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# Pinkwashing the Past: Gay Rights, Military History and the Sidelining of Protest in Australia

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## Abstract

This paper explores the implications of the militarisation of Australian history and the dilemmas of increasing public support for same-sex marriage in Australia at a time of renewed assaults on Indigenous rights, austerity measures and the silencing of dissent. The paper analyses the celebratory rhetoric which increasingly typifies both marriage equality campaigns and the commemoration of Australia's First World War or 'Anzac' history in popular media and public debate. Against the confluence between ongoing debates on same-sex marriage and the 'Anzac myth', I highlight four key challenges: the silencing of dissent; forgetting of the Frontier Wars; untold stories of civil society achievements; and the normalising of same-sex rights. I argue that professed support for a liberal version of 'gay rights' exemplified by same-sex marriage, set against a militarized version of Australian history, glosses over past and ongoing injustices. A militarized version of history underpins a nationalism that misrepresents credit for advances in rights recognition, sidelining public representations of Indigenous sovereignties and the contributions of civil society, protest and social justice campaigning to the recognition and maintenance of civil and political rights. As a result, the transformative claims of Land Rights and Treaty, critiques of war, and queer politics, are contained.

## Key words

Same-sex marriage; protest; nationalism; militarisation

## Resumen

Este artículo explora las implicaciones de la militarización de la historia de Australia y los dilemas del creciente apoyo público al matrimonio entre parejas del mismo sexo en Australia, en una época de ataques renovados a los derechos de los indígenas, medidas de austeridad y silenciamiento de las discrepancias. El artículo analiza la retórica de celebración en los medios populares y el debate público que cada vez más acompaña tanto las campañas de igualdad matrimonial como la conmemoración de la historia de Australia en la primera guerra mundial o "Anzac". En contra de la confluencia entre los debates que se están desarrollando sobre el

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matrimonio entre parejas del mismo sexo y el “mito Anzac”, se destacan cuatro retos clave: el silenciamiento de las discrepancias, el olvido de las Guerras de Frontera; las historias no contadas sobre los logros de la sociedad civil; y la normalización de los derechos de las parejas del mismo sexo. Se defiende que el supuesto apoyo a una versión liberal de los “derechos homosexuales” ejemplificado por el matrimonio entre parejas del mismo sexo, contrapuesto con una versión militarizada de la historia de Australia, encubre injusticias pasadas y actuales. Una versión militarizada de la historia respalda un nacionalismo que tergiversa el crédito para avanzar en el reconocimiento de derechos, marginando las representaciones públicas de la soberanía de los indígenas y las contribuciones de la sociedad civil, las protestas y campañas de protesta en favor de la justicia social para que se reconozcan y mantengan los derechos civiles y políticos. De esta forma se frenan las demandas transformadoras de los derechos y tratados de tierra, las críticas a la guerra y las políticas *queer*.

**Palabras clave**

Matrimonio entre parejas del mismo sexo; protestas; nacionalismo; militarización

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## 1. Introduction

When Australia's most successful far-right politician of recent years, Pauline Hanson, announced her return to politics in 2013, newspapers reported that Hanson 'clashed' with commercial radio personalities Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O in her first interview. The former One Nation leader 'invoked Australia's World War One soldiers in her argument against same-sex marriage and urged listeners to 'think of the children', according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. When radio host Jackie O criticised Hanson's views as 'old fashioned', Ms Hanson replied: 'People have to understand what happened in the past to discover this land; the Diggers that fought for us'. In reply, Kyle Sandilands asked, 'Didn't they fight for us to be free – so that we can all have gay sex?' and further suggested that Hanson was 'treating people like second class citizens; if they want to get married, let them get married'.

That this exchange was considered newsworthy itself says something about the recent success of campaigns for marriage equality in Australia. If Kyle Sandilands, one of the highest rating radio personalities in the country, can advocate for same-sex marriage on commercial radio, then claims for 'gay marriage' have well and truly reached the pop culture mainstream. This could be seen as a significant victory for gay rights campaigns, and for progressive politics more generally. In this paper I take a different tack, highlighting instead the rewriting of history and the implications of this celebration of same-sex rights for Indigenous sovereignties, queer politics and possibilities for dissent.

As in the United States and many European countries, campaigns for same-sex marriage rights have emerged as a focal point for law reform and for civil rights campaigning in Australia in recent years. Competing positions on marriage equality were seen as one vital factor in the latest ousting of a Prime Minister in September 2015 (ABC 2015), and support for same-sex marriage often functions as a 'litmus test' for progressive politics in media and public debate (Dreher forthcoming). Since the 1980s, successive Australian governments have cultivated a focus on Australia's military history as the source of national values and foundational achievements (Lake and Reynolds 2010). I argue that professed support for a liberal version of 'gay rights' exemplified by same-sex marriage, and the celebration of a militarized version of Australian history, glosses over ongoing injustices and sidelines dissent. Sandilands' comments 'pinkwash' the past, where pinkwashing refers to the tendency to 'coopt' queer politics (Schulman 2011) or to tout a nation's 'gay-friendliness' as a marker of modernity, civilization and desirable progress (Puar 2007). The suggestion that the diggers fought for gay rights normalises war rather than civil society protest and democratic action as the path to rights and freedoms. This rewriting of Australian history shapes understandings of Indigenous sovereignties, rights and discriminations, protest and civil society in the context of austerity measures and neoliberal politics.

In the following section, I focus on Kyle Sandilands to unpack the contradictions inherent in his advocacy of both same-sex marriage rights and Australia's achievements in war. These contradictions include Sandiland's reputation for misogyny, the persistence of homophobia and the militarization of Australia's history. While Sandiland's argument linking the diggers and marriage equality is unusual in media and public debate, the triumphant accounts of both Australian history and of same-sex marriage as a marker of inevitable progress are prominent in public culture (Lake and Reynolds 2010, Dreher forthcoming). In the following sections I analyse the wider implications of the celebratory rhetoric on marriage equality and the commemoration of Australia's First World War or 'Anzac' history brought together in Sandiland's comments. The argument is developed over four sections. In 'silencing dissent' I discuss the ways in which protests against rape in war and criticisms of military action have been constrained as the Anzac story takes centre stage in public representations of Australian identity and history. The

following section identifies the forgetting of the Frontier Wars as central to celebrations of 'digger nationalism'. Having traced the consequences of the Anzac myth in silencing dissent and denying Indigenous sovereignties, the section on 'marginalised and untold stories' highlights Indigenous claims to Land Rights and the role of civil society and protest in securing rights recognition – stories which are rarely heard in media and public debate. The following section focuses on same-sex marriage debates to analyse the ways in which support for equal rights can resonate with discourses which contain the transformative potential of queer politics and instead can serve nationalist agendas.

