

Kaiyu's Waiting



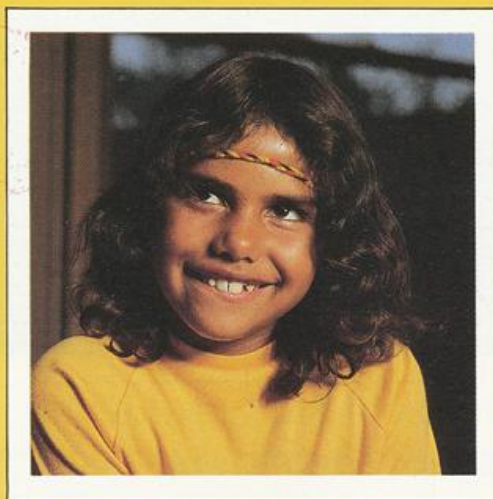
an Aboriginal
story by
Maureen Watson
photographs by
David Verrall

Hodja's Australian Stories for Kids

Kaiyu's Waiting



Hodja
Educational
Resources
Cooperative
Limited
135 Church Street,
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Australia



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Kaiyu was so excited. She was up early that morning. So was everybody else. Aunty Lil was leaving Sydney to go back to Brisbane. She lives there with Great-Gran and works at the university, teaching about Aboriginal people.

'Don't forget my present, Uncle Mick,' said Kaiyu, as she helped him carry out Aunty Lil's things. 'And tell my Great-Gran we'll be up for Christmas, Aunty Lil,' Kaiyu added as they reached Uncle Mick's car.

'Been a great week,' Kaiyu's mum said.

'Wish you didn't have to go,' said her father.

'Yeah,' agreed Aunty Mandy.

'You drive carefully, Michael,' Gran said, 'and don't go speeding, you hear?'

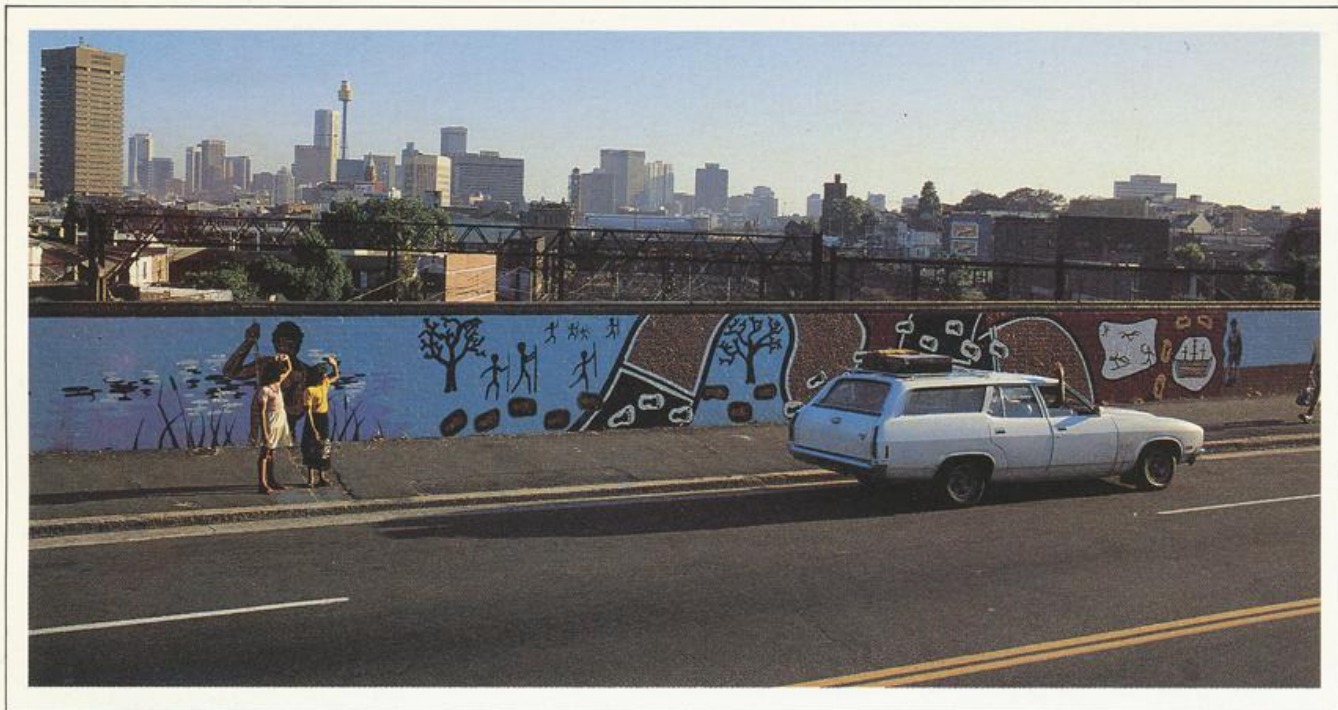
'Gee whiz, Mum, I don't speed,' Uncle Michael said. Then he grinned at Kaiyu. Kaiyu grinned back, straightening the red, black and yellow headband Aunty Lil had made her.

