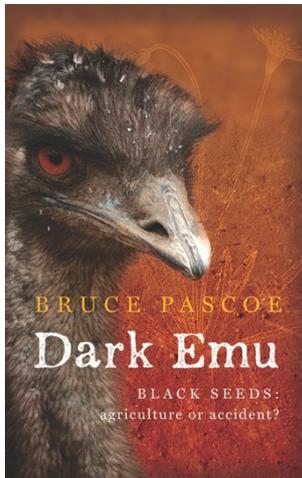


MEDIA RELEASE



Magabala's March 2014 Book Release

The truth about our past?

The latest foray into Australian Indigenous history by national award-winner Bruce Pascoe is set to re-ignite the long-running debate about the true nature of Aboriginal civilisation at the time of European colonisation.

Pascoe's book *Dark Emu – Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*, which hits the shelves in March, is a significant new contribution to the academic and social discourse about the true history of pre-European Australia and its Indigenous inhabitants.

Dark Emu argues for a reconsideration of the hunter-gatherer tag for pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians and attempts to rebut the entrenched, centuries-old notion that pre-European Aboriginal people were hunter-gatherers who did not farm the land they occupied. This descriptor – so deeply embedded in mainstream Australia's concept of Indigenous history – is refuted by Bruce Pascoe in easily-read and non-academic prose.

"The evidence insists that Aboriginal people right across the continent were using domesticated plants, sowing, harvesting, irrigating and storing – behaviours inconsistent with the hunter-gatherer tag," he says.

This premise is supported by scholars Rupert Gerritsen and Bill Gammage in their latest works, but *Dark Emu* takes it further and challenges the hunter-gatherer tag as a convenient lie promulgated by colonisers who ignored the possibility of prior Indigenous possession of the land.

Almost all the evidence comes from original records and diaries of Australian explorers — sources academic historians consider impeccable — and presents new material not covered by others.

Says Bruce: "My book is about food production, housing construction and clothing.

"Gammage opened the debate by revealing that colonists said that Australia looked like an English park. *Dark Emu* analyses the reasons why the hunter-gatherer label was still applied to Aboriginal people despite the colonial texts showing an entirely different economy.

"Aborigines did sow, grow, irrigate, preserve and build. Hunter-gatherers do not do that. Time to look again."

Dark Emu is essentially trying to reinterpret Australian history.

ends

About Bruce Pascoe

Winner of the Prime Ministers Literary Award for YA Fiction, 2013, for Fog a Dox.

Bruce Pascoe is a Bunurong man born in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond. He is a member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative of southern Victoria and has been the director of the Australian Studies Project for the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Bruce

has had a varied career as a teacher, farmer, fisherman, barman, fencing contractor, lecturer, Aboriginal language researcher, archaeological site worker and editor.

Books include the short story collections *Night Animals* (1986) and *Nightjar* (2000); the novels *Fox* (1988), *Ruby Eyed Coucal* (1996), *Ribcage* (1999), *Shark* (1999), *Earth* (2001), and *Ocean* (2002); historical works *Cape Otway: Coast of secrets* (1997) and *Convincing Ground* (2007); the childrens' book *Foxies in a Firehose* (2006); and the young adult fiction *Fog a Dox* (2012).