



# Engagement and Impact 2018

Victoria University

VIC (IN) - Impact

## Overview

### Title

*(Title of the impact study)*

Re-writing and re-telling the narrative on Aboriginal history in Australia

### Unit of Assessment

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research

### FoR codes

*(Identify up to three two-digit FoRs that relate to the overall content of the impact study.)*

16 - Studies in Human Society

21 - History and Archaeology

### Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) Codes

*(Choose from the list of two-digit SEO codes that are relevant to the impact study.)*

93 - Education and Training

94 - Law, Politics and Community Services

95 - Cultural Understanding

97 - Expanding Knowledge

### Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) Codes

*(Choose from the list of two-digit ANZSIC codes that are relevant to the impact study.)*

60 - Library and Other Information Services

80 - Preschool and School Education

90 - Creative and Performing Arts Activities

81 - Tertiary Education

## Keywords

*(List up to 10 keywords related to the impact described in Part A.)*

Gary Foley

activism

Aboriginal

history

archive

Black Power movement

land rights

self-determination

curriculum

performance

## Sensitivities

Commercially sensitive

No

Culturally sensitive

Yes

## Sensitivities description

*(Please describe any sensitivities in relation to the impact study that need to be considered, including any particular instructions for ARC staff or assessors, or for the impact study to be made publicly available after EI 2018.)*

The impact study contains the name of at least one Indigenous person who is now deceased

**Science and Research Priorities**

*(Does this impact study fall within one or more of the Science and Research Priorities?)*

No

# Impact

## Summary of the impact

*(Briefly describe the specific impact in simple, clear English. This will enable the general community to understand the impact of the research.)*

Professor Gary Foley and his associates at Victoria University are drawing on Foley's personal research archive and experience as an activist to re-write, re-tell, and balance out the colonial bias in the Australian story. In bringing greater visibility to the Aboriginal narrative, this work has benefited Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, educators, students, historians and activists. It has uncovered significant 'hidden chapters' in Aboriginal political history and is creating the only digital archive on Australia's Black Power movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy. It has influenced school curriculum and cultural practices, and challenged ignorant and racist mindsets through provocative performances, documentaries, publications, curriculum materials and public education.

## Beneficiaries

*(List up to 10 beneficiaries related to the impact study)*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples throughout Australia, particularly SE Australia - telling their history and stories

Non-Aboriginal Australians – a re-balanced understanding of the history of their country and appreciation of the historical context of current issues.

Australian schools and teachers, including ATSI education organisations, curriculum developers and writers

Australian school students – due to having better-informed teachers and access to more balanced curriculum and research resources.

Melbourne and Sydney Festival committees and patrons who attended the 'Foley' show – offered and experienced (respectively) an 'untold history'

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company – due to being chosen to produce the groundbreaking 'Foley' show, and being externally funded to do so

Viewers of the 'Persons of Interest' documentary series – learning about ASIO's historical surveillance activities and present-day powers

Australian and international audiences at public talks, presentations and performances given by Professor Foley and his research associates

## Details of the impact

*(Provide a narrative that clearly outlines the research impact. The narrative should explain the relationship between the associated research and the impact. It should also identify the contribution the research has made beyond academia, including:*

- who or what has benefitted from the results of the research (this should identify relevant research end-users, or beneficiaries from industry, the community, government, wider public etc.)*
- the nature or type of impact and how the research made a social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental impact*
- the extent of the impact (with specific references to appropriate evidence, such as cost-benefit-analysis, quantity of those affected, reported benefits etc.)*
- the dates and time period in which the impact occurred.*
- where relevant, evidence of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethical research guidelines were integrated into the research activities and processes detailed in the impact study*

*NOTE - the narrative must describe only impact that has occurred within the reference period, and must not make aspirational claims.)*

Prof Gary Foley and his VU associates are re-writing and re-telling the Aboriginal narrative in this land's history. Drawing on Foley's personal archive and autobiographical research, they are balancing out the colonial bias in the story of Australia and bringing to light significant chapters in Aboriginal political history that were previously misrepresented or ignored. The cultural and social impacts arising from this work have benefited Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, educators, students, historians and new generations of activists.

Foley, a Gumbaynggirr man, is a prominent activist, actor and historian. His public profile, archive, and academic research are intrinsically interwoven and therefore have all contributed in varying degrees to the reported impacts. An example of this is the one-man theatre production, 'Foley', presented at the Melbourne and Sydney festivals in 2011–12. 'Foley' told the story of the Aboriginal struggle through Foley's life story. It was commissioned and funded by both festivals – a rare occurrence in the Australian arts sector. Sixteen performances were staged at the Melbourne Arts Centre and Sydney Opera House and experienced by 4,284 people. The online education kit [1] was downloaded 274 times. 'Foley' received extremely positive theatre reviews, which also reported the show's themes and messages. For example, in Theatre Notes, Alison Croggon wrote: 'Foley highlighted the shameful fact that I know more about the US Civil Rights movement than I do about the history of Indigenous activism here... This history is not only necessary; it's fascinating. If nothing else, that these stories remain largely untold demonstrates how colonial Australian culture remains' [2].