'You hurry back, Uncle Mick, please,' she told him. 'I can't wait to see what my present is.'

Kaiyu's Great-Gran always gave her something for National Aboriginal Day — something special. 'Because it's our very own special day,' she told Kaiyu. And it was a holiday too! Not for everybody, like Australia Day, but for all Aboriginal people it was.

'Kaiyu, I'll be back before you know it,' Uncle Mick told her.

Kaiyu loved her Uncle Mick, but then all the kids did. He played the didgeridoo and clap sticks and told them funny stories.



Toot, toot, toot! Kaiyu jumped as Uncle Mick hit the horn and pointed. Kaiyu's little sister, Yarraka, was marching up and down the footpath, waving her flag over her head and saying, 'What do we want? Land rights. When do we want it? Now!'

Uncle Mick said, 'Right on, sis, right on!' and everybody laughed.

Finally, everyone had been hugged and kissed goodbye, and Uncle Mick and Aunty Lil drove off. The kids ran after them, still waving.

'Hurry wheels. Hurry car. Hurry Uncle Mick,' whispered Kaiyu. 'And bring my present back.'



The days passed slowly and at school Kaiyu watched the wall clock and said, 'Faster, faster, faster,' as the big hand ticked but didn't move. She only half listened to her teacher. He didn't seem to know very much. He actually said Captain Cook discovered Australia and he talked about the first men to cross the Blue Mountains.

When Kaiyu got home, she told her father. 'He doesn't know Aborigines have been doing those things for 50 000 years or more.'

'Well,' her father said, as he put Mundanara in the bath tub, 'not many gubbas know much about koories. But you can teach him, can't you?'

'If kids can learn from teachers, then teachers can learn from kids,' Kaiyu said.

'I reckon,' her dad replied, giving her a quick hug and kissing the top of her head, while Mundanara splashed water on the both of them. Kaiyu ducked out of the way and Uncle John came in with a big towel.

'Come on, Uncle John's girl,' he said, wrapping up Mundanara. 'And how's my big woman?' he said to Kaiyu. 'Can't wait for tomorrow I s'pose and your present?'

'Tomorrow! Is Uncle Mick coming back tomorrow?'

'Yeah, he just phoned to say he's heading south tonight.'

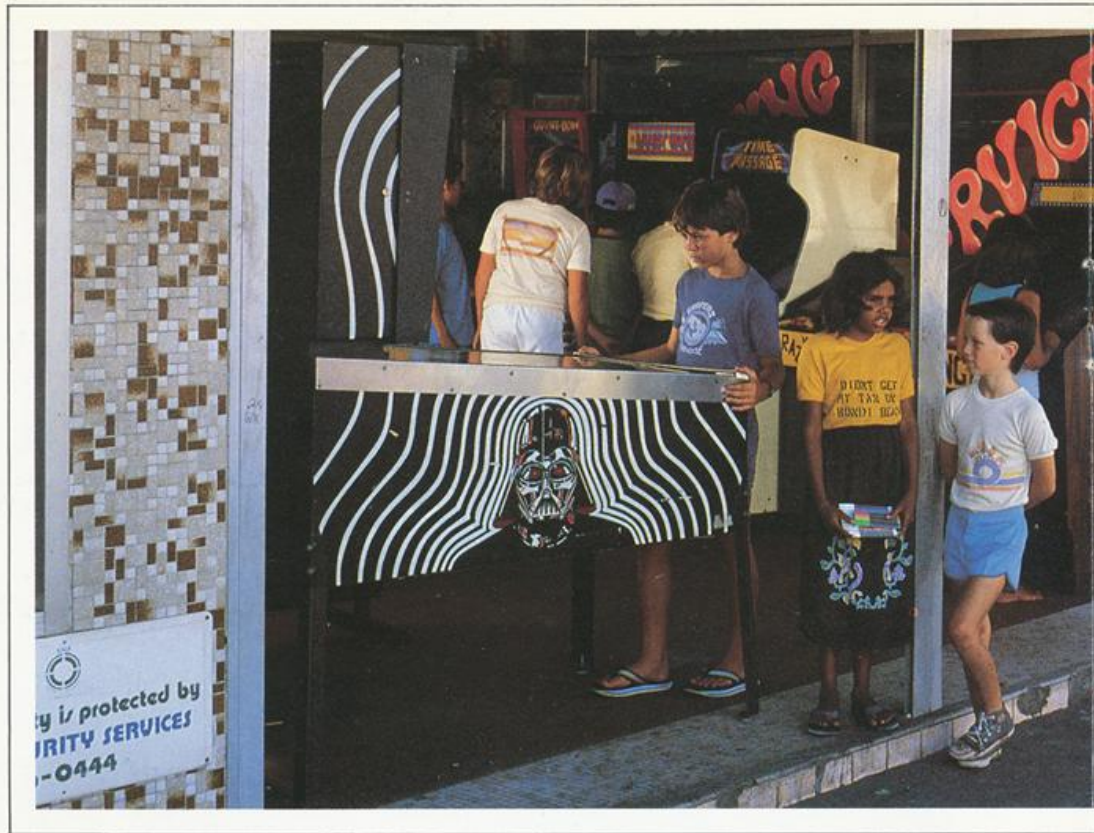
'Wowee!' shouted Kaiyu. 'He'll be here for the march.'

