

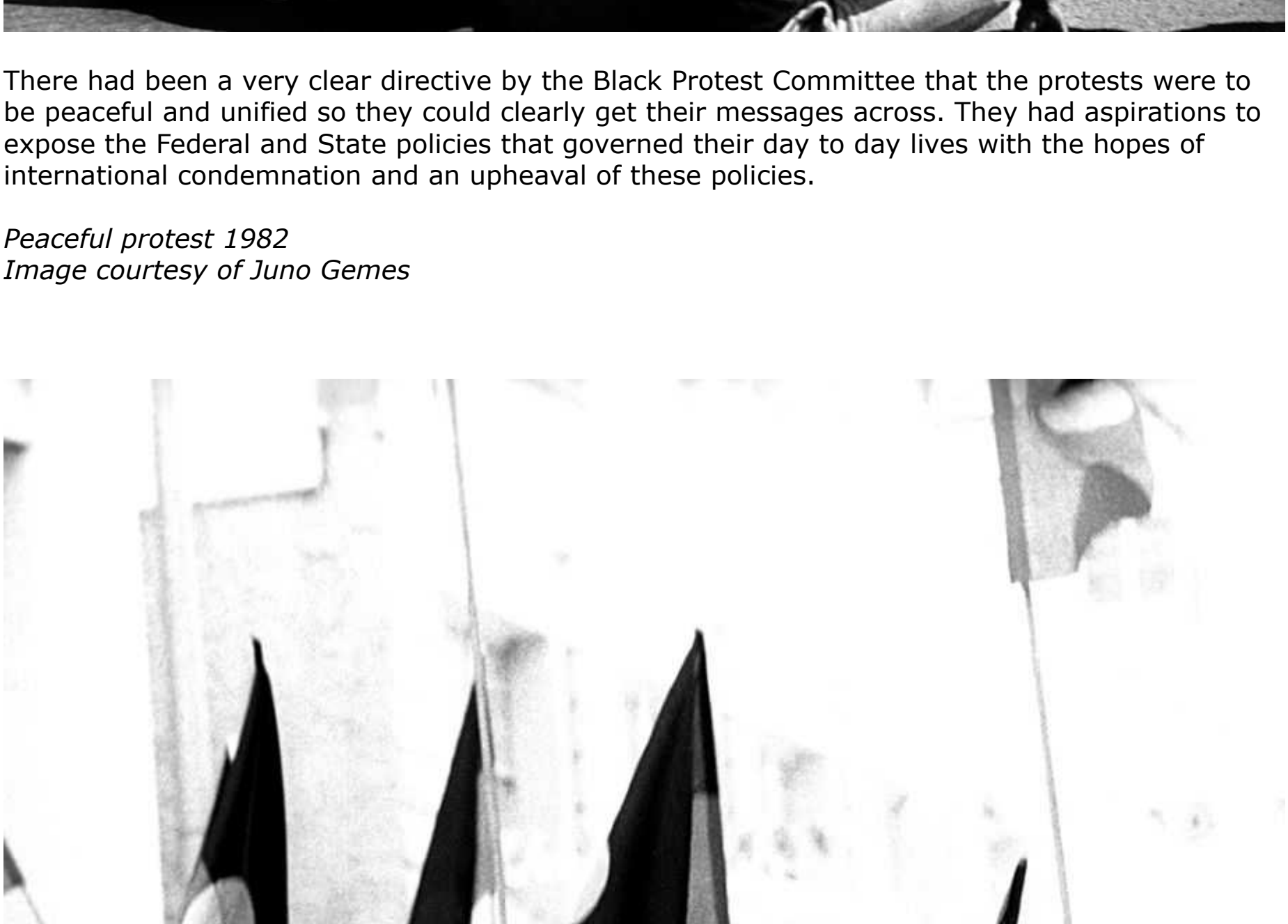


Upper Adelaide Street, Brisbane, 1982.

Image courtesy of Juno Gemes



Image courtesy of Juno Gemes



There had been a very clear directive by the Black Protest Committee that the protests were to be peaceful and unified so they could clearly get their messages across. They had aspirations to expose the Federal and State policies that governed their day to day lives with the hopes of international condemnation and an upheaval of these policies.

