

## INTRODUCTION

It is most unfortunate that the inquiry and the nature of this inquiry was not more widely known as there are many South Australians still living who have understandably an avid and involved interest in the whole question of what has come to be known as Maralinga.. I myself have only to come to know of it very lately so it is no surprise that Aboriginal people, particularly those in the bush who are much further outside the knowledge of Parliamentary Committees and such like would have no idea that such official discussions are proceeding about events in South Australia which have proved cataclysmic for themselves and their families.

I am in fact astounded to discover that Aboriginal/ Indigenous Australians have not been under consideration at all in this study. Surely then from the beginning this invalidates the study. **I trust then that Standing Committee members were vigorously pursue and seek to rectify this astounding omission;** astounding that the very people whose lifestyle and lack of knowledge of what was going on at the time ensured that they be potentially the most vulnerable as a group of all those affected by the tests, become further disadvantaged by exclusion from this study. How this serious error which of course undermines the validity of the entire study may be rectified must be a cause of concern and a task for the Standing Committee to challenge those responsible. It would seem that nothing less than an adjunct study specifically aimed at Aboriginal/Indigenous affected population will suffice.

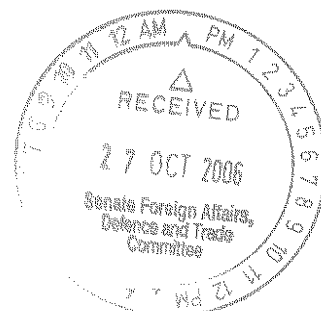
**One way that the names of Aboriginal families and family groups so affected become known and so followed up would be consulting official written records available**

- e.g. station books of the area where Aboriginal workers were listed.
- A more obvious source in this year of 2006, over 20 years after the Australian Royal Commission into the British Nuclear Tests are the listings of Aboriginal peoples involved (Cf the Hearings at Wallatina, n-e South Australia)

**By consulting with /notifying relevant Aboriginal organisations - e.g. Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) Adelaide main office, Port Augusta, Ceduna;  
Umooona Aged Care Coober Pedy;  
Anangu Pitjantjatjara/ Yankunytjatjara (APY) Council, Umuwa SA  
Maralinga Tjarutja Office, Ceduna  
Yalata Community Council, Yalata  
Tallawon Health, Yalata**

Research work done by Maggie Brady of Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies ( AIATSIS) including her very relevant published work *Diet and Dust in the Desert*.

Other documentation - see below



My own involvement with South Australian Aboriginal people from Yalata/ Oak Valley and from Coober Pedy and environs has meant over many years a great deal of involvement in the history of the ' bomb ' simply because the people so frequently refer to it.

**It stands as a cataclysmic marker in the lives of the groups and of many individuals.**

**For the 'Maralinga'/Oak Valley people**

- It was the cause of the proximate annexing of the ' Maralinga'/Ooldea Lands by the Government,
- the removal of the entire peoples,
- the banning of their return to their ancestral lands for 30 years so disabling the practice of their ceremonial culture and care of their places, as well as the trauma of exile and to some extent institutionalisation
- the poisoning of the land
- the traumatisation, sickness and earlier death of many of their members - and without diagnosis,

**For the Yankunyjatjara/ Pitjantjatjara people**

the traumatisation, sickness and earlier death of many of their members

**For Aboriginal 'station' people south of Wallatinna and**

**For those living in between both the APY area and Maralinga/Yalata area**  
e.g. in Coober Pedy, Woomera, Port Augusta etc It meant much of the above with the added disadvantage that most, if not all, had no knowledge of the Royal Commission and so have never had a chance to speak of their experiences to an official Government body and so of the chance to have their own experiences heard and the chance of compensation for the trauma, sick and death of so many of their people. (See below)

## **MY OWN TESTIMONY**

In September 1993 I moved to Coober Pedy and was almost immediately co-opted by a senior Aboriginal woman Jessie Lennon to help her write her memoirs. The traumatic experience of witnessing what others had called the Black Mist of Totem 1, the first nuclear explosion at Emu Junction north of Coober Pedy was big focus of this.