'How about you go to the shop and get some more felt pens for me. I've still got some posters to finish,' Uncle John said.

'Okay,' said Kaiyu taking the money and heading for the door.



'There should be some change,' Uncle John called after her. 'You better have a game of pin ball for me while you're down there. I've got to keep in practice, haven't I?' and he winked at her.



As Kaiyu ran into the shop, she bumped into a boy coming out. It was the new boy in her class.

'Hey,' he said, 'you're that Aboriginal girl. You're black.'

'Of course I am, silly,' Kaiyu said, puzzled, looking him up and down. Did he expect her to be green or something? Boy, gubbas were really strange sometimes.

Kaiyu bought the pens and waited for a turn on the pinball machine. The new boy stood behind her.

'My name's Tim,' he said with a friendly smile. 'What's yours?'

'Kaiyu Moura.'



'I've never heard a name like that before. Is it Aboriginal?'

'Yes, it's from the Birri Gaba, my father's people in north Queensland,' Kaiyu explained. 'And the Wakawaka, my Gran's people.'

'Wow! Aboriginal. I suppose it's really old then.'

'Really old,' Kaiyu agreed, watching the game.

'Older than the pyramids, even?'

Even older than that,' Kaiyu nodded.

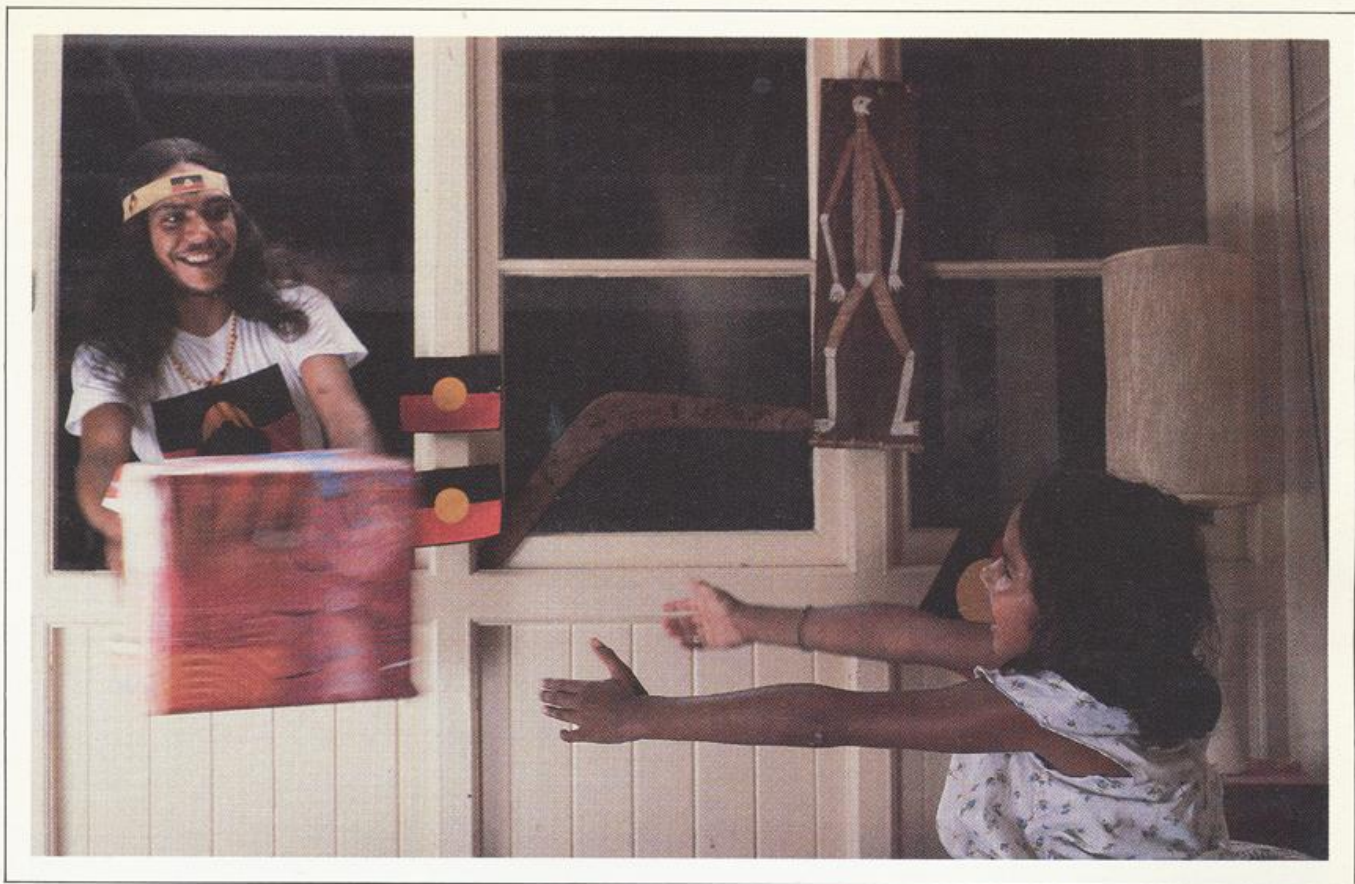
'Boy,' Tim said, 'that is really old,' and he shook his head in amazement.

At home, Kaiyu sat listening for the phone, hoping Uncle Mick might ring again. But it was quieter than ever.

The next door neighbour Mrs Mendoza called over the fence, 'Your cousin Buddy broke down at Mt Druitt. He rings but no-one answers.'