Peaceful protest 1982
Image courtesy of Juno Gemes



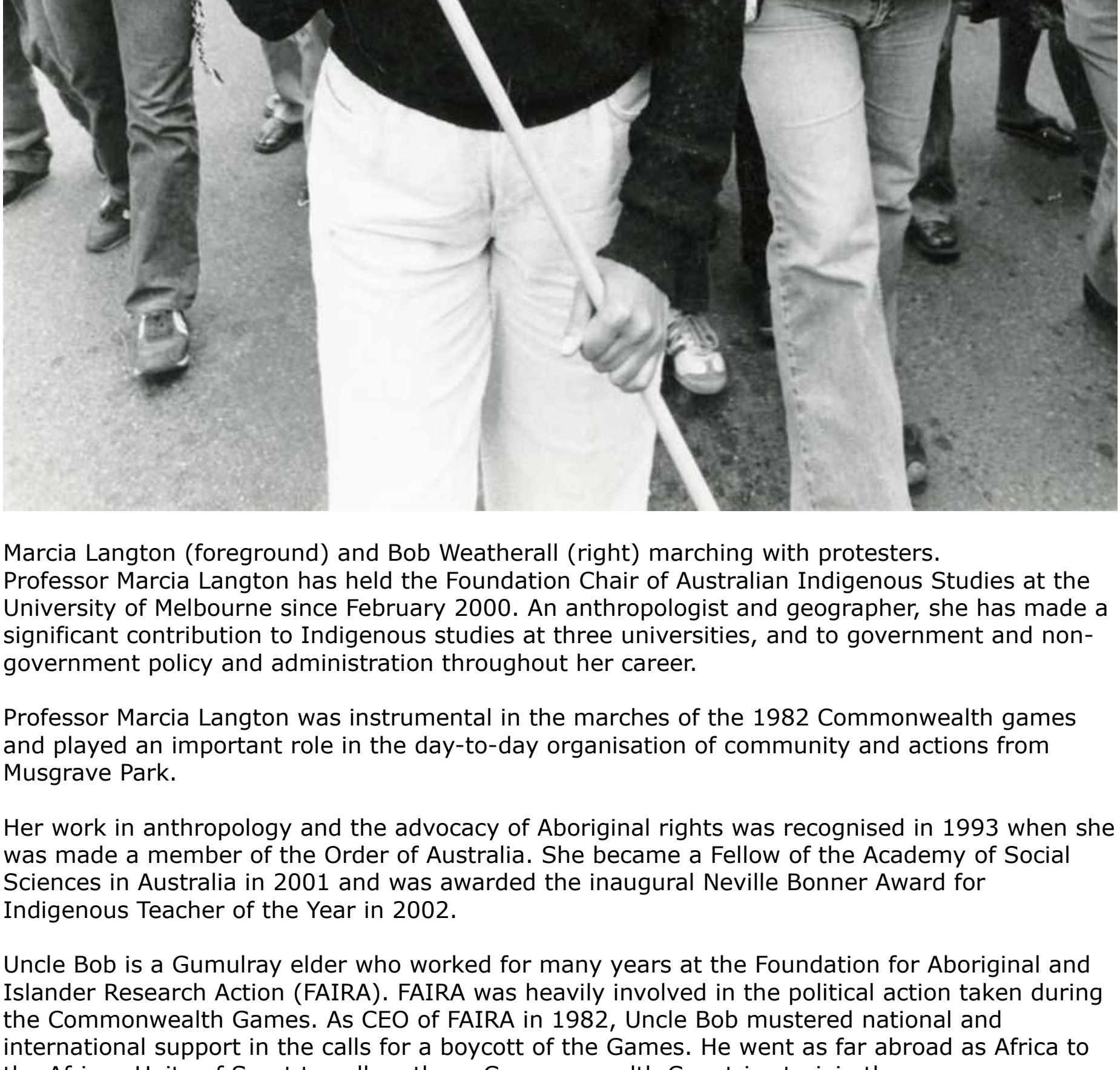
Lionel Fogarty at a land rights march.

Image courtesy of Juno Gemes



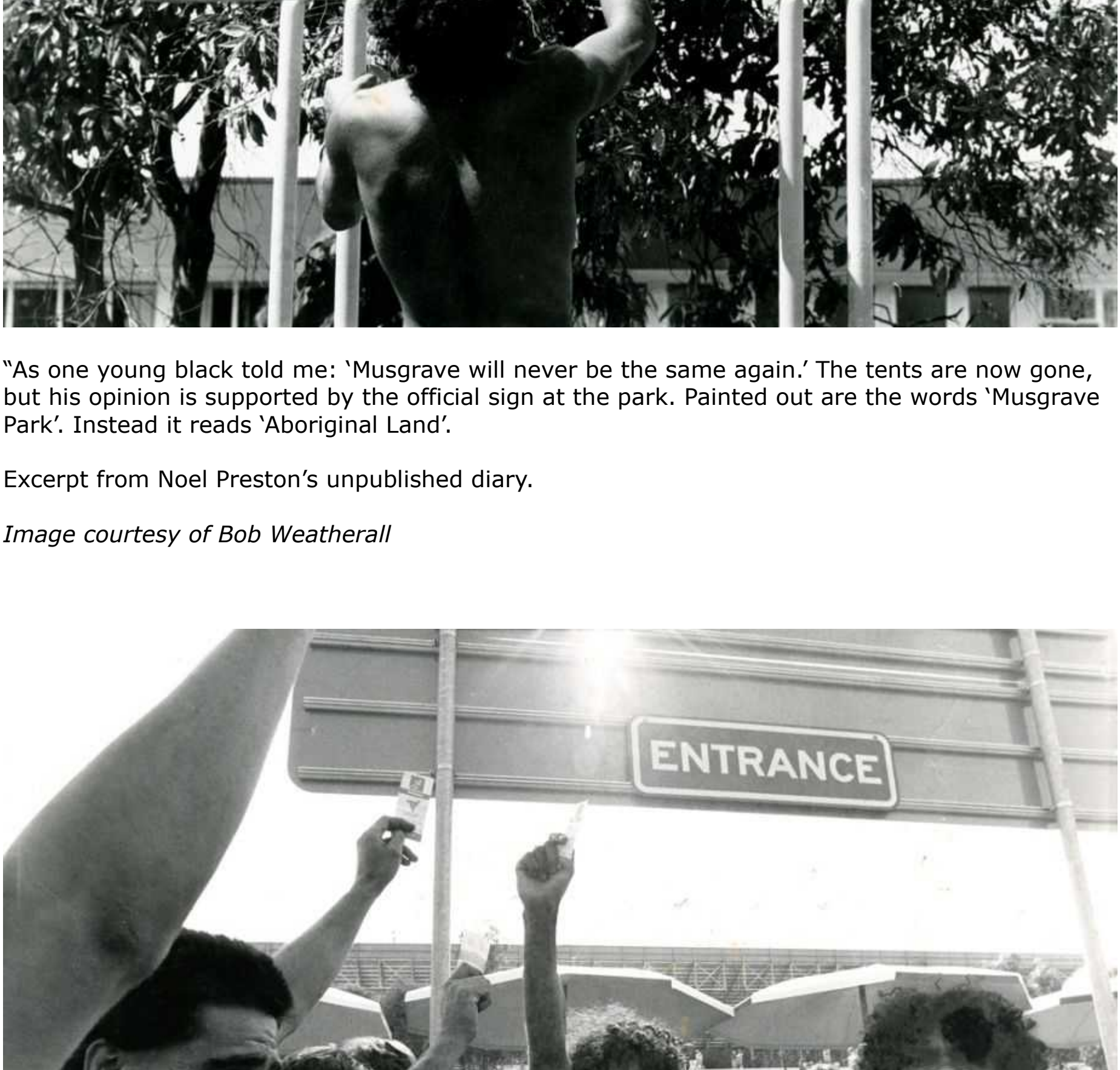
Uncle Steve made a placard saying, "We've been carrying Joh long enough", which he carried in the protests prior to the Games. It features a photograph of Joh Bjelke-Petersen in the Torres Strait, taken 22 February 1973, on Saibai Island during a campaign against the prospect to include Papua New Guinea as part of Australian territory. At the time, Torres Strait Islanders were often overlooked because of their isolation but as Indigenous people of Australia, they have very similar issues and he held this picket to represent his people.