I was also co-opted by Mrs Lennon, her partner Ricky Brown and another Aboriginal Elder Larry Pilungu Crombie, (all of whom had Pitjantjatjara/Yankunyjatjara as their first language, non literate but who also spoke English) to help them follow through a series of meetings which had begun the previous year at their initiative with the aim of having their own experiences of suffering the nuclear tests acknowledged and compensation

granted. Mrs Lennon refers with great frustration and sadness to both the tests ordeal and consequences - and to the later foiled efforts of meetings - in her book:  
*I'm the one that know this country* by Jessie Lennon AIATSIS, Canberra 2000.

As Minute taker and co convenor of the second and third (the last) of these meetings as well as facilitator of the above book as well as numerous unofficial conversations of which I was part I became (surprisingly to me) as immersed in the effects of the nuclear tests as I had in the previous number of years when associating with Yalata/Oak Valley ('Maralinga') people both in Adelaide and while living in Yalata.

Knowing only too well the yearnings of those involved in these minutes to have their sufferings and their just cause for compensation recognised I send a summary of data from these meetings as part of this current submission. If relevant people had been made aware of the study and the hearings, the hand written Minutes which much valuable material could have been made available. There is nothing to stop this happening if the required follow up is launched.

A further period of immersion into the 'business of Maralinga' took place between 1998-2001 in particular as the honorary secretary for the *Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta* - Senior Aboriginal Women's Council in Coober Pedy in their efforts to protect their ancestral country. The experience of many of the women with the British nuclear testing of the 50s had led them to understand more clearly and immediately the serious ramifications of nuclear waste.

There are many written documents/ press releases/ press cuttings and website references in Australia during these years as to their experiences being documented. Overseas journalists, particularly intrigued with their 1950s experiences, and documentary makers also spread their message further as the women travelled as far from Coober Pedy as Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra as well as to their own capital city of Adelaide. Journalists, including international journalists also made the trip to Coober Pedy in the above years as well as following from 2002-4.

The *Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta* invited a corresponding group of Elders from Oak Valley/ Yalata to share their 'Maralinga' experiences with interested people at 10 Mile Creek outside Coober Pedy in October 2004. There several hundred people heard the Y/OV people share their 'experiences of the bomb' for the first time some said for such a large unofficial audience. Even after almost 50 years the telling was a traumatic experience.

I trust that this submission will bring clearly in focus what might be called the fatal flaw in the matter before the Standing Committee. Service personnel and families and anyone affected by the British nuclear testing in Australia richly deserve to also be heard and compensated however not to the present exclusion of the Aboriginal people so affected. How can this possibly be justified.

I assure the Standing Committee Members that I would give my utmost co-operation to help facilitate any necessary work required to achieve a fair and equitable outcome for all

those affected notably including the Aboriginal/Indigenous people - not just for those chosen.

Following is an important part of the submission-  
the pages summarising findings in Meetings of the early 1990s Coober Pedy, referred to above.

Sent on behalf of the people there named and families.

(Permission previously given to be used in any way possible to bring about desired acknowledgement and compensation.)

Thank you for receiving my submission.

Yours faithfully,

*Michele Madigan*

Michele Madigan  
(Sister of St Joseph)  
Murray Bridge, South Australia  
(08) 8531 2330

27th October 2006

PART 2

DOCUMENTATION re ABORIGINAL PEOPLE at TWELVE MILE and MABEL CREEK

THE BOMB CAUGHT US."

1) PEOPLE WHO WERE AT 12 MILE WHEN THE BOMB CAUGHT US

Jessie Lennon

Barney Lennon

Bernard Lennon aged about 6 or 7 years

Emily Lennon aged about 5 years

Beaver Lennon aged about 3 years

Jessie Lennon's mother, Rosie Austin

Jessie Lennon's sister, Jane.

Edna Williams

Willie Williams

Shirley Williams aged about 3 - a toddler

Maureen Williams - just sitting up i.e. not yet 1 year

Lallie Lennon's old mother.

