

On a Saturday afternoon 25 people gathered at Northcliffe's cinema to spend time with Jim Morrison; film producer, Order of Australia recipient, elder, and all round nice bloke. For a start Jim told us he was loving the irony and colonial overtones of finding out about his Order of Australia on 'invasion day' 2026, and then recently picking up his medal at Government House.

Jim started by making some points about Welcome to Country ceremonies and recent controversies. To those who complain 'they shouldn't have to be welcomed into their own country', Jim had this to say: The 'country' being referred to in a Welcome to Country ceremony is not Australia. Instead it is one of approximately 250 Aboriginal language, social or nation groups. In the case of Northcliffe we are situated on Pibbelmun country within the Noongar nation.

He also responded to complaints about the modern nature of Welcome to Country. While famously Ernie Dingo helped devise our modern ceremonial form, welcoming Maori dancers to the Perth festival in 1976 (alongside Noongar elder Dr. Richard Walley), the idea behind it is a universal and ancient human phenomenon found across traditional societies globally.

After we watched the award winning documentary *Genocide in the Wildflower State* Jim led the audience in a warm and lively discussion of the films' themes and impact.

Jim recounted arranging a private screening of *Genocide in the Wildflower State* for State premier Roger Cook. Shortly after the screening our Government announced redress payments for WA's Stolen Generations children. Such compensation was recommended by the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997 and as of now Queensland is the only state in Australia who has not provided any form of redress. Sadly many from the Stolen Generations are no longer alive to see this (6400 were still alive in 2024), and the compensation itself is meager.

Three years ago in Northcliffe, Jim presented his previous documentary *Yokai*. *Yokai* focused on the conditions of WA Stolen Generations children, the vast majority of whom were placed in institutions where many were sexually abused. With their family ties severed, they were then 'released' onto the streets of Perth between the ages of 14 and 16, with few skills or prospects; set up for failure.

Jim warned the Northcliffe audience three years ago that his next film would be even more brutal. *Genocide in the Wildflower State* is that film. It documents the racial and eugenics

movement in Western Australia, and how this fed into the human rights disasters of the Stolen Generations policies which in place from 1912 to 1972.

In *Genocide in the Wildflower State* we have the audio, video, speeches and documents of the infamous 'Chief Protector of Aborigines in WA', AO Neville. You may remember Neville being depicted in the movie *Rabbit Proof Fence*, where he was played by Kenneth Branagh. Neville proudly proclaims his mission is to ensure the Commonwealth "...eventually forget (s) that there were ever any Aborigines in Australia..." The goal and methods used fit the modern definitions of genocide, and fully justify the name of this documentary.

AO Neville, by no means a lone voice in his time, was accustomed to addressing large white audiences. Academics, medical and religious institutions provided support for his eugenics program to "breed out the colour". Our Government awarded Neville and his ilk unprecedented power to implement this vision for sixty years.

This was to be achieved by taking Aboriginal children away from their parents and ensuring they would only make partnerships and have offspring with white partners. Alongside hundreds of smaller facilities, these children were institutionalised in infamous institutions like Moore River and Carrolup Native Settlements. Over the sixty years over 1 in 3 Aboriginal children in WA were taken away from their parents—by far the highest rate in Australia.

From these settlements, Aboriginal girls were often allocated to white households as domestic servants. AO Neville is quoted sounding content with the idea that white masters in these households would impregnate those girls. To him, this would help dilute native bloodlines.

To continue with the disturbing terminology of the time: half-caste children were prohibited from marrying full blooded Aboriginal people, without seeking special permission. Within a few generations, the plan was, native traits would be 'bred out'. Half castes would become quadroons (quarter-caste) and finally octoroons, who were held to be functionally indistinguishable from whites. 'Full blood Aborigines' would "die out as quickly as possible."

Genocide in the Wildflower State makes a devastating case that, in Western Australia, the industrial scale assimilation policies underlying the Stolen Generations squarely fit our modern definition of genocide.

Right : Jim Morrison led a warm and valuable discussion. Thanks Jim for sharing your wisdom and making the effort to come down to Northcliffe in person for the screening.



Watch free on **SBS ONDEMAND**

Genocide in the Wildflower State

58m 2024 English **PG CC HD**