Mick Miller and Steve Mam, 1982
Image courtesy of Juno Gemes



"The initiative in planning always remained with Aboriginal people in the Brisbane demonstrations. A Black Unity Committee representing various state delegations of blacks present in Brisbane, did the planning. Often the plans were kept secret from white supporters. This was particularly the case with the action at QEII Stadium on Monday 4 October 1982. Whites involved were only told five minutes before leaving for the stadium what was planned. Senator Bonner's reported comment that the illegal demonstrations were inspired by 'non-Aboriginals' sadly reflects how out of touch he was."

Excerpt from Noel Preston's unpublished diary.
Aboriginal Senator Neville Bonner questioned by media
Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall



Marcia Langton (foreground) and Bob Weatherall (right) marching with protesters. Professor Marcia Langton has held the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne since February 2000. An anthropologist and geographer, she has made a significant contribution to Indigenous studies at three universities, and to government and non-government policy and administration throughout her career.

Professor Marcia Langton was instrumental in the marches of the 1982 Commonwealth games and played an important role in the day-to-day organisation of community and actions from Musgrave Park.

Her work in anthropology and the advocacy of Aboriginal rights was recognised in 1993 when she was made a member of the Order of Australia. She became a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 2001 and was awarded the inaugural Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Teacher of the Year in 2002.

Uncle Bob is a Gumulray elder who worked for many years at the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA). FAIRA was heavily involved in the political action taken during the Commonwealth Games. As CEO of FAIRA in 1982, Uncle Bob mustered national and international support in the calls for a boycott of the Games. He went as far abroad as Africa to the African Unity of Sport to call on those Commonwealth Countries to join the cause.

Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall

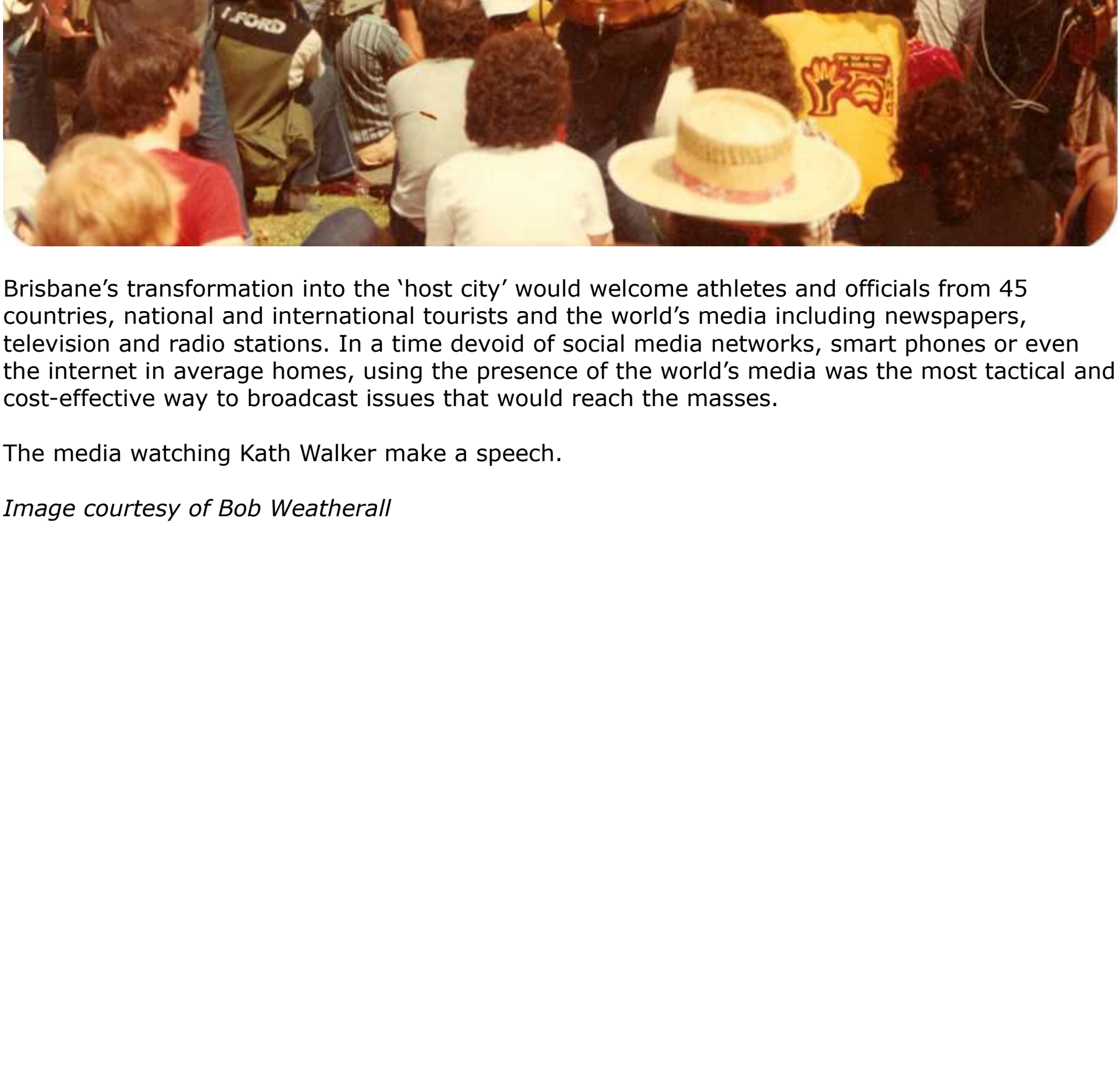


Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall

"As one young black told me: 'Musgrave will never be the same again.' The tents are now gone, but his opinion is supported by the official sign at the park. Painted out are the words 'Musgrave Park'. Instead it reads 'Aboriginal Land'.

Excerpt from Noel Preston's unpublished diary.
Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall

On 4 October 1982, a protest group entered the QE II Stadium for one of the main events of the XII Commonwealth Games: the 100m sprint where Australia's Raelene Boyle was the gold medal favourite. The group had purchased tickets and walked through the gates wearing regular clothes. After taking prime position in front of international media cameras, they revealed their flags and banners and displayed them for the world to see.

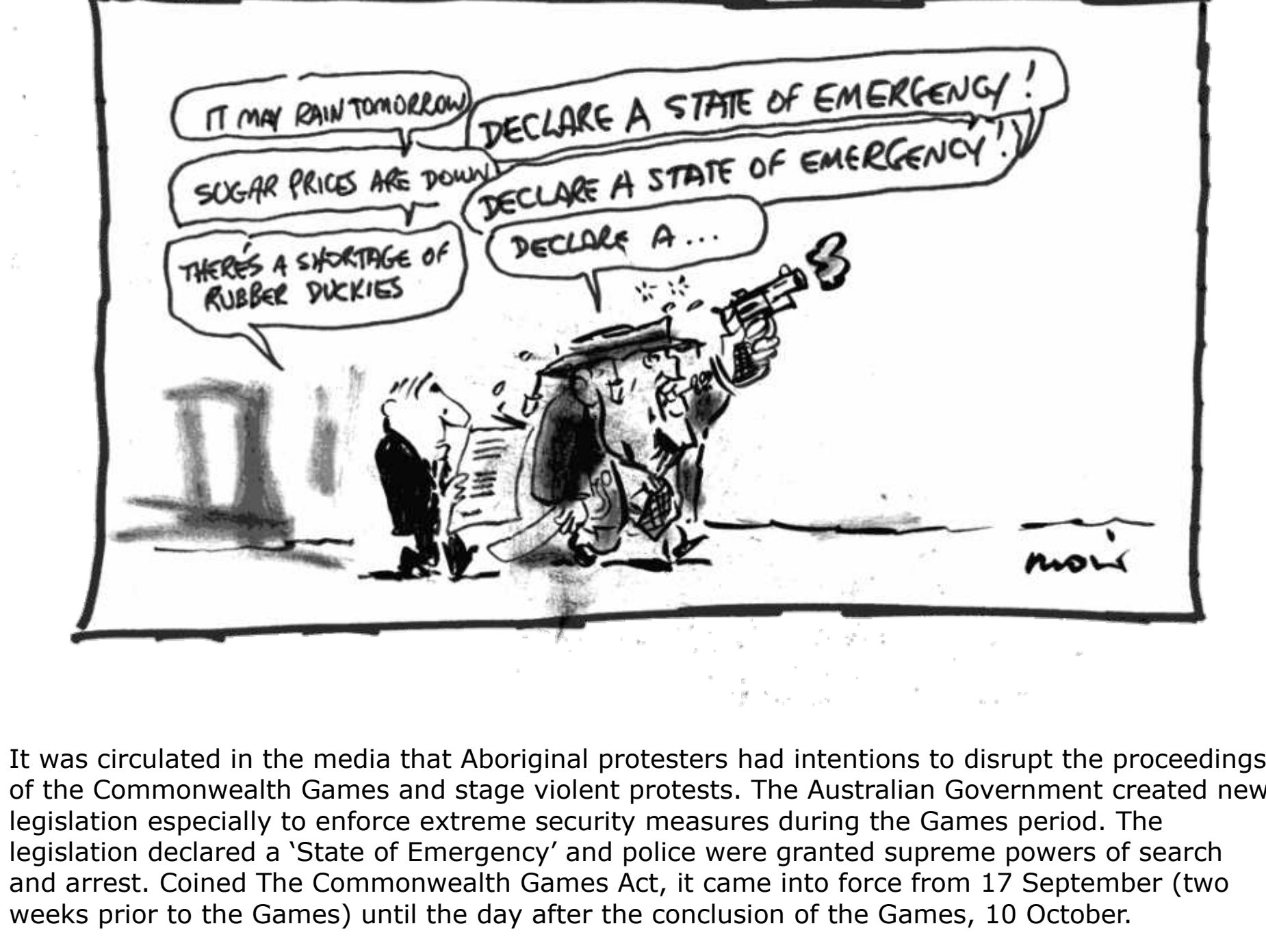
Some protesters with tickets were not allowed entry to sporting events.

Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall

Brisbane's transformation into the 'host city' would welcome athletes and officials from 45 countries, national and international tourists and the world's media including newspapers, television and radio stations. In a time devoid of social media networks, smart phones or even the internet in average homes, using the presence of the world's media was the most tactical and cost-effective way to broadcast issues that would reach the masses.

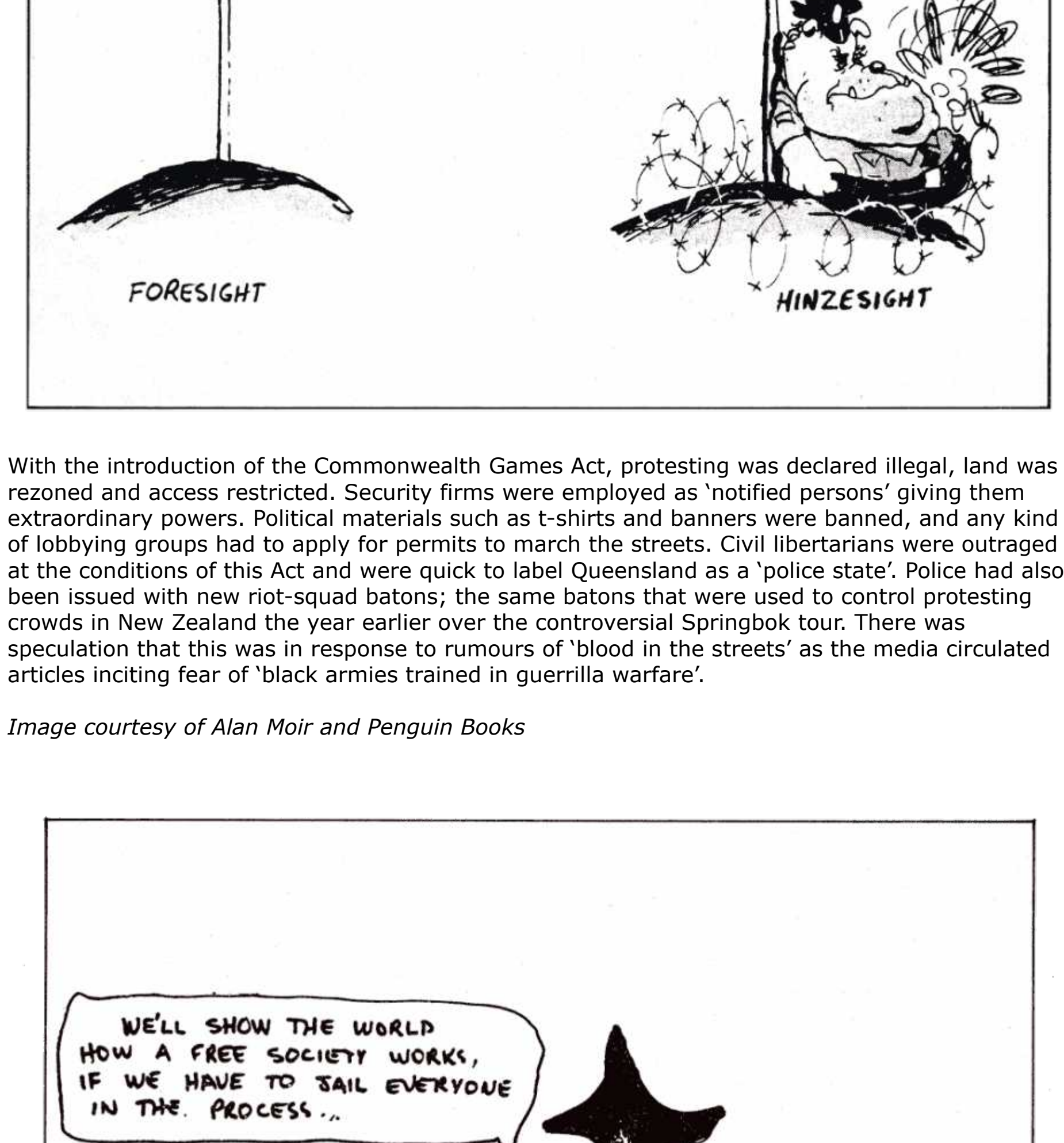
The media watching Kath Walker make a speech.

