



VOLUNTARY ACTION HISTORY SEMINARS

VAHS seminar series at the Institute of Historical Research

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

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Saving Aboriginal Children: Save the Children Aboriginal Preschools, white volunteers and the rural colour bar

Save the Children Australia established fourteen rural preschools in the eastern Australian states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, in the 1960's. Aboriginal and white volunteers worked together under the auspices of Save the Children to establish these cornerstone Aboriginal self-help initiatives, making long lasting inroads into Aboriginal disadvantage. This paper examines the early impact of their initiative in Griffith, a rural town in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area of south western New South Wales. Although Federal Government policy encouraged Aboriginal assimilation, the New South Wales State Government continued to cooperate with rural communities to resist desegregation, especially in educational contexts. The paper considers the role conservative Aboriginal and white rural women volunteers played in breaking down the colour bar and pressuring the NSW State Government to extend services to Aboriginal communities; by jointly enrolling their pre-school aged children in the Three Ways Bridge Aboriginal preschool.

Biography

Dr Jennifer Jones is a Lecturer in Australian Indigenous Studies, Historical and European Studies Program, at La Trobe University. Her Australian Research Council Post Doctoral research, examining Aboriginal Branches of the Country Women's Association of NSW 1956-1972, was conducted at the University of Melbourne. Jennifer's research interests include the Australian Indigenous history and biography, Australian Indigenous Literature, cross cultural collaboration and the construction of identity (rurality and whiteness), editorial praxis, voluntary action and community participation.