

**‘Mission Impossible’: Aboriginal  
survival before, during and after the  
Aboriginal Protection Era**

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### **Declaration**

**The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.**

**Signed.....**

### **Acknowledgements**

To my Worimi Ancestors who walked the traditional path, who cared for our land and our people, for all those who endured the many hardships throughout colonisation and those Worimi elders with us today: I acknowledge you and pay my respect. Thank you for leaving your deep footprints in history to make our journey that little bit easier.

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## **Abstract**

The topic I chose for my thesis is something I personally felt very strongly about. I was driven to undertake this important research study for my family, local community and the wider Aboriginal community. I wanted to write a story about the history of an Aboriginal Mission of a small coastal town in New South Wales, Karuah, and to deliver an accurate historical record so that younger generations of the Worimi people can understand the changing lifestyles of their ancestors before, during and after the arrival of Europeans. The thesis discusses Aboriginal survival, living on the mission under the control of Christian missionaries and government policies of so-called protection. During and after the reign of the Aborigines Protection /Welfare Board, the mission underwent substantial transformations, which I also personally experienced as I was growing up there.

The limited historical research undertaken on missions, reserves and stations, like that at Karuah have, to a large degree, been a missing piece of Aboriginal history. Australia and its institutions systematically denounced, omitted and erased a significant period of our history that caused the shattering of our people's cultural beliefs, families and communities. These designated tracts of government land became the catalyst for many social and economic problems that Aboriginal people experienced and are still coming to terms with today. Our people were often plagued with extreme poverty and hardship, yet little concern was raised in the wider Australian society. Australian governments believed that Aboriginal people were a dying race destined for extinction whilst under the governments' paternal care.

This thesis was written to provide our younger generations with information of the paths our Worimi ancestors were compelled to follow and the lifestyle and freedoms that were restricted and controlled. The account I present reveals our people continually confronting bias and racial discrimination in that small town where the Karuah mission was established, and how they experienced and contested the racist attitudes of the local Karuah residents and wider Australian society. This thesis provides an Aboriginal historical perspective in displaying the mission's transformation over the years and showing the struggle and courage of our ancestors who lived in a very different era from today. In the end it is not just a story of tragedy and destruction but one of great pride, survival, success and triumph.