Overall, I argue that that the celebration of Anzac and certain conspicuous markers of 'gay friendliness' – such as support for same-sex marriage – can function to gloss over injustices and sideline dissent at a time of continuing assaults on Indigenous sovereignties and austerity cuts to welfare benefits and public services. While the Anzac myth and the campaign for marriage equality are rarely linked explicitly as in Kyle Sandiland's exchange with Pauline Hanson, both feature regularly and prominently in Australian media and public debate. Both have significant consequences for the ways in which history and the recognition of rights can be represented, and both narrow the possibilities for protest, dissent and transformative politics.

Before analysing the wider resonances of the on-air exchange between Pauline Hanson and Kyle Sandilands, I will briefly introduce the key players and events referred to. Kyle Sandilands is a high profile TV and radio personality or 'shock jock', having appeared as a judge or host on *Australian Idol*, *Big Brother*, *Australia's Got Talent* and *The X Factor*. Since 2005 Sandilands has co-hosted the commercial breakfast radio program *The Kyle and Jackie O Show* with Jacqueline Henderson, originally on 2Day FM, moving to KIIS 106.5FM in 2014. The program regularly tops the FM breakfast radio ratings, and has won numerous awards at the Australian Commercial Radio Awards.

Pauline Hanson is a former parliamentarian who entered the Australian parliament as an Independent at the 1996 election which brought the conservative Prime Minister John Howard to power after 13 years of Labour Party government. Hanson attracted high levels of media coverage for her controversial views, including calls to abolish Native Title, an end to multiculturalism and zero net immigration. Her maiden speech included claims that Australia was in danger of being 'swamped by Asians', criticism of Aboriginal land rights and benefits, and called for abolition of the elected representative body The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Despite persistent prompts, Prime Minister Howard refused to condemn Ms Hanson's views, instead stating that her opinions were shared by many Australians, arguing that his election had lifted the 'pall of political correctness' and implementing several of her policy proposals, including the abolition of ATSIC in 2004.

By referring to 'the Diggers', Hanson and Sandilands invoke events and characters which have come to dominate official representations of Australian history and values: the Anzacs or diggers and the Gallipolli landing of April 1915. Diggers is a widely-used vernacular term for Australian and New Zealand soldiers, particularly those who served in the first World War. Diggers is used almost synonymously with the official term Anzac, which stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Anzac Day on April 25 has been revived as a major national celebration. On 25 April 1915 members of the Australian Imperial Force landed on the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey with troops from New Zealand, Britain and France. After heavy losses on both sides, Australian troops were evacuated in December of the same year. Often described as 'the birth of the nation', the Australian War Memorial sums up the Anzac legend: 'The spirit of Anzac, with its human qualities of courage, mateship, and sacrifice, continues to have meaning and relevance for our sense of national identity'. The official investment in the legend of Anzac is such that companies


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wanting to use the word must obtain permission from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). In April 2015 the DVA asked supermarket giant Woolworths to remove an online Anzac commemoration campaign as the company did not have permission under the *Protection of Word 'Anzac' Act* (Cth 1920) (ABC 2015). The Returned and Services League or RSL is a support organisation for men and women who have served or are currently serving in the Australian military and plays a key role in Anzac celebrations. The precursor to the RSL was established by returning veterans in 1916 as The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia.

The exchange between Pauline Hanson and Kyle Sandilands thus refers to key figures and events in official versions of Australian history which are carefully regulated and closely tied to celebrations of national identity and values. The claim that the Diggers fought for gay rights is not one that is often made in public debate, but it does indicate certain connections and similarities between triumphalist arguments for same-sex marriage and the celebration of military history, which both feature prominently in contemporary debates on national identity and expressions of Australian nationalism (see also Dreher forthcoming). In the discussion that follows I tease out the implications for public representations of Australian history and identity and understandings of rights and dissent.

## 2. Vile Kyle

While Kyle Sandilands' comments might be read as a cause for celebration – a high profile endorsement of gay rights – in this paper I question the nature and costs of celebration. Perhaps the most obvious place to start is to remember that Kyle Sandilands is not well known as a gay rights campaigner. Instead, Sandilands has been dubbed 'Vile Kyle' for his well known on air misogyny, epitomised by a rant in November 2011 which the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) found to be 'deeply derogatory and offensive'. In 2009 Sandilands was sacked by Channel Ten from his job as a judge on Australian Idol after public outrage and an ACMA finding against him for a radio segment in which a 14 year old girl strapped to a lie detector disclosed a history of sexual assault. Sandilands courts controversy, not for progressive politics or activism, but rather for an 'edgy' style of 'entertainment' which offends and outrages, not least for the pattern of threats, demeaning comments and extreme insensitivity towards women (for an overview see Waters 2011). To celebrate Sandilands' comments in support of same-sex marriage would require separating 'gay rights' and 'women's rights', singling out the issue of same-sex marriage and ignoring a consistent pattern of sexism.

If Sandilands' apparent support for same-sex rights depends on bracketing his public harassment of women, it also obscures the persistence of homophobia and discrimination in Australia. Sandilands and his co-host Jackie O themselves use homophobic and transphobic 'humour' as part of their high rating program (Akersten 2011) and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby was amongst the organisations to complain about their on air comments (Davies 2012). Just as Kyle and Jackie O's support of gay marriage when interviewing Pauline Hanson obscures their own homophobic comments, it also makes no reference to ongoing violence and discrimination against LGBTI Australians. The week of the Hanson interview also saw revelations of police violence against participants in the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade (Olding and Robertson 2013), prompting a street march and a public meeting with police, at which dozens of people shared personal experiences of being harassed by officers at Mardi Gras events. The meeting also heard that concerns over the use of sniffer dogs, over-policing of Mardi Gras events and homophobia from police officers had been brewing for years before the 2013 event (Akersten 2013).