'Gee,' Kaiyu thought, 'the phone's broken. Uncle Mick could have been trying to ring for hours. Disgusted, she went to bed not even worrying about TV. She lay there thinking about Mrs Mendoza who came from Chile. She was a bit hard to understand sometimes and she mostly spoke her own language, Spanish. Kaiyu wished she could speak her own language — her Aboriginal language. Oh, she knew a lot of koori words, like most koories did. But it wasn't the same.

It seemed she had just gone to sleep when a car roared to a stop outside her window, waking her.



'Uncle Mick, you're back.'

'Yes chicken, and here's your present,' he said, tossing a parcel through her window.

'Oh, thanks Uncle Mick,' cried Kaiyu, tearing the paper in her hurry. Then the flag colours — red, yellow and black — spilled out everywhere.

'Hey, look everybody,' she called, running into the kitchen. 'Gran has sent me a skirt, and a cap and a scarf, and oh boy, just in time for the march too.'

Kaiyu thought she looked real deadly up the front of the march with all the other kids. Everybody wore the colours — on their heads, around their bodies, their feet, their hands. There were flags and posters and ribbons everywhere.

Yarraka, in her new yellow joggers with the little flags painted on them, held onto Mundanara's stroller. Old Auntie Jane had ribbons tied to her walking stick. She would end up riding in the Murawina pre-school bus, but she liked to start off walking. A lot of the old people rode in the bus or the cars that followed the march.

There were koories from all over — Bourke, Walgett, Moree, Wee Waa, and even from Western Australia and Tasmania. Uncle Jim said, 'You can tell it's Friday the 13th — Black Friday.'

