

## CAMBRIDGE CONCISE HISTORIES

*A Concise History of Australia**Fifth Edition*

Stuart Macintyre, one of Australia's most highly regarded historians, revisits *A Concise History of Australia* to provoke readers to reconsider Australia's past and its relationship to the present. Integrating new scholarship with the historical record, the fifth edition of *A Concise History of Australia* brings together the long narrative of Australia's First Nations' peoples; the arrival of Europeans and the era of colonies, convicts, gold and free settlers; the foundation of a nation state; and the social, cultural, political and economic developments that created a modern Australia.

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, Macintyre's Australia remains one of achievements and failures. So too the future possibilities are deeply rooted in the country's past endeavours. *A Concise History of Australia* is an invitation to examine this past.

**Stuart Macintyre** is an Emeritus Laureate Professor of the University of Melbourne. He served as president of the Australian Historical Association and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, and is currently chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria and president of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. Among the forty books he has written or edited are *The Oxford History of Australia*, Volume 4 (1986), *The History Wars* (2003), *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (2015) and the *Cambridge History of Australia* (2013) with Alison Bashford.

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-72848-5 — A Concise History of Australia  
Stuart Macintyre  
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# *A Concise History of Australia*

*Fifth Edition*

STUART MACINTYRE



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
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 Stuart Macintyre  
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[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108728485](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108728485)

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 Fifth edition © Cambridge University Press 2020

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First published 1999  
 Second edition 2004  
 Third edition 2009  
 Fourth edition 2016  
 Fifth edition 2020

Cover designed by Denise Lane, Sardine Design

Typeset by SPi Global

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd, June 2020

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia*

ISBN 978-1-108-72848-5 Paperback

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*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are respectfully advised that images of deceased persons appear in this book and may cause distress.*

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*For my daughters Mary and Jessie, their partners Phi and Aaron,  
and their children Xuan, Tai, Rory and Hamish.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is part of a series of national histories published for an international readership, and successive editions have been translated into a number of foreign languages. The opportunity to explain Australia and its history to non-Australians was compelling, though when the book first appeared I became aware of the contrasting expectations of readers. The Australian reader looks for familiar events and actors for both orientation and reassurance that this is indeed an account of their past. The overseas reader, on the other hand, has little familiarity with such local lore, and a narrative composed of it is unlikely to assist those who do not hold any prior knowledge. In subsequent revisions I have therefore provided more of these signposts while endeavouring to paint a broad-brush picture in which the detail is subordinated to the distinctive features.

In keeping with the design of the series, I also dispensed originally with textual references and indicated the sources of quotations at the end of the volume. As the list of such sources grew in subsequent editions, it became more difficult for the reader to identify the relevant citation, so in this edition I have keyed it to the text with a pertinent phrase. Full documentation of the literature on which I have drawn would burden what is, by its nature, an overview; I have therefore restricted the references to the sources of quotations and some works that elucidate specific points of interest.

A similar quandary arises from the different uses of this book. Those using it as a textbook to teach Australian history expect it to encompass the principal fields of research, while other readers who

*Acknowledgements*

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feel strongly about particular causes take the amount of attention given to 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. The purpose, however, is to provide 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 in the context of global and regional history and to draw out comparisons with other parts of the world. This approach is intended to serve the overseas reader who perhaps has a mental image of the Australian landscape, its flora and fauna, but is dependent on a media coverage that sheds little light on the patterns of national life. I also have in mind the visitor who encounters the local practices but finds their logic difficult to follow. I hope the book assists these readers to understand what they see and hear by providing an account of how it came to be.

My predecessor as professor of history at the University of Melbourne wrote 100 years ago in his *Short History of Australia* that ‘historical events, like mountain ranges, can best be surveyed as a whole by an observer who is placed at a good distance from them’. In preparing this edition I have taken the opportunity to look again at events that have now receded from the foreground and bring greater clarity into the account of contemporary developments.

A concise history is necessarily dependent on a very large body of historical scholarship, and in earlier editions I acknowledged the assistance of many friends and colleagues. I have now accumulated so many layers of guidance that it would be invidious to attempt to list all my obligations. As before, I have learned from those I have taught here and overseas, as well as the postgraduates with whom I work, not least for sharing the questions that exercise them and the approaches to Australian history that catch their imagination.

I dedicated the first edition of the book to my two daughters, born in England, raised in Australia, who too often had their father play the pedagogue and all along were instructing him in their interests and concerns. So too their partners and children give me additional insights into the interplay of then and now.

Stuart Macintyre  
September 2019