The claim that the Anzac Diggers fought for the freedom to have gay sex also misrepresents many aspects of Australian history, not least the fact that homosexuality began to be decriminalised only in the 1970s, beginning with South

Australia in 1972 and culminating in Tasmania as recently as 1997. Indeed, homophobia in the Australian armed forces is regularly exposed, and in contrast to other government bodies, the military until very recently refused to recognize the partners of gay and lesbian service personnel (Nicoll 2001, p. 195). March 2013 saw the reporting of complaints of an inadequate investigation by the Australian Defence Force into a gay hate vilification campaign on Facebook (Cooper 2013). The RSL vigorously rejected demands for recognition of gay service personnel until very recently. When the Gay Ex-servicemen's Association publicised its intention to lay a wreath at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance in 1982, the president of the Victorian RSL was outraged, stating 'I don't know where all these queers and poofters have come from. I don't remember a single poofter from World War Two' (McKenna 2010, p. 117).

While homophobia in the public sphere persists, the high rates of suicide, homelessness and mental illness among LGBTI Australians rate relatively little coverage. Politicians and personalities such as Kyle Sandilands are regularly asked to explain their views on same-sex marriage, but are very rarely asked to respond to research which consistently identifies concerns about the health and wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Australians (Leonard *et al*. 2012), or discuss the fact that young people who are questioning their sexuality are six times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Pulford 2013), or discuss the LGBT pay gap (Hough 2015). Rather than challenging key institutions such as the military or the police, or addressing the persistence of homophobic violence and discrimination, Sandilands' public support for gay rights focuses on the relatively safe option of same-sex marriage and mobilises a militarised version of Australian nationalism.

One of the most striking things about the exchange between Pauline Hanson, Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O is the various ways in which the radio hosts present same-sex marriage as natural, unremarkable and inevitable. Jackie O tells Pauline Hanson, 'Your old fashioned views … your generation won't be around in 20 to 30 years' time'. Sandilands and Jackie O position themselves as part of a younger generation whose support for marriage equality marks them as modern and tolerant. The narrative of inevitable historical progress towards gay rights has been criticized in the United States, where it is seen as consigning racial equality to a prior historical moment (Eng 2010), sidelining the transformative agenda of queer politics in favour of a liberal rights agenda (Warner 1999) and legitimising state violence towards racialised communities positioned as 'backward' or mediaeval in contrast to the purportedly gay-friendly West (Butler 2008).

In the following sections I explore 'digger nationalism' and the celebration of marriage equality evident in Kyle Sandiland's comments to Pauline Hanson in order to analyse the profound consequences of a narrow version of 'gay rights' and a militarised version of Australia's history in the present. Sandilands draws on a recent interpretation of Australian history and a specific formulation of same sex rights which both significantly narrow public representations and understandings of Indigenous sovereignties, civil rights campaigns, protest and dissent under contemporary neoliberalism.

## 3. The diggers

While Kyle Sandiland's on air comments on same-sex marriage make no connection to the persistence of everyday homophobia, nor to ongoing campaigns for women's rights, his comments do readily take up Pauline Hanson's evocation of 'digger nationalism' which positions the Anzac legend and the figure of the 'Digger' at the centre of Australian national identity (Nicoll 2001). When Sandilands says 'Didn't [the Diggers] fight for us to be free – so that we can all have gay sex?' he not only rewrites Australian history, but also mobilises a national narrative centred on militarist, imperialist and masculinist values (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 3).


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This interpretation of Australian history and the meaning of Anzac has been subject to scholarly scrutiny, but little public debate, in the lead up to the 100 year anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. Critical historians assert that the Diggers invaded Turkey, 'a country that in no way threatened Australia' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 10) not to defend democracy, but rather in the name of the British Empire and to assist 'the world's greatest autocracy, Russia' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 7). The Anzacs fought under the British flag, were subject to military rules rather than democratic freedoms, and fought Turkish opponents who were defending their country from invasion. As older war memorials embarrassingly state, the diggers fought for God and Empire – only recently termed as freedom (Due 2008, p. 28).

Critics have identified a concerted government campaign behind the resurgence of Anzac mythology and the 'militarisation' of Australian history and values (Lake and Reynolds 2010). Since the late 1990s the Australian government through agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Australian War Memorial has 'deployed vast resources to promulgate a new national history, a story of national development centred on the sacrifice and service of the Anzacs through the ages' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 139). In 1990 the Australian government added the Australian War Memorial and Canberra's Anzac Parade to the national heritage list (McKenna 2010, p. 119). Under the Howard conservative government elected in 1996, 'Australian values' posters distributed to schools featured the Anzac hero, Simpson and his donkey (McKenna 2010, p. 126). Funds and subsidies have enabled the development of curriculum materials and media content, pedagogical websites and teaching resources, the expansion of war memorials and commemoration activities. In 2007 – 8 the federal government budget for such curriculum materials was nearly $6 million (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 138). In contrast, departments of employment, health, immigration, environment, and Aboriginal affairs are not funded to produce curriculum materials (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 155).

The militarization of Australian history and the cultivation of the 'Anzac myth' has significant implications for public debate and representations of rights and social justice in the past and the present. From the founding violence of colonization to contemporary campaigns for marriage equality, the transformative claims of Indigenous rights and queer politics are sidelined and the contributions of civil society and protest are obscured. In the following sections I analyse four key consequences of celebrating Anzac and foregrounding same-sex marriage: the silencing of dissent; forgetting the Frontier Wars; marginalized and untold stories; and the normalising of same-sex rights.

### *3.1. Silencing dissent*

In the lead up to the centenary of the Anzac landing at Gallipolli, historians raised concerns that 'a resistance to critical debate on this subject today – and indeed a hostile response to the suggestion of debate - represses alternative narratives about the meaning of war and what it means to be Australian' (Damousi 2010, p. 97, Lake and Reynolds 2010, McKenna 2010). Elder argues that it has always been difficult to protest at Anzac Day, as 'the cult of Anzac does not open itself to self-critique' (Elder 2005, p. 73). The resistance to critical debate or critique has significant consequences for Australia's continuing involvement in military operations abroad. Lake and Reynolds suggest that debate on Australia's participation in current and future wars has been silenced as Australia's condition of perpetual war has been naturalized (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 23):

> The Anzac legend has also worked to normalise the deployment of Australian forces overseas and to deflect the critical observation that very few of the world's other small to middle sized powers have been so constantly engaged in conflict as Australia has been so far from its own borders. Engagement in foreign wars has been one of the most distinctive features of Australia's twentieth century history (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 164).