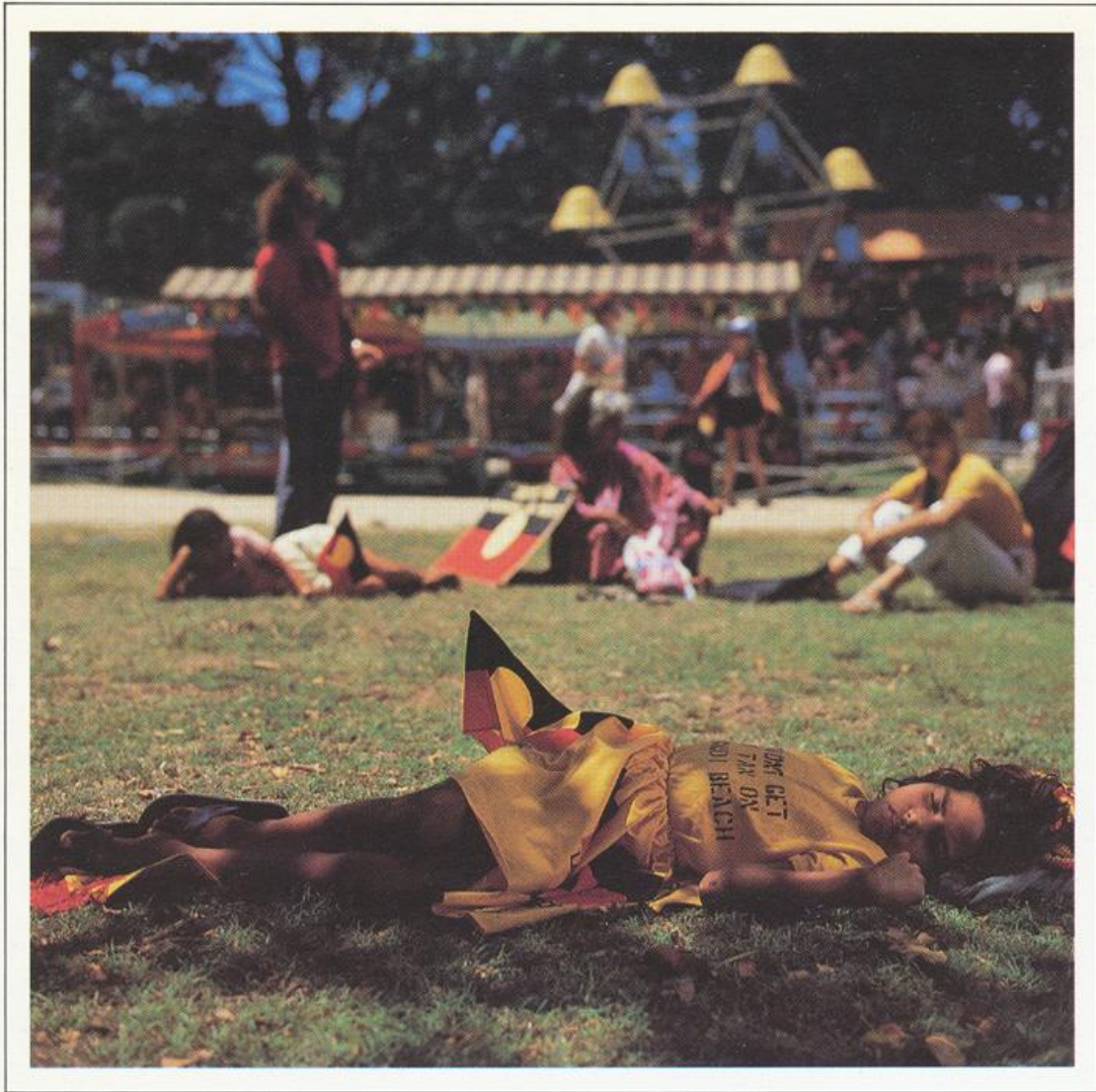
Kaiyu's teacher was there carrying a flag and, calling out, 'What do we want?'

And so was the new boy, Tim. Fancy that.

'Land rights. When do we want it? Now!'

The march ended at the Town Hall. There were speeches, cheers, photographs, talking all over, and then everybody headed back to the park.





And there were steaks and hot dogs and pony rides and merry-go-rounds and dancing and music and football. Finally, tired out, Kaiyu stretched out on the grass and closed her eyes.