Kaylene Miller aged about 6 or 7 years with her mother.

\*\*\*\*\*

Immediate Effects

Jessie Lennon's mother and sister were very ill but every one was very sick - vomiting, diarrhoea, sore eyes. (see Jessie Lennon's account sent previously.)

"We couldn't eat if you tried to, you'd vomit

(and any way the game - kangaroo tasted 'funny.')

Luckily Barney Lennon had a truck he'd bought from finding opal and took everyone at the camp to hospital all the way to Port Augusta 500 kilometres on the old dirt road.

(The Stuart Highway wasn't sealed till the 1980s)

3) Longer Term Effects

Edna and Willie Williams "got better quickly" from the immediate effects.

However, Edna thinks her later frequent ill health is a result.

However, Edna thinks her later frequent ill health is a result. Their daughter, Maureen, developed a bad skin rash or rather peeling which has come and gone on her face all her life up till the present day.

Kaylene Miller has a number of warts on her face.

One of her children, now in his mid teens, has six toes on each foot.

Jessie Lennon developed cancer of the breast but an operation on the breast some years ago successfully removed the cancerous tissue.

Her grand daughter, Naomi Lennon, her son Joseph's child, developed cancer as a young child. Joseph born after the bomb was born at Port Augusta Hospital in 1956 when the family were living at Andamooka.

Her mother and sister are dead many years. Her sister, Janie had many children but died young.

Barney Lennon died in 1987

#### MABEL CREEK

Eileen Wingfield (then Allen) and baby Marlene.

Her sister, Alma Allen

Her mother, Winnie

Her father, Tim Allen

Topsy Lang and Frankie Lang and their adult daughter Ida Lang, brother, Archie Lang.

Old Nellie

Bulla Buzzacott

Eileen Crombie, a young girl with her parents Nancy and Peter Russell.

Billy Brown.

Linda Brown's old mother and father.

Linda Brown who was pregnant at the time, & her husband Paddy Packsaddle/Buzzacott were shepherding sheep at nearby Hawker's Nest. Also son Bobby Brown born "during the War" - about 1942.

Effects.

After maybe a week i.e. not on the same day everybody began to be sick - vomiting, diarrhoea, blood running from the nose.

Nobody made the connection with the Bomb as knew nothing about such things. Blamed germs coming with the mail truck etc.

No thought to go to hospital, "knew nothing of doctors - we lived all our lives in the bush." (Eileen W. tape)

Old Nellie died soon after.

Frankie Lang's hair began falling out soon after and generally the old people lost their vitality - previously "walking everywhere carrying their swags" to just "lying down."

Eileen Wingfield's taped interview They were now ill "all the time."

Ida Lang "died young."

Bulla Buzzacott lived many years after the Bomb but was a sick person (became crippled) for many of these years. Had previous good health.

Nancy Russell died early. (Her husband lived to 100! d. 1993)

Eileen Wingfield's mother developed swelling in the left breast almost immediately afterwards. This continued for many years - no doctors. Finally, she was airlifted to hospital but died on the plane. Her husband, Tim Allen remained healthy.

Eileen leads an active life, has blood pressure and diabetes.

Four of her adult children have different forms of ill health.

(Tape) Also the youngest, Winnie has a type of peeling skin.

Both Eileen Wingfield and Eileen Crombie have had a history of eye trouble.

(1996). Linda Brown died only last year in her 70s. For a long time Linda Brown "had trouble with a family" e.g. had miscarriages.

Linda Brown's daughter, Georgina Dingaman was born after the 12 Mile incident with two fingers webbed together - "glued together." (middle finger over the first finger). They are still like this today.

Bobby Brown (interview today 22/5/97) distinguishes between "the 1953 Bomb" and "the 1956 Bomb" by which time he was living in what is the present day town area of Coober Pedy. His notes from the Woomera Hospital are dated 1957. He was admitted with "skin problems and abcess on the skin."

Note that many people were living on various stations, moving around with the work available. (see below, Millie Taylor.) Eileen Wingfield notes how at the usual gatherings of Aboriginal people at the annual Kingoonya and Tarcoola Races, most were ill and people commented on it. (tape.)