Far from generating lively public debate about the justifications and costs of Australia's many military involvements, Smith contends that there is a dangerous rise in militarism which effectively silences dissent. 'In early 2003, polls suggested that most Australians opposed the invasion of Iraq, but once troops were in combat opposition waned. If Australian troops are permanently on overseas duty, a similar effect can be expected' (Smith 2006, p. 4). The compulsion to be patriotic and stand by Australia's troops engulfs dissent around Australia's military involvements in the Middle East and in the Asia-Pacific region. Indeed, Australian Prime Ministers regularly invoke Anzac imagery for contemporary deployments. For example, PM John Howard represented Australian soldiers as 'diggers' and the country as the 'deputy sheriff' to the United States when dispatching troops to post-independence East Timor (Nicoll 2001, p. xix). More recently the Australian War Memorial has confirmed that some of the world's biggest weapons companies, including Lockheed Martin, used the memorial for events to increase profile and celebrate achievements (Thomson 2015).

Alongside a general resistance to critique of the digger mythology, there is also a history of repressing dissent, including protest actions on Anzac Day. Critique of the RSL among university students in 1958 influenced a larger critique of Anzac Day and the Vietnam War that developed later in the 1960s (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 88). During the 1980s, Anzac Day events were the scene of protests by Women Against Rape (Elder 2005, Lake and Reynolds 2010, Twomey 2013). These critiques have regularly been silenced. At the first Adelaide Arts Festival in 1960, the play *The One Day of the Year* was banned on the grounds of perceived insensitivity to returned servicemen (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 72) and in the 1920s and 1930s the RSL called for all war books to be censored by the official historian (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 74). More recent examples suggest that 'the expression of political dissent in Australia is increasingly constrained by the Anzac myth' (Smith 2006, p. 2). In 2005, a young man who burnt an Australian flag outside an RSL club was charged with destruction of property and subjected to tabloid media outrage, while in 2006 the Veteran's Affairs Minister described as 'totally inappropriate' an artist's installation of hundreds of body bags near the Cenotaph in the centre of Sydney (Smith 2006, p. 2).

Women Against Rape protests were met with sustained resistance by the RSL, police response, arrest and imprisonment. Women protesting against rape made their first appearance at Anzac Day services in Canberra and Perth in 1977 under the banner 'Rape is War against Women' and in Brisbane in 1979 with the slogan 'How many women did you rape in the war, Dad?' (Twomey 2013, p. 98-99). The protests reached their peak in the 1980s, deploying 'rites and rituals of military mourning – a march, a wreath, a minute's silence' (Elder 2005, p. 75) to highlight sexual violence against women and rape in war. At this time, rape in war had not yet been recognized as a war crime. In 1980, 14 women were arrested at the WAR protest in Canberra. In 1981, 65 people were arrested under new powers, and in 1982 the Commonwealth government passed a new ordinance designed to stop women participating in WAR actions (Elder 2005, p. 72). Three of the women arrested in 1981 were sentenced to one month's jail – 'that is, one month's jail for coming within 400 metres of the tail end of an Anzac Day march' (Elder 2005, p. 75). In 1984 Melbourne police arrested 17 women, three of whom had 'invaded' the ceremonial area of the Shrine carrying a banner which read 'Abolish Anzac Day. No more silence about sexual violence' (Twomey 2013, p. 99). In response, a 'wave of misogyny' was directed at the women who participated in the feminist protests, with onlookers shouting 'who would want to rape you anyway'? and mainstream media unsupportive of WAR's actions (Twomey 2013, p. 101, Summers 2015).

Hostility towards the Women Against Rape protestors has reverberated across debates around dissent, difference and the Anzac legacy. McKenna argues that former Australian Prime Minister John Howard developed an image of Vietnam veterans as victims of protestors in order to stifle dissent about military


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engagements (in Smith 2006, p. 3). When, in 1982, the Gay Ex-servicemen's Association publicised its intention to lay a wreath at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, the Victorian RSL President Bruce Ruxton linked the campaign to that of WAR. They have 'lesbian connotations', said Ruxton, 'I've seen the proof, it's all part of a deliberate campaign by some people in this country to destroy Anzac day' (McKenna 2010, p. 117)

If the 1980s might be described as a high point of protest and a key turning point in the history of Anzac (Twomey 2013, p. 91), Anzac Day in the lead up to the centenary celebrations is increasingly seen as a cause for celebration, not critique, and demonstrations are rare (Twomey 2013, p. 86). The language of celebration and pride has replaced grief and shame (Stanley 2012), with Anzac Day 'marches' now often described as 'parades'. Twomey argues that the new conservatism around Anzac 'gained legitimacy by allowing certain groups into the march – the descendants of veterans and immigrant groups from Allied nations – while at the same time refusing to tolerate groups and individuals who wished to use the occasion to draw attention to their cause' (Twomey 2013, p. 110). In their engagements with the RSL, Women Against Rape themselves tended to excuse or exclude Australian men as rapists, focusing attention instead on 'foreign' or 'enemy' perpetrators of sexual violence (Elder 2005, p. 73). There were some concessions to feminist critiques, as the Women's Land Army eventually won their argument with the RSL and were allowed to join the Anzac Day march (Twomey 2013, p. 103). Nurses also joined the parade, analysed by Elder as the inclusion of 'a less threatening Other' (Elder 2005, p. 81) in response to feminist protest. More significantly, Twomey argues that via the debates around feminist protest at Anzac Day, 'male veterans reasserted their symbolic centrality to the Anzac march and claimed victim status for themselves' (Twomey 2013, p. 85). If debate about the meaning of Anzac in the 1980s began with the figure of the raped woman, 'it was soon the traumatised male war veteran who stood at its centre, and Australians opened their hearts to him' (Twomey 2013, p. 92). As male war veterans are increasingly understood as traumatised victims of the horrors of war, and victims of feminist protest, critical engagement and debate becomes difficult. Elder further argues that the more radical claims of WAR were kept in check, not only by those who demonized the women protestors, but by the women themselves (Elder 2005, p. 75), not least by ignoring the sexual violence of colonization.

