



Australian
National
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Observing Justice?: Protectors of Aborigines in Early Colonial Australasia

Wednesday 7 October 2020 4:15–5:15 pm

School of History Zoom Seminar Series
Speaker: Sam Furphy (ANU)

Meeting ID: 854 0723 0201

Password: 854505

URL: <https://anu.zoom.us/j/85407230201?pwd=d3pMRDNRMW5LMjRlRVJQMm82c3RsZz09>

Historians of Aboriginal protection as a mode of colonial governance have emphasised both its global origins and its varied local practices. Between 1838 and 1842 the British government appointed at least sixteen Protectors of Aborigines across four Australasian colonies. Their contrasting careers suggest the important influence of local conditions in refining colonial policy; but because protection was a field of governance that routinely operated through individual forms of contact and influence, their



Mary Hindmarsh, 'Feast, Given to the Natives by Governor Gawler, October 1838, Adelaide, S.A.' (State Library of NSW)

personal histories and networks are also worthy of attention. This presentation will consider the utility of group biography to the study of Aboriginal protection. It will focus on two protectors, William Thomas (1793–1867) and Charles Symmons (1804–1887), whose contrasting careers in Port Phillip (Victoria) and Western Australia illustrate the ambiguity of the protection project. They are among eight protectors under study for a book I am writing with the tentative title of *Observing Justice? Protectors of Aborigines in Early Colonial Australasia*.



Sam Furphy is a historian based in the National Centre of Biography, School of History. He is a research editor for the Australian Dictionary of Biography and was a recipient (2014–17) of an Australian Research Council early career fellowship. His previous publications include *Edward M. Curr and the Tide of History* (2013), as well as several edited books and commissioned histories including *Australian of the Year Awards: A Fiftieth Anniversary History* (2010). His most recent book (co-edited with Amanda Nettelbeck) is *Aboriginal Protection and Its Intermediaries in Britain's Antipodean Colonies* (Routledge, 2020).

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ALL WELCOME

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