Other.

1) There was no money for the Australian Radiation Laboratory to conduct tests on the soil at 12 Mile though before the ATSI cuts of the 1996 Federal Budget, some preliminary arrangements had been made.

2) Copies were obtained in 1995 of results of tests made a number of years ago on buildings and a bulldozer which had been salvaged from Maralinga and brought here to Coober Pedy.

The tests were said to show no radiation above acceptable levels.

Obviously this is a different issue.

3) Another copy of the slide taken in Coober Pedy on 27 Sept. 1956 has been made and also permission obtained from the owner John Wake to send it to you. Vin Wake, his father, was an opal buyer in Coober Pedy and John was with him at Coober Pedy on the day they saw the smoke of the Bomb above the normal cloud (This normal cloud is on the lower level of the slide.) Having seen the upper cloud and knowing that the bomb was going off that day, they went inside to get the camera.

John Wake also provided a sketch - also enclosed.

\*\*\*Re which Bomb it was.

4) Since we have gathered the birth dates of the Lennon children (see below) it seems absolutely certain that the smoke which "caught" the people both at 12 Mile and Mabel Creek was the "Black Mist" from the Emu Bombs of 1953.

i.e. not 1956.

(As you would be well aware, the Explosions at Emu Field took place on October 15, 1953 - Totem 1

October 27, 1953 - Totem 2

The Lennons didn't return to Coober Pedy after going to the Port Augusta Hospital. It was "too dangerous."

A son, Billy Luke, since passed away as an adult was born in Port Augusta Hospital on 16 November 1953

while the family were living at Finnis Springs.

Another boy, Joseph (see above) was born on May 25, 1956

while the family were living at Andamooka

(Previous to the family's experience of "being caught by the Bomb" - a child, Stanley had been born on the opal field at 12 Mile - on the 6th of June 1952. Because he had a "hair-lip and that," he was not able to breast feed so arrangements had been made to take him from 12 Mile to Umeewarra Mission in Port Augusta where he remained. There are only 3 children in Jessie Lennon's repeated accounts of "being caught"; namely Bernard, Emily and Beaver Lennon.)

The Lennon family never lived again in the Coober Pedy area as a family unit. Thus there could be no confusion with timings of living in Coober Pedy. Different members beginning with the father, Barney Lennon, moved back later.

Edna and Willie Williams also moved to Andamooka.

The Allen family then at Mabel Creek also moved away from the area to other stations and by "the time of the second Bomb" i.e. 1956, Eileen Allen (by then Eileen Wingfield) was living with her husband at Iron Knob.

\* Apparently the British official evidence says that it was "impossible" for the Emu fallout to affect this far westward as 12 Mile and Mabel Creek. As Edna Williams testifies, what was impossible was for the British to predict accurately what the wind would do.

\* The Aboriginal people of Coober Pedy were not previously informed of the Hearings of the 1985 Royal Commission and so were unable to present their case to this body - a fact that they have been protesting in these later years as the happening of the R.C. became general historical knowledge. After the Royal Commission was over, a representative came to the area and spoke about it to a group of people.

\* Three of the senior people in the Community - Jessie Lennon, her then husband Ricky Brown (lately deceased) and Larry Crombie were the main instigators of several meetings to put their case.

#### \*Further Comments

Eileen Wingfield

We were there at Mabel Creek. Trucks were going to Emu (along the Mabel Creek Road - at that time the route of the Stuart Highway.)

We never knew the Bomb was coming. We didn't ask (why the trucks were going along).

We thought it was soldiers. All we were thinking was about they were training for war.

Alf Turner had Mabel Creek then. Ida Lang, Alf Turner, his wife, another young fellow and Dan Turner (Tanner) (he's dead), Billy Brown went up the hill to see the Bomb.

Those trees used to nice and shady but now they're straggly.

- Aboriginal people stronger than trees?

(Alma Allen: The leaves were dry and falling off. the leaves were just loose.)