In summary, there is evidence that the celebration of Anzac history has served to silence or sideline dissenting voices, despite the rhetoric that the diggers fought for freedom. The triumphant national narrative centred on the Anzacs leaves very little room for criticism of Australia's many overseas military involvements, or protest at the costs of war, such as sexual violence. In the following section I focus on the ways in which the Anzac myth has contributed to forgetting the founding colonial violence of the Frontier Wars in Australia.

## 4. Forgetting the frontier wars

Women Against Rape were silent on the violence, including sexual violence, that characterizes colonization:

> In many ways the WAR coalitions were complicit in making invisible the wars fought in Australia and the Indigenous men and women who were the victims of those wars. In the logic of the women's arguments, rape in war was located in inter-state conflict and those who perpetrated it located outside the nation (Elder 2005, p. 79).

The WAR protests thus elided 'the war rape experiences of Indigenous peoples and the complicity of non-Indigenous women in these acts' (Elder 2005, p. 79). WAR increasingly focused on unknown Australian enemy rapists rather than known Australian soldiers, thus locating war rape outside the nation (Elder 2005, p. 78).

While WAR challenged the masculinist and militarist dimensions of Anzac commemorations, WAR's silence on the rape of Indigenous women conforms to the

Anzac myth as a forgetting of the Frontier Wars in Australia (Nicoll 2001, Lake and Reynolds 2010, McKenna 2010). Indeed, the revival of a militarist national identity came at the same time as a resurgent and growing Indigenous rights movement (Due 2008) and can be seen as 'a new front in the history wars' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 164). The 1990s saw intense public debate around the history of British invasion in Australian. The construction of the First World War as the 'first war fought by Australians' denies the wars fought by Indigenous peoples against British colonisers, and thereby privileges white histories over those held by Indigenous Australians (Due 2008, p. 4). Renewed focus on Anzac Day developed as the impossibility of unproblematically celebrating 'Australia Day' as the key national day became clear. Australia Day is commemorated on 26 January, marking the landing in Sydney of the First Fleet in 1788. On 26 January 1938, Aboriginal Australians held a Day of Mourning protest on the sesquicentenary of colonization. With increased activism for Land Rights and Treaty in the 1970s and 80s and landmark protests against Australia's Bicentennial celebrations in 1988, Indigenous Australians badged 26 January as 'Invasion Day' and marched under the banner 'White Australia has a Black History'. The Anzac tradition, in contrast, offered an opportunity to divert attention from the history of Aboriginal dispossession and frontier massacres (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 139, McKenna 2010).

Anzac commemorations demonstrate pride at invading Turkey 'on behest of the British' and yet there is a 'great reluctance to acknowledge British invasion of Australia' (Nicoll 2001, Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 163, McKenna 2010). Aileen Moreton-Robison argues that the very martial values celebrated on Anzac days are those which enabled white settlers to dispossess Indigenous Australians from their lands (in Due 2005, p. 4). In forgetting the Frontier Wars, Indigenous versions of history are excluded from public discourse, and the legal myth of terra nullius is affirmed, overlooking the fact that Indigenous Australians did defend lands that they saw as theirs (Due 2005, p. 3).

The absence of frontier conflict in official representations of Australian history is particularly evident in the exhibits and events at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The Australian War Memorial (AWM) does not memorialise Indigenous Australians who died defending their lands from colonization, but does feature on its walls a number of carved Aboriginal heads or 'gargoyles' (Nicoll 2001, Barritt-Eyles 2015):

> There are 26 sandstone gargoyles representing Australian fauna adorning the walls of the Roll of Honour walkways. Alongside a kookaburra, wombat and and emu are gargoyles of an Aboriginal man and woman … This representation of Indigenous peoples as fauna is indicative of their treatment throughout Australian history (Barritt-Eyles 2015).

Historian Humphrey McQueen offered two possible interpretations of these carved heads. Either the Aboriginal figures are linked to Australian fauna, or they are battle trophies (in Nicoll 2001, p. 276). In either interpretation, Indigenous Australians are represented as subhuman (Nicoll 2001, p. 175) and representative of the spoils of frontier war:

> Placed alongside the sculpted heads of native fauna, Indigenous Australians are incorporated into the Australian War Memorial as symbols of the material property white diggers sought to secure in formally recognised military campaigns (Nicoll 2001, p. 277).

The carved heads can thus be seen as an *unintentional* representation of a violent history of colonisation and contested lands (Barritt-Eyles 2015). Yet the leadership of the AWM have stoutly resisted suggestions that the frontier wars should be included in its activities (Nicoll 2001, Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 163, Barritt-Eyles 2015), and 'no official attempt has ever been made to find, mark and commemorate the sites where Aborigines were shot down by settlers, soldiers and police' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 164). This is despite the fact that the Frontier


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Wars lasted for at least 150 years, continuing for at least ten years after the end of the First World War, including the 1928 massacre at Coniston in the Northern Territory (Barritt-Eyles 2015). By commemorating Anzac and excluding domestic conflict, the Australian War Memorial suggests that Australia was settled peacefully rather than colonized, continuing the legal fiction of *terra nullius*: 'if there were no land possessing people in Australia, there could be no official declaration of war' (Nicoll 2001, p. 163).

In recent years the AWM have been among the official organisations to belatedly include recognition of the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women abroad in their exhibits and activities. While this has been a welcome development, it does not address concerns that the Frontier Wars and Indigenous protest have been sidelined. Indigenous marchers are allowed in Anzac parades as participants but not as protestors (Nicoll 2013, p. 279). On the Anzac Centenary in 2015, Marrawarri man and Black Digger Fred Hooper was threatened with arrest and prevented from joining the main Anzac parade after he led the 'undeclared Frontier Wars' march (McQuire 2015). Where the Australian War Memorial and Department of Veterans Affairs may claim to have fulfilled their responsibilities by belatedly celebrating Black Diggers, Lake and Reynolds argue:

> there is an important distinction to be made between recognizing the role played by Indigenous diggers alongside their white comrades in wars against *external* enemies and commemorating Indigenous people who have died fighting for their rights in, and to, *this* country (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 179)

The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women in official commemorations thus serves to contain the far more unsettling prospect of acknowledging the foundation of Australia in violent conflict and the legacies of the Frontier Wars. If, as Nicoll argues, 'the war is not over for Indigenous Australians, who continue to disproportionately experience the effects of a punitive discipline administered by the state' (Nicoll 2013, p. 186), official commemorations of Anzac continue the official myth that the war never began. As Barritt-Eyles (2015) argues:

> In order to represent Indigenous war experience as something other than (re)colonised service or history carved in stone, the foundational myths of 'our story' need to be confronted, the forgotten wars remembered and different stories told.