Research into Foley's and others' ASIO files inspired the documentary series: Persons of Interest: The ASIO Files [3]. Episode 3 focused on Foley and premiered at the 2013 Melbourne International Film Festival to a sold-out audience (390 people), then aired nationally on SBS TV in 2014. The episode won Best Documentary Feature at the 2014 Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards and was nominated for a Walkley Award. The series was a finalist in the 2014 NSW Premier's History Awards. It was the first historical analysis of ASIO's past surveillance activities ever published and highlighted the need to scrutinise ASIO's activities, as evidenced by Mark McKenna's review in The Monthly [4]. Screen Australia was the principal investor. One reviewer wrote that the series 'deserves to be on the high school history syllabus... and its contents deserve to be the subject of national outrage. Persons of Interest is a milestone in Australian documentary, the most revealing insight into stealthy manipulations since Rats in the Ranks.' [5]

Research also informed The Redfern Story documentary (2014), and Irish and Canadian documentaries about assimilation and the global anti-apartheid movement, respectively. Foley collaborated with artist Richard Bell on the acclaimed Imagining Victory video trilogy, which exposed Australia's contentious history of racial relations and was exhibited at 9 galleries.

To rebalance the narrative and build understanding, Foley conducted more than 130 public talks, lectures, workshops and media interviews during the reference period. For e.g., he spoke at NRL Indigenous players camps, was guest speaker on the Australian tour of leading US intellectual Dr Cornel West, and delivered cultural awareness training to Red Cross and Amnesty International personnel.

Foley's research group fielded numerous requests to contribute to curricula and school textbooks, thus influencing

the Aboriginal history narrative taught in Australian schools. Students and teachers now have access to new reference material about Aboriginal activism and historical political issues. For e.g., Foley contributed 'Chapter 10: A short history of the Australian Indigenous resistance 1950–1990' in Nelson Aboriginal Studies [6]. This book was developed with the Aboriginal Education Council of NSW, the NSW Department of Education and Communities, and the NSW Office of the Board of Studies. It supports Stage 6 Aboriginal Studies in NSW and is used as an educational reference in other states.

In 2015, Foley's 'The Koori History Website' (TKHW) was added as a prominent reference portal on the Victorian Department of Education and Training's FUSE curriculum resource website (Humanities: Koori history student resources). TKHW has had over 2 million hits since it went live in 1994. David Browne, Vice-President of the Aboriginal Studies Association (ASA), describes Nelson and TKHW as "go-to" references for around 600 Aboriginal Studies students in NSW and their teachers. TKHW is also a reference link in the 'Activism and Representation' section of the Australian Institute of ATSI Studies' The Little Red Yellow Black Book (2012 ed.) and associated website.

The group's work seeded the Aboriginal History Archive, an internationally significant digital archive about the Aboriginal resistance. Supported by ARC LIEF funding, this project opens up access to a vast repository of almost 500,000 Foley Collection items including correspondence, manuscripts, press clippings, photos, videos and campaign ephemera. The ARC website describes VU's research group as representing 'the first of many high-impact research users of this unique material'.

Foley and his collaborators also published books that achieved impact beyond academia, including The Aboriginal Tent Embassy [7]; Decolonizing Solidarity [8]; and edited Barrie Dexter's book Pandora's Box: The Council of Aboriginal Affairs. The significance of the latter book is indicated by Paul Daley in The Guardian: '[It] offers an extraordinary insight into the commonwealth's policy – and political – responses to the 1967 referendum and to the political class's early (often bigoted) attitudes towards Indigenous Australians... The book is a remarkable historical document' [9].

## Associated research

*(Briefly describe the research that led to the impact presented for the UoA. The research must meet the definition of research in Section 1.9 of the EI 2018 Submission Guidelines. The description should include details of:*

- what was researched*
- when the research occurred*
- who conducted the research and what is the association with the institution*
- details of any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities who were consulted throughout the research.)*

From 2005–12, Gary Foley undertook a PhD in History at the University of Melbourne (UoM), focusing on an under-researched period of Aboriginal political resistance: Australia's Black Power movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Tent Embassy. The research drew on Foley's vast personal archive developed over 40 years of activism, his ASIO files, and other individuals' archives, including those of fellow activist Bruce McGinness and former federal bureaucrat Barrie Dexter.

