

Epilogue

Epilogue: Can the Settler State Settle with Whom it Colonises? Reasons for Hope and Priorities for Action

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How does the Settler State settle its conflict with whom it colonises? How do Indigenous and Settler Australia realise a common future together? Can the unification of Australia be settled within a framework of hope, fulfilling Aboriginal cultural, social and economic aspirations? To the essayists in this book, these challenging questions are more relevant than ever if we are to move beyond simplistic explanations of the conflict that binds us and transform relationships between the Settler and the colonised. The purpose of this book was to examine contemporary Indigenous engagements with the Settler State, probe for lessons of failure and success, forecast future challenges, and explore strategies for building a future together. Governance is a keyword here – governance that speaks to the future of Aboriginal First Peoples in Australia as well as to wider Australia, both real and imagined.

These very themes are important to my own theorising about Settler Australia's relationship with minorities. Over time it has become clear to me that Australia's current mechanisms for handling Indigenous-Settler conflict are inadequate (Rigney 2002a, 2002b; 2003; 2008; Worby and Rigney 2006). From court processes such as those grappling to resolve native title claims to wider reconciliation strategies, there is need for change. Adjudication in our courts often does not resolve conflict. It tends to breed winners and losers who inhabit a temporary peace until the defeated regroup to challenge the winners again. Forcing settlement via institutional monopolies held by the state does not construct new and positive relationships. Quite simply, reconciliation cannot be achieved if the defeated reject

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