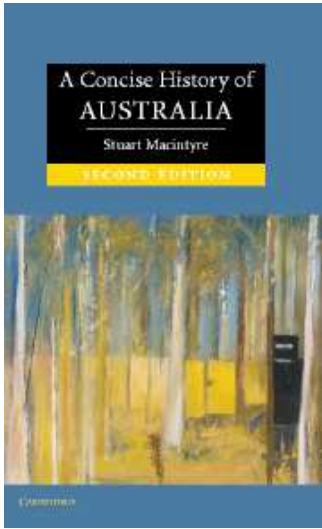


A concise history of Australia by Stuart Macintyre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn., 2004, pp XIV + 342, £40.00, hardback, ISBN 0 521 84122 4, £14.99, paperback, ISBN 0 521 60101 0.



Macintyre is from the school of Australian history inspired by Geoffrey Bolton, whom he says still teaches him. He says that readers of this history will see where his sympathies lie. Macintyre seeks to include Australians whose contribution to the history of their own country has not been given sufficient emphasis in most previous histories of Australia. This is the case with Aborigines. He shows that they played a much more important role in the early white settlement of Australia than many previous histories have suggested. Macintyre agrees with Henry Reynolds that Aborigines often suffered appalling treatment at the hands of white Australians. He disagrees with the current prime minister of Australia, John Howard, who repudiates the 'black armband' view of Australia's past. Howard favours the work of revisionist historians such as Keith Windschuttle, who has challenged the work of historians such as Reynolds on the tragedy of Australia's Aborigines.

Macintyre has fully updated this second edition of his book to include events up to 2004. He views the period since the victory of John Howard in the general election of 1996 very unfavourably. Howard has succeeded in reversing many of the progressive reforms of his predecessors from both the Labor opposition and his own party. Macintyre is particularly critical of Howard's policies towards Aborigines and immigrants. He suggests in his conclusion that Australia has lost its self-confidence and no longer provides inspiration to progressive reformers from other countries as it did at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it could be argued that there has been a struggle for supremacy between conservative and progressive forces in Australia since the first white settlement. Indeed Howard's current supremacy is very similar to that of his predecessor Sir Robert Menzies during the 1950s and 1960s.

Macintyre provides an excellent starting point for those who want to know more about most aspects of Australia's history. He also has a very useful bibliography. Macintyre's text is supplemented by a number of illustrations including portraits of many of Australia's former political leaders. Some may feel that the absence of a photograph of Gough Whitlam is regrettable given his important, if controversial, contribution to the modernisation of Australia which Macintyre fully acknowledges in his text.

RICHARD A. HAWKINS, *University of Wolverhampton*, 1 March 2005