



Tom Wills: The Insubordinate Life of an Australian Sporting Legend

Date/time: Thursday 25 July, 11am-12.30pm

In person and online: Seminar room 6.71, level 6, RSSS Building | bit.ly/BioWorkshop2022 **Turn right from lifts**

Enquiries: Dr Stephen Wilks | stephen.wilks@anu.edu.au | (02) 6125 2349



Aboriginal cricketers alongside the Melbourne Cricket Ground Pavilion, c.1867. Tom Wills is standing in the back row, second from the left. State Library of New South Wales.

There are many versions of the origins of our Australian game of football, but all of them include T.W. Wills in some way. A champion cricketer, he had been exposed to the game of rugby when he was at Rugby School in England. In Melbourne in 1858, with several other men, he organised the first football match, thinking the sport was a great way to keep fit between cricket seasons.

But the story ascends the sporting field. In 1861, his father was killed in outback Queensland during the largest massacre of Europeans by First Nations people. Tom survived the massacre. Five years later, Tom Wills was captain and coach of Aboriginal cricketers who formed the first Australian cricket team to tour England. He seemed fearless, strong-willed and indestructible; but at 44 years of age, Tom Wills took his own life. Greg de Moore's meticulous research provides a deep and thoughtful perspective on the dramatic life of this extraordinary man.



Associate Professor Greg de Moore is a psychiatrist, historian and author. His four books include *Tom Wills: the insubordinate life of an Australian sporting legend*, which blends mental health and Australian history. Winning numerous awards, it was short-listed for the National Biography Award. He is also co-author of *Australia's Game*, which documents the history of Australian Rules football from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and *Finding Sanity: John Cade, lithium and the taming of bipolar disorder*, the biography of John Cade and Australia's greatest mental health achievement: the discovery of lithium for the treatment of bipolar disorder.