In this section I have argued that the pervasive mythology of the Digger tradition produces a national identity which obscures the founding violence of colonization and constrains representations of Indigenous sovereignties and resistance, both past and present. I now turn to highlight marginalised stories of Indigenous rights campaigns and the crucial role of civil society and protest in the recognition of rights and democratic values in Australia, including LGBTQI rights. The following section explores some of the different stories to be told as the celebration of Anzac dominates official representations of Australian history.

## 5. Marginalised and untold stories

If, as argued above, the Anzac myth serves to ignore the Frontier Wars, silence dissent and sideline protest, then it is very important to prioritise the stories that are marginalised and untold: 'other stories, different historic sites and other conceptions of national values' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 138). The militarization of Australian history not only deflects dissent, but also sidelines crucial stories of activism and protest, the significance of civil society and the achievements of social movements. The celebration of Anzac not only deters protest, but also screens from view the many achievements and ongoing struggles of Indigenous Australians, dissenters, activists and social justice organisations.

The profound silence on the Frontier Wars bolstered by the myth of Anzac obscures contemporary assertions of Indigenous sovereignty and ongoing relations of colonial violence. Indigenous activists suggest that high figures of Indigenous incarceration and deaths in custody should be seen as evidence of continuing 'legalised white violence' (Nicoll 2013, p. 271) or the continuation of undeclared war. As the Anzac centenary filled the TV schedule in April 2015, dispossession continued as remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia faced forced closure by shutting off essential services including water. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy campaigns for a Treaty as well as Land Rights to belatedly acknowledge conflict between Indigenous and nonIndigenous people in Australia and lay the foundations for negotiation on more just terms. These calls are largely ignored by Australian governments.

Fiona Nicoll analyses the Aboriginal Tent Embassy established on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra in 1972 as 'evidence of a sovereign will that resists policy as a means of incorporation within a white state' (Nicoll 2013, p. 267). Tent Embassy activists focus on Anzac Day and Australian Day with stories of 'the victories of ancestral and living warriors against successive policies aimed to secure their absorption into a foreign political body' (Nicoll 2013, p. 269). This assertion of sovereign will, Nicoll argues, challenges:

> … the construction of Indigenous people as not-quite-human objects of policy 'protections' rather than as enemy combatants has historically provided an alibi for official and unofficial forms of violence against them (Nicoll 2013, p. 269).

Focusing on the Anzac myth as the 'national creation story' sidelines not only Indigenous claims for Land Rights, Treaty and compensation, but also 'different stories of nation-building, oriented not to military prowess, but to visions of social justice and democratic equality' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 10). The claim that the Diggers fought for freedom obscures the vital role of civil society and social movements, protest and advocacy in securing rights and progressive social change in Australia, both before and after the first World War.

Historians Henry Reynolds and Marilyn Lake locate Australia's foundational achievements in democracy and social justice in the period before Gallipolli – the late nineteenth century and the years around federation in 1901. Non-Indigenous Australian women were among the first in the world to win voting rights, 'possibly the only turning point in world history in which Australians led the way' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 3). Women in South Australia achieved the right to vote in 1895, while the newly-formed Commonwealth of Australia allowed women the vote in 1902.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Australia was known internationally for high living standards and comparatively robust rights for white settlers. Indeed, Australia before the first World War developed the key cornerstones of the welfare state: 'the tradition was carried through into the first years of the new Commonwealth, which introduced women's rights, a living wage, old age pensions and kindred measures which pioneered the welfare state' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 26). These vital measures were achieved not via overseas military campaigns, but by the actions of civil society – trade unions and church groups and social movements and political parties and advocacy groups, engaged in activism, protests and strikes, letter writing and public meetings and all the 'slow cumulative work of innumerable citizens in all walks of life' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 26). Furthermore, Australia's world-famous achievements were made in peacetime, through political campaigning, rather than during war. Indeed, World War One and the Vietnam War were deeply unpopular in Australia, dividing public opinion and inspiring large-scale protest movements. Referenda to bring in conscription in 1916 and 1917 were defeated after heated public debate and concerted opposition (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 13).


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The significant political achievements in turn of the century Australia were not made through military action, but Indigenous Australians and many non-whites were excluded from the rights victories of the time. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were not counted as citizens nor entitled to vote in Australia until after a national referendum in 1967. If federation in 1901 marked a break with British rule, it was the White Australia Policy that underpinned assertions of sovereignty and national identity (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 20). The Australian vision of equal opportunity and social justice was 'integrally linked to the insistent demand for racial homogeneity. Democratic equality had meant racial exclusion' (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 20). The Anzacs, for their part, did more to uphold than to challenge the values of White Australia. Prime Minister Billy Hughes, nicknamed 'the little digger', argued for the protection of the White Australia Policy at the peace conference at Versailles (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 19). The diggers had a reputation as white supremacists and were used by the British to help put down the nationalist uprising in Egypt in 1919 – committing atrocities that have been largely forgotten (Lake and Reynolds 2010, p. 162, Dwyer 2015).

Overall, this section has outlined just some of the stories that are rarely heard in media and public debate dominated by the celebration of Anzac and the importance of same-sex marriage. The focus on Australia's military history obscures the vital role of civil society, protest and dissent in developing and maintaining democratic institutions and rights recognition. The Anzac legend further silences the founding violence and exclusions of White Australia, and ongoing Indigenous claims to Land Rights and Treaty. In the following section I trace the implications of triumphalist narratives of national identity and marriage equality for questions of same-sex rights and queer politics.