Image courtesy of Bob Weatherall



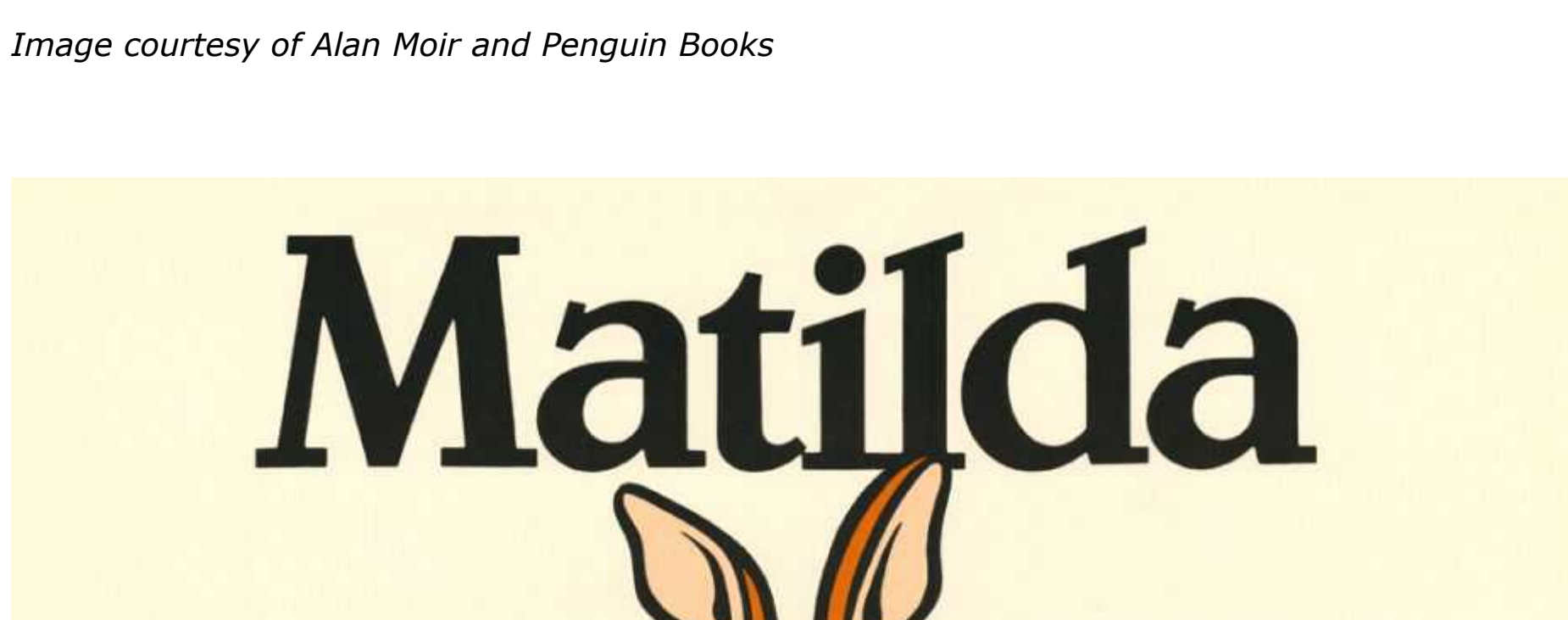
It was circulated in the media that Aboriginal protesters had intentions to disrupt the proceedings of the Commonwealth Games and stage violent protests. The Australian Government created new legislation especially to enforce extreme security measures during the Games period. The legislation declared a 'State of Emergency' and police were granted supreme powers of search and arrest. Coined The Commonwealth Games Act, it came into force from 17 September (two weeks prior to the Games) until the day after the conclusion of the Games, 10 October.

Alan Moir, *Declare a State of Emergency*, 5533, John Oxley Library, SLQ



With the introduction of the Commonwealth Games Act, protesting was declared illegal, land was zoned and access restricted. Security firms were employed as 'notified persons' giving them extraordinary powers. Political materials such as t-shirts and banners were banned, and any kind of lobbying groups had to apply for permits to march the streets. Civil libertarians were outraged at the conditions of this Act and were quick to label Queensland as a 'police state'. Police had also been issued with new riot-squad batons; the same batons that were used to control protesting crowds in New Zealand the year earlier over the controversial Springbok tour. There was speculation that this was in response to rumours of 'blood in the streets' as the media circulated articles inciting fear of 'black armies trained in guerrilla warfare'.

