lawson	127
6.3	Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin	137
6.4	Native symbols	148
7.1	Billy Hughes	170
7.2	An improvised dwelling in the Depression	180

Illustrations xi

7.3 Aboriginal Day of Mourning, 1938	188
7.4 Douglas MacArthur and John Curtin	194
7.5 Kokoda Track	195
8.1 Bonegilla migrant reception centre, 1949	204
8.2 Ben Chifley, Clement Attlee and H. V. Evatt	206
8.3 Robert Menzies pays tribute to Queen Elizabeth	213
8.4 Evdokia Petrova in Soviet custody, 1954	218
8.5 The triumph of the supermarket	222
8.6 Sydney teenagers, 1956	225
8.7 Aboriginal children, Northern Territory	228
8.8 The surf lifesaver	230
8.9 Lyndon Baines Johnson and Harold Holt	232
9.1 Malcolm Fraser	244
9.2 Bob Hawke	247
9.3 Paul Keating	260
9.4 The maritime dispute	266
9.5 Children overboard	278
9.6 Save the Franklin River	285
9.7 Qantas in Aboriginal livery	288
9.8 John Howard	294

MAPS

1.1 Australia: the main rivers, cities and towns	xiv
1.2 Sunda and Sahul	7
1.3 Aboriginal Australia, showing location of groups	12
2.1 Australia and the region	22
4.1 Land exploration	56
5.1 Boundaries of states and territories	96

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[More information](#)

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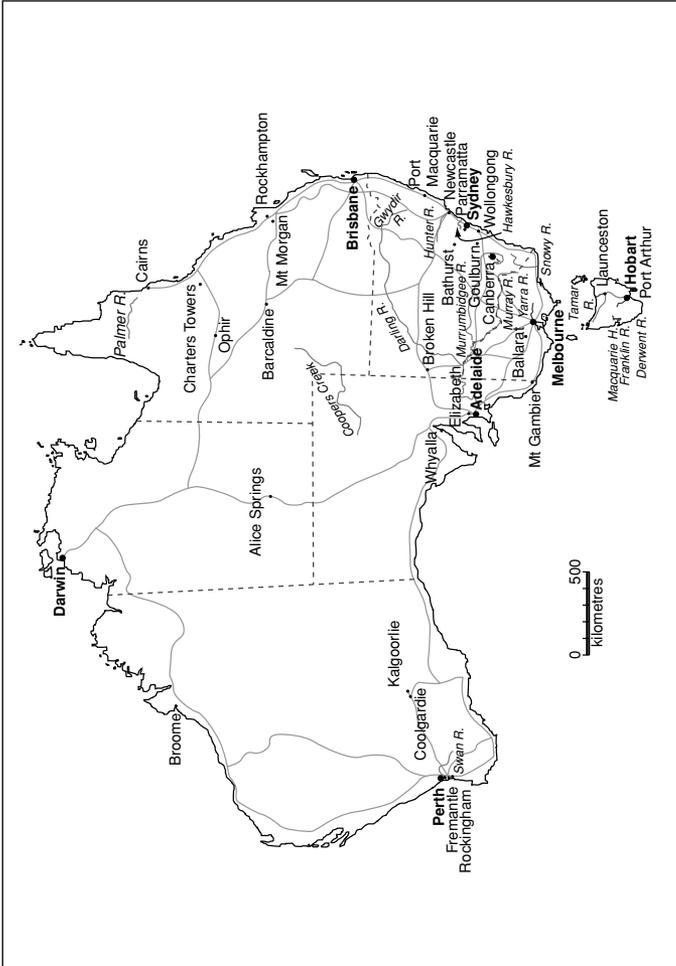
xiii

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