## 6. Normalising same-sex rights

The official history that suggests the Diggers fought for freedom, and Kyle Sandiland's argument that the diggers fought for gay rights, contributes to a wider narrative of national identity and progress which positions Australia on the 'right side of history' in contrast to racialised constructions of 'Asia' and Islam (Dreher 2016). The celebration of military achievements also ignores the long, difficult and ongoing struggles of LGBTI individuals and organisations in fighting for sexual and gender justice in Australia. Dennis Altman (2013) traces the history of queer politics and struggles in Australia to the beginnings of gay liberation in the 1960s. Campaigns for LGBTI rights and recognition have often involved confrontations with police, such as the original Mardi Gras in 1978, and have encountered intense resistance from the Returned Soldiers League (Altman 2013). As described above, the RSL and its leadership have refused to acknowledge queer 'diggers' and have refused moves for LGBTI representation at official commemorations (Nicoll 2001, p. 194), while evidence of homophobia in the Australian Defence Forces persists (Nicoll 2001, p. 195).

Despite widespread resistance, persistent political campaigning and activist struggles have brought victories for equalising rights. In recent years, Australia has been a pioneer in recognising same-sex couples, and in allowing individuals in same-sex partnerships to immigrate (Altman 2013, Copland 2013). Federal and state laws have increasingly eliminated discrimination against gays and lesbians and their children in areas such as social security, workers' compensation, superannuation, child support and Medicare (Altman 2013). Gay marriage emerged on the political agenda in 2004 when the then conservative Prime Minister John Howard changed the federal Marriage Act to define marriage as 'the union between a man and a woman', supported by the Australian Labour Party, and clearly following the example of US Republicans (Altman 2013). Yet in 2008, the Rudd Labour government removed inequalities in dozens of federal laws. Unlike the USA, rights in terms of health care, social security and the like are no longer connected to marriage in Australian law, and the campaign for marriage equality in Australia

does not have the wider rights implications which characterise US debates (Copland 2013).

The historical amnesia evident in the official celebrations of Anzac not only sidelines the long history of social justice campaigning, it also dovetails neatly with neoliberal austerity politics in contemporary Australia that have seen the defunding of social services and advocacy organisations. While the Anzac myth suggests that Australia's achievements in social and political rights are founded in military campaigns, there are very few official commemorations of the many significant victories achieved through activism and advocacy, protest and solidarity movements. Instead, organisations working on social justice concerns from Indigenous rights to AIDS education, refugee policy to women's refuges have seen government funding drastically reduced and restraints placed on their public advocacy.

As well as obscuring the vital role of civil society including LGBTI activism, celebration of the Digger tradition also hides the history of particular forms of homophobia imposed across the British Empire via British colonial anti-sodomy laws. The British criminalization of buggery was exported to the colonies via the unreformed law of England transported through criminal codes (Kong 2012). Relics of British colonial laws can be found in Hong Kong (Kong 2012), in Malaysia as in the trial of the politician Anwar Ibrahim, and beyond (Chakraborty 2015). While advocates such as Kyle Sandilands suggest that support for gay rights and same-sex marriage in Australia is a natural and inevitable continuation of the Anzac tradition, there is evidence that homophobic Australian churches are exporting 'conversion therapies' to Uganda and beyond (Williams 2014). Australia's final gay conversion ministry closed in 2014 as the same pastors took the mission overseas. The Australian gay 'curing' missionaries (Gerber 2015) followed the path of American evangelicals.

> In 2009, as their gay 'curing' agenda was discredited in the US, three American evangelicals travelled to Kampala to 'instruct' thousands of influential Ugandans on how gay men sodomise teenagers and how the gay movement promotes sexual promiscuity. A month after that, a Ugandan politician introduced a bill to create a capital offence of 'aggravated homosexuality' (The Guardian 2015).

The triumphalist narrative on gay rights also marginalizes ongoing rights concerns such as exemptions from anti-discrimination legislation given to religious organisations in Australia and Britain, or the fact that the last decriminalization of homosexual sex in Australia did not come until 1997, in Tasmania (Jones 2015).

Kyle Sandiland's unusual rereading of the ANZAC legend as support for gay rights which opened this paper mobilises homonormativity and homonationalism which are increasingly evident in public debates on marriage equality in Australia and elsewhere (Dreher forthcoming). In response to Pauline Hanson's more traditional evocation of 'Australian values', Sandilands mobilises a contemporary formulation which foregrounds support for same-sex marriage as a marker of the nation's tolerance and modernity. The focus on same-sex marriage can be analysed as a 'homonormative' agenda which contains the transformative potential of a queer politics. Lisa Duggan (2002) coined the term 'homonormativity' to describe a 'new neoliberal sexual politics'. This is

> [p]olitics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan 2002, p. 179).

As Nan Seuffert explains, homonormativity 'represents the normalisation of particular types of intimate heterosexual relationships that reflect social hierarchies, including race, gender, class and other configurations of privilege' (Seuffert 2009, p. 135). Kyle Sandilands' comment, 'if they want to get married, let them get married' mobilises a homonormative gay rights agenda focused on the institution of


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marriage. As Warner (1999) argues, queer critiques have historically sought to transform rather join conservative institutions such as marriage. There is a concern that homonormative versions of sexual rights will dominate popular culture and politics, with the result that critique becomes depoliticised and queer difference is rendered invisible, or undesirable (Warner 1999).

Homonationalism as analysed by Jasbir Puar (2007) refers to the increasing tendency to position 'gay-friendliness' as a conspicuous marker of commitment to 'western', 'democratic' ideals. Sandilands assumes that a commitment to same-sex marriage is an integral part of a modern national identity and a continuation of Australia's progressive embrace of human rights. However, as Puar (2007) and others (Butler 2008, R. Stringer personal communication, 11-13 December 2012)[1] argue, the claim to 'gay friendliness' or support for same-sex rights can in fact function to obscure injustice and provide 'moral cover' for past and present oppressions.

In the Australian context, traces of homonationalism are evident in campaigns for LGBTI rights in Commonwealth countries which reproduce colonial narratives: 'In this case, it is sexual liberation – rather than repression – that is being exported to the former colonial world from the former colonial centre' (Jones 2015). A 'focus on non-white former colonies sidelines rights abuses in countries where gay sex is legal' such as continued exemptions from anti-discrimination legislation given to religious organisations in Australia (Jones 2015). An assumption that Australia is increasingly and inevitably 'gay-friendly' also obscures the agency of activists in former colonies and the diversity of non-western sexual orientations and gender identities, exemplified in the recent recognition of Hijras in Bangladesh and India (Jones 2015, Chakraborty 2015).