Foley's thesis, completed in 2013 and supported through his Victoria University (VU) employ, presented a new narrative on a crucial period in Australian history. It challenged prevailing academic understandings, debunked popular misconceptions, and was praised by its assessors. The dissertation was awarded a UoM Chancellor's Prize for Excellence in the PhD Thesis and described as: '...a seminal piece of Australian political history, unique in its autobiographical approach and steeped in academic practice'.

After joining VU in 2008 as a Senior Lecturer in the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit, the Unit expanded to accommodate a research program around the 'Foley Collection'. This included appointing Dr Edwina Howell in 2010 to support the cataloguing and study of the archive. Howell completed her concurrent PhD thesis in 2013 about the activist strategies of the Black Power movement through the life of Foley. Their complementary research opened up a major program of research and advocacy at VU.

## FoR of associated research

*(Up to three two-digit FoRs that best describe the associated research)*

16 - Studies in Human Society

21 - History and Archaeology

13 - Education

### References (up to 10 references, 350 characters per reference)

*(This section should include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant research outputs associated with the impact)*

1.Perry, David, 'Foley: Education Resource Pack', ILBIJERRI Theatre Company (Australia) and Melbourne Festival (2011). ([http://d2mv4hhud78qhy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Melbourne\\_Festival\\_Foley\\_Education\\_Pack.pdf](http://d2mv4hhud78qhy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Melbourne_Festival_Foley_Education_Pack.pdf))

2.Croggon, Alison, Theatre Notes, 'Melbourne Festival review: Whiteley's Incredible Blue, Foley' (October 14, 2011)

3.Keenan, Haydn (Dir.), 'Persons of Interest' 4-part documentary series (Episode 3: Gary Foley), Smart Street Films, Melbourne International Film Festival (2013), SBS TV (2014)

4.McKenna, Mark, The Monthly, 'Documentary series charts the history of Australia's intelligence-gathering operations' (February 2014) (<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2014/february/1391173200/mark-mckenna/asio-surveillance-persons-interest>)

5.Gleeson, Sean, Beat magazine, 'Persons of Interest' (2013) (<http://www.beat.com.au/arts/persons-interest#sthash.PXvXhrAF.dpuf>)

6.Foley, Gary, 'A short history of the Australian Indigenous Resistance 1950-1990' Ch. 10 in Cadzow, Allison, John Maynard et al, Nelson Aboriginal Studies, South Melbourne, Vic Cengage Learning (2012)

7.Foley, Gary, Schaap, Andrew and Howell, Edwina (eds), The Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Sovereignty, Black Power, Land Rights and the State, Routledge: London UK (2013)

8.Land, C (with introduction by Foley, G), Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles, Zed Books Ltd (2015), and its associated website (<http://decolonizingsolidarity.org/>), and Book Club Resource Pack and Facebook community.

9.Daley, Paul, The Guardian, 'When two old foes opened Pandora's box, it unleashed an unlikely reconciliation', (29 May 2015) (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2015/may/29/book-opens-pandoras-box-of-sad-foes-but-true-of-indigenous-experience>)

10.Behrendt, Larissa, The Guardian, 'Gary Foley, the activist and artist, makes Australia come to him (May 2015). (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/27/gary-foley-the-activist-and-artist-makes-australia>)

come-to-him)



## Additional impact indicator information

### Additional impact indicator information

*(Provide information about any indicators not captured above that are relevant to the impact study, for example return on investment, jobs created, improvements in quality of life years (QALYs). Additional indicators should be quantitative in nature and include:*

- name of indicator (100 characters)*
- data for indicator (200 characters)*
- brief description of indicator and how it is calculated (300 characters).*

Name

Gary Foley recognised for the significant impact of his work in Australia's Indigenous arts sector

Indicator Data

Foley won the 2015 Red Ochre Award – Australia's most prestigious peer-assessed award for an Indigenous artist – for his outstanding contributions to the recognition of ATSI arts, here and overseas.

Indicator Description

Larissa Behrendt wrote about Foley winning the award in The Guardian on 27/5/15 [10]: 'Gary Foley's renaissance is a reminder of the interplay between the arts and the agenda for long-term structural change; between protest in the street and an intellectual agenda for societal transformation'.

Name

YouTube advice for white supporters of Aboriginal rights

Indicator Data

2 instructional YouTube videos featuring Foley have been viewed over 36,000 times since 2011

Indicator Description

Two YouTube videos of Foley talking about the mistakes well-meaning white people make when trying to support Indigenous causes have increased awareness in the community about misplaced white activism. They are: 'Advice for white Indigenous activists' and 'Educate YOURSELF, then educate the people'.