Image courtesy of Alan Moir and Penguin Books



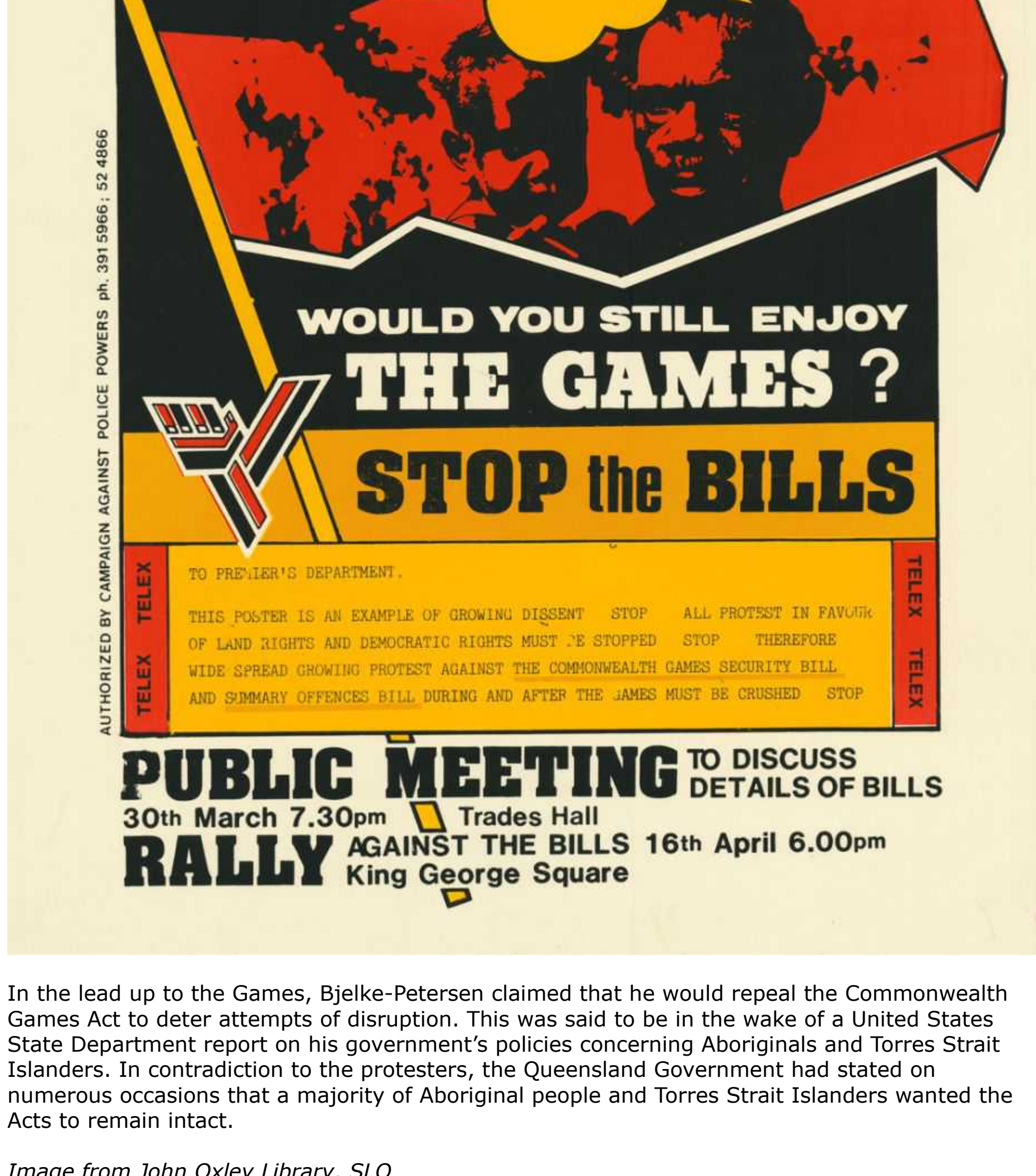
Numerous illegal marches and demonstrations occurred during the Games which resulted in mass arrests of more than 300 people. None of these were violent.

Image courtesy of Alan Moir and Penguin Books



The Commonwealth Games is often referred to as the 'Friendly Games' because all of the competing nations have a British colonial heritage and share the common language of English. This allowed all athletes, officials and tourists to easily communicate and interact with each other. The 'Friendly' premise of the Games is also based on the understanding that sport and unfavourable aspects of politics were not to intersect.

Matilda, *Commonwealth Games 1982*. Image courtesy of John Oxley Library, SLQ



In the lead up to the Games, Bjelke-Petersen claimed that he would repeal the Commonwealth Games Act to deter attempts of disruption. This was said to be in the wake of a United States State Department report on his government's policies concerning Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. In contradiction to the protesters, the Queensland Government had stated on numerous occasions that a majority of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders wanted the Acts to remain intact.

Image from John Oxley Library, SLQ



A man by the name of Kati (right), a Pan-African National Congress Representative from Namibia, came to Brisbane and took part in the protests, which almost sparked an international diplomatic incident when police attempted to remove him from the protests.

Image courtesy of Unikup Productions Ltd.



Protesters near Brisbane's casino.

Image courtesy of Unikup Productions Ltd.