The transformative potential of a queer politics that seeks to challenge institutions and subvert normative expectations of sexuality and gender is contained by a focus on same-sex marriage in Australia and selective concern at homophobia in the Commonwealth. The result is a form of 'heteronormative citizenship' (Johnson in Riggs 2006a, p. 9) whereby 'good queers' are granted recognition as a result of their ability to look as the nation would desire them to look (ie not queer, not threatening, not subversive etc) (Riggs 2006b, p. 42).

In this section I have indicated some of the ways in which triumphalist support for same-sex marriage can obscure the transformative possibilities of queer politics in Australian popular culture. As the campaign for marriage equality is increasingly taken up by politicians and corporations, the difficult history of LGBTQI campaigns for rights recognition is rarely invoked. Against a queer politics which seeks to challenge norms and transform institutions, a narrow focus on marriage equality can bolster homonormative and homonationalist discourses.

## 7. Discussion

In this paper I have highlighted the implications of the celebratory rhetoric on both marriage equality and on Anzac history for discussion of Indigenous sovereignties, dissent, civil society achievements and queer politics in Australian popular media and public debate. I argue that claims that Australia is on 'the right side of history' in moving inexorably towards recognition of same-sex marriage, sit comfortably within a wider interpretation of Australian history which serves to silence dissent and the founding violence of colonialisation. This militarized version of history underpins a nationalism that misrepresents credit for advances in rights recognition, sidelining public representations of Indigenous sovereignties and the contributions of civil society, protest and social justice campaigning to the recognition and maintenance of civil and political rights. As a result, the

[1] Keynote lecture at *Racialising Desire,* Annual Conference of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association, University of Adelaide, 11–13 December.

transformative claims of Land Rights and Treaty, critiques of war, and queer politics, are contained.

Two years on from Kyle Sandilands' claim that the Diggers fought for gay rights, the centenary commemorations of the Anzac landing at Gallipolli provided a platform for more complex and critical views against the backdrop of official celebrations. Opinion pieces and columns appeared in a range of outlets, including calls to remember the Frontier Wars (Behrendt 2015) and a proposed 'memorial day for the Indigenous people who fought and died for their country' (Chapman 2015), an analysis of the connections between the Gallipolli campaign and the Armenian Genocide (Kieser 2015), an argument that the refusal to discuss rape in war makes 'a nation ignorant of rape' (Cover 2015), a call to remember the women who marched against war rape and their achievements (Summers 2015) and a call to remember Australia's history of democratic dissent and those who fought for it (Sawer 2015).

The centenary commemorations also provided evidence of the continuing limits on dissent and protest around Anzac, and a continuing refusal to acknowledge the Frontier Wars. A sports journalist with the national multicultural public broadcaster, the SBS, Scott McIntyre was sacked after he refused to apologise for a series of Anzac Day tweets deemed 'inappropriate' and 'disrespectful' (Dwyer 2015, Wilson 2015). In several twitter posts, McIntyre described Gallipolli as 'an imperialist invasion', referred to 'the summary execution, widespread rape and theft committed by these 'brave' Anzacs in Egypt, Palestine and Japan', and compared the civilian death toll to Hiroshima (Dwyer 2015). As described above, marchers attempting to commemorate the Frontier Wars in Canberra's Anzac Day parade were blocked by police, with Fred Hooper told, 'this day is not for you' (McQuire 2015). During the week of Anzac Day, plans to evict Indigenous Australians from their homelands in Western Australia were described as 'a declaration of war' (Pilger 2015), the latest escalation in ongoing state violence directed at Indigenous Australians (McQuire 2015).

The suggestion that the Diggers 'fought for our freedoms' remains the central trope in official accounts and commemorations of Australian history and national values. This rewriting of history sidelines stories of protest and the achievements of civil society. It ignores frontier warfare in the colonisation of Australia and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Australians. At a time of austerity measures including cuts to welfare spending and public services, this version of history celebrates an imperial military campaign rather than democratic action as the path to rights and freedoms.

Kyle Sandilands' suggestion that the Diggers fought for gay rights remains an unusual argument. It also indicates something of the relative successes, and the pitfalls, of campaigns for the recognition of same-sex marriage. When celebrating 'freedoms', marriage equality occupies centre stage in public debate and popular media in Australia. Claims for same-sex marriage are often presented as the most pressing of civil rights or law reform questions, which can gloss over ongoing injustices with profound implications for understandings of understandings of Indigenous sovereignties, rights and discriminations, protest and civil society. Sandilands' exchange with Pauline Hanson can be seen as a rare example of 'digger homonationalism' whereby certain conspicuous markers of 'gay friendliness' – such as support for a liberal version of 'gay rights' exemplified by same-sex marriage – can be yoked to a conservative and militarized version of Australian history which silences or sidelines a wide range of claims for justice and radical transformation.

If digger homonationalism contains critique and radical politics, then queer politics on the ground of Indigenous sovereignties offers alternative conceptions of justice and transformation. Drawing on Nicoll's (2001) work on digger nationalism and Indigenous sovereignties, Riggs asks: 'should our primary responsibility as white


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lesbians and gay men be first to an ethical engagement with Indigenous sovereignty?' (Riggs 2006b, p. 40) and suggests:

> 'a radical rethinking of national belonging that would take as its ground the fact of Indigenous sovereignty, a move that would be productive of a 'queered' national space that begin the important work of rethinking how we understand belonging …' (Riggs 2006b, p. 40).

Following this suggestion, queer politics on the grounds of Indigenous sovereignty might prioritise land rights or treaties, as 'such recognition might begin to unravel the everyday violence through which Indigenous policy continues to effect race warfare' (Nicoll 2013, p. 283). A queer politics might challenge the narrative that positions same-sex marriage as the final challenge and inevitable achievement of 'freedoms' in Australia, highlighting instead the interconnection of persistent injustice and discriminations. Rather than pinkwashing the past, a more just future depends on grappling with the persistence of discrimination and the prevalence of injustice, mobilising protest and dissent to transformative ends.

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