

# The History Council of NSW

is pleased to award the



## JOHN FERRY AWARD

for  
2007  
to

*Lorina Barker*

for her essay

### “Hangin’ out” and “Yarnin’”: Reflecting on the Experience of Collecting Oral Histories

This paper explores the writer’s experience, as a descendant of the Muruwari people of western New South Wales who returns to her childhood home for the purposes of scholarly research. It focuses on the problems of being simultaneously insider and outsider, and it tells the story of the writer’s changing methods and emotional approach. It is fascinating to hear from a writer who was both a member of the community under study - an Indigenous group - and at the same time distanced from it by place and by advanced education. The resulting problems of critical detachment are acute, and beautifully handled.

The paper is therefore an extremely useful account of some of the fundamental problems of community history. It offers a fine analysis of the practice of oral history in a very particular situation, pushing the critical literature in a number of significant ways by concentrating on the nature of the interviewer-

interviewee relationship and on the cultural context that surrounds oral history methodology. There is a strong analytical and self-reflective tone, which suggests a researcher grappling not only with the moral and emotional issues of good history but also with the evidence and the nature of the chosen methodology. All this indicates a commendable level of engagement with the problems inherent in the project and a highly enlightening relationship with the material.

The material is well arranged from beginning to end, and the research and scholarly judgements are thoroughly competent. The writing style is honest, direct and engaging, and the reader is carried forward not only by the writer’s sure sense of scholarly context but also by a vigorous narrative. With its keen attention to methodology, which was one of Dr Ferry’s leading concerns, the paper is a very suitable first winner of the John Ferry Award.

Awarded 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007



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by: .....

Professor Emerita Jill Roe AO  
President, History Council of NSW



# · JOHN FERRY AWARD ·

2007

## Judges' Report

Six entries were received for the inaugural year of the John Ferry Award. The judges found the standard to be high. The winner of the John Ferry Award for 2007 is Lorina Barker for her essay "*Hangin' out*" and "*Yarnin*": *Reflecting on the Experience of Collecting Oral Histories*. The judges also highly commend the following entrant:

*'A few honest men from Home': Assisted Immigration and the Family Economy at Ollera Station, Guyra, 1840-c.1860*  
By Margaret Eleanor Rodwell

This paper describes the managed immigration in the mid-nineteenth century of a community of English labouring families to New England, and their settlement by the Everett brothers on Ollera station, near Guyra.

The paper is characterised by a close analysis of the station records, which has enabled the writer to piece together a highly detailed account of the more homely aspects of immigrant life. The focus on the long-term relationship of employers and employees is excellent; likewise the detailed attention to income, expenditure and so on, which gives a vivid impression of the lives of working families.

Coupled with the regional, economic and social context of the station, the writer also considers the

situation in Wiltshire, the county of origin. The two ends of the migration chain are thus wonderfully illuminated.

The paper is an original and highly constructive piece of research and writing. The writing style is competent, with some nice flourishes here and there. The background reading and historical context are good. Not only has the writer uncovered intriguing details on regional migration, she has also provided a revisionist account of the economy of pastoral station life. By uncovering and contextualising the economic activities of women the paper is a valuable corrective to overly masculine accounts of bush and pastoral work, while at the same time enumerating the family economy activities of men and children.