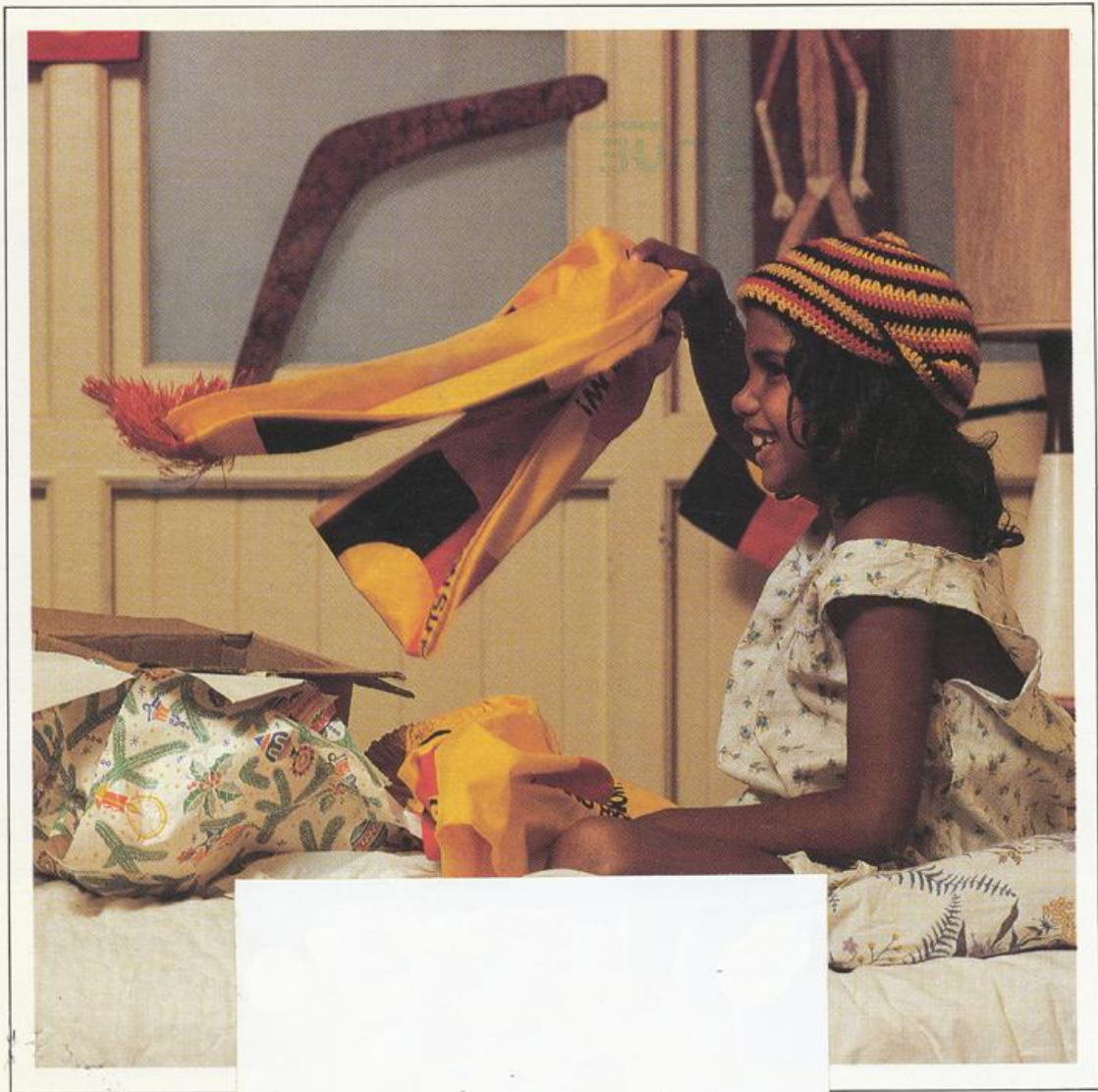


'Kaiyu, Kaiyu, wake up. You'll be late for the march.'
Kaiyu sat up and looked around. She was back in her own bed.

'But we went to the march, Mum, and to the picnic, yesterday when Uncle Mick came home.'

'Silly, you must have been dreaming. Look, Uncle Mick's just pulling in now and he's got a big parcel.'

'Is that for me? My present?' said Kaiyu.



It was. And guess what it was. That's right. A skirt, a cap and a scarf in the flag colours.

'Gee,' Kaiyu thought, 'it makes you feel good being a koori.'

Hodja's Australian Stories for Kids is a series designed to encourage children's awareness about modern Australian society and social issues. The stories acknowledge Australian multiculturalism, focussing on various factors of culture such as ethnicity, class, gender, age and religion. Each story has been written in consultation with a group of children and the events portrayed are based on the real lives of children and their families. A cassette and teaching notes are available for each book.

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