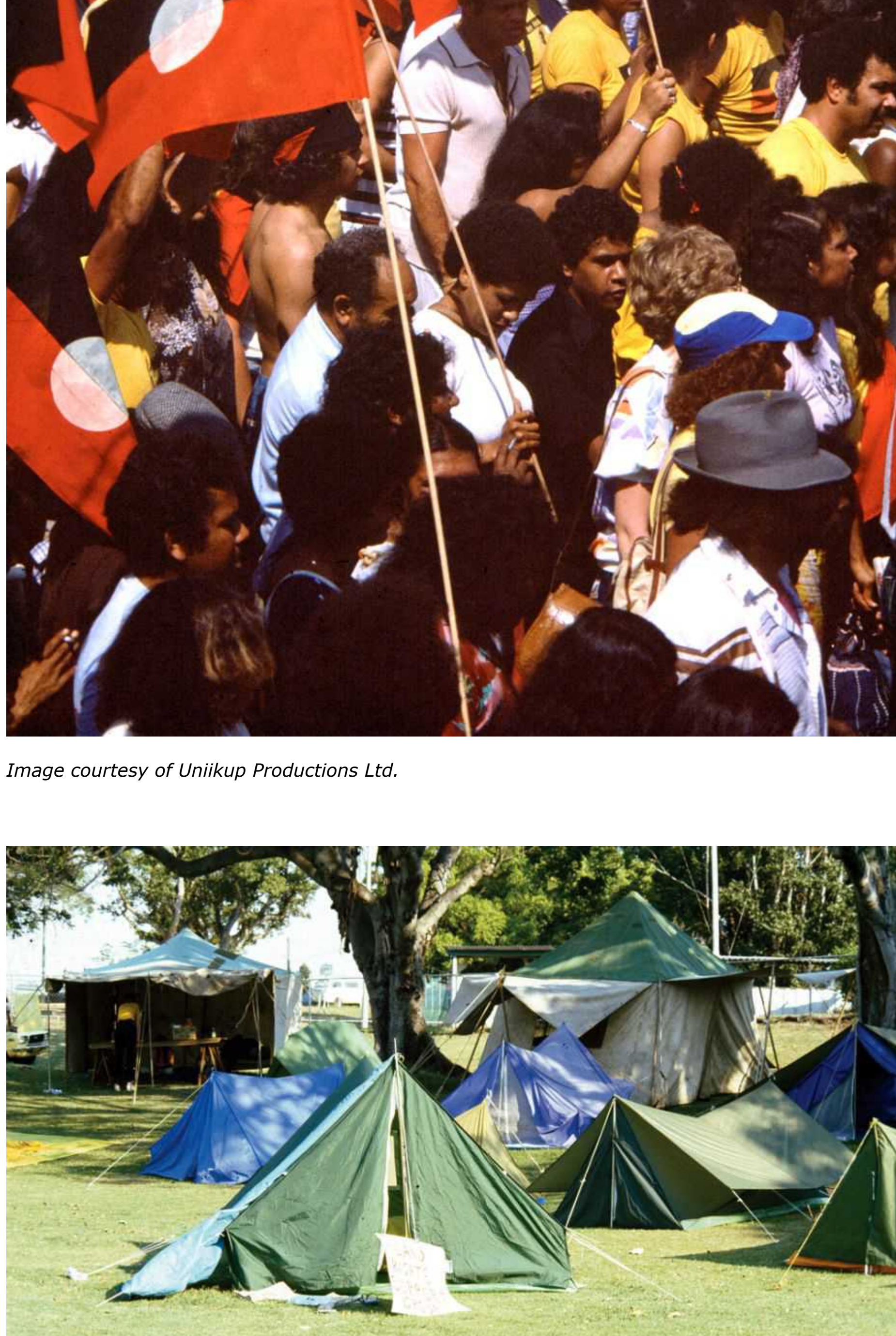
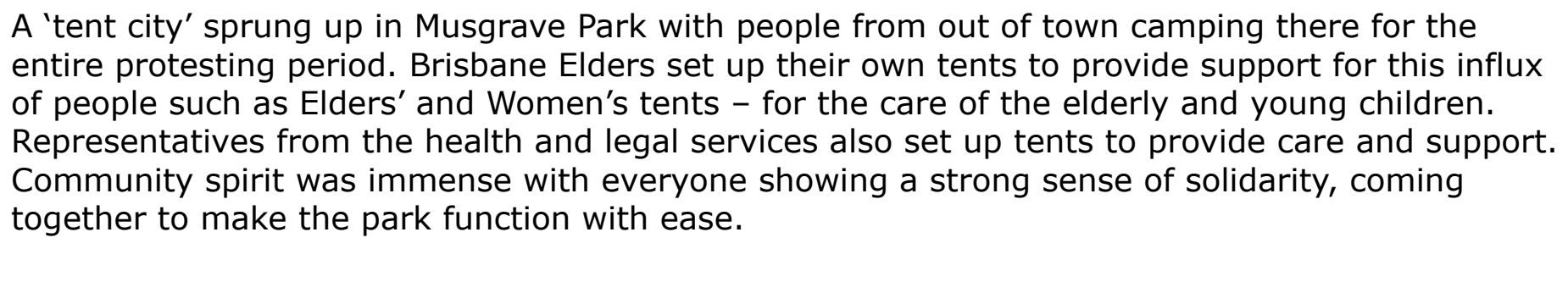


Image courtesy of Unikup Productions Ltd.



Musgrave Park has always been a central meeting point for the Brisbane Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and played a pivotal role in the organisation of the protests surrounding the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games. Despite oppressive policies and bad media, Indigenous people nation-wide travelled to support the Brisbane community, bringing with them hope, solidarity and support.

A 'tent city' sprung up in Musgrave Park with people from out of town camping there for the entire protesting period. Brisbane Elders set up their own tents to provide support for this influx of people such as Elders' and Women's tents – for the care of the elderly and young children. Representatives from the health and legal services also set up tents to provide care and support. Community spirit was immense with everyone showing a strong sense of solidarity, coming together to make the park function with ease.

Image courtesy of Unikup Productions Ltd.