NEW RELEASE FROM UWA PUBLISHING

JUST RELATIONS
The Story of Mary Bennett’s Crusade for Aboriginal Rights
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by Alison Holland

Shortlisted, 2016 NSW Premier’s History Awards

Just Relations charts the life and work of one of Australia’s leading twentieth century human rights advocates. It recovers the efforts of Mary Bennett to found a ‘just relationship’ between Aborigines and non-Aborigines from the late 1920s, when the possibility of Aboriginal human rights was first mooted on the international stage, to the 1960s, when an attempt was made to have the Aboriginal question raised before the United Nations.

In viewing this crusade as humanitarianism, Holland reveals the ethics of care, as well as the tensions, contradictions and investments at the heart of humanitarian intervention. In demonstrating the close connection between humanitarianism, as a political project and the rise of human rights, Holland tells an important chapter in the little known history of human rights in Australia.

Dr Alison Holland lectures in the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University. She has taught a variety of Australian history subjects, including environmental and Aboriginal history, and specialises in Aboriginal-settler relations in a global comparative frame. Alison has published widely on issues of Aboriginal and feminist history, as well as citizenship.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES
For media enquiries, or to arrange an author interview, please contact Nikki Anderson for UWA Publishing on 0405 539 055 or nikki.anderson@ozemail.com.au.
A copy of your review would be appreciated.
On October 6 1961, Mary Bennett, leading advocate for Aboriginal human rights, died in Kalgoorlie hospital aged eighty. At that moment, a close friend of hers, Ada Bromham, was sitting at her kitchen table sorting through her papers which she described as lining two rooms of the small home from the floor to three-quarters of the way up the walls. She had finished sorting through them when she received the news of Mary’s death. Not long after ... she heard a knock on the front door. On opening it two suited men representing the Western Australian Crown Law department, carrying large suitcases, barged past her, walked into the house, and scooped up as much as they were able, including what she had set aside for herself on the table, leaving only the Hansards.

This book started with my efforts to retrieve Bennett’s papers. I never found a single collection. Rather I found threads in archives around Australia and England, particularly in the papers of fellow humanitarians and advocates for Aboriginal rights. This thread and the tussle over her papers revealed an important part of her story. Bennett’s articulation of the need for humane intervention in the lives of Aboriginal people was not hers alone but one she shared with others across the middle years of the twentieth century.

—Alison Holland, extract from the prologue to Just Relations

A solid and methodical book such as the one Holland has written...feels valuable.
—Anna Heyward, The Australian

Holland’s biography is a major achievement.
It is also essential reading for anyone interested in Australian history.
—Marilyn Lake, The University of Melbourne

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