Example of a script with in text references.

**Background**

In the 1960s, Aboriginal people did not have the same rights as other Australians. “In the sixties in Australia if you were born Aboriginal, by law you couldn’t marry without permission, eat in a restaurant, enter a pub, swim in a public pool or vote” (Perkins, R 1993). It is shocking to me that such injustices were permitted. Non-Aboriginal Australians were largely unaware of the needs of Aboriginal Australians. In 1965, Charles Perkins, the first Australian Aboriginal person to attend university, led other students in a campaign across the country to expose segregation and the shame of Australia’s treatment of their Aboriginal people. Charles Perkins clearly stated his goal in Blood Brothers which was made by his daughter Rachel Perkins. “The white person in Australia must be educated to be able to understand the Aboriginal person, to be more tolerant towards him. A lot of Australians talk about ‘Oh yeah we want to give the Aborigine a fair go.’ Then it is full stop and it’s usually forgotten …” (Perkins, C 1993). The frustration in Perkins’ voice in this quote shows the strength of his desire for change to improve Aboriginal lives.

**Methods — the civil rights action**

To raise awareness of injustices, students from Sydney University travelled through country towns in a bus. This picture shows the Freedom Riders outside their bus in Walgett, New South Wales, in 1967. Anne Curthoys, one of the participants of this Ride, made it clear that the Australian Freedom Ride was inspired by the Freedom Rides in the United States when she noted, “So, with [Martin Luther] King’s philosophy of non-violent direct action firmly in our heads, our tour all planned, we set off” (Curthoys, A 2002).

The Freedom Ride went to country towns in New South Wales. Traditionally, country towns were the areas most resistant to change. Students were shocked by the lack of rights and freedoms that they observed. “In the towns, Aboriginal people were routinely barred from clubs, swimming pools and cafes. They were frequently refused drinks in hotels” (Taffe, S 2008). The students used non-violent direct actions such as protests in the towns to challenge such racist practices. As part of the public awareness campaign, they also ensured that the angry reaction of the towns’ inhabitants were beamed into the homes of white Australia via the ABC news.

“Captured on tape was the vice-president of the Walgett Returned Service Leagues Club who said he would never allow an Aboriginal to be a member. Film footage shocked city viewers, adding to mounting pressure on the government to provide rights and freedoms equally to Aboriginal people in Australia” (Taffe, S 2008). This image shows one of the newspaper headlines from the time that influenced public opinion.

**Role of individuals**

In the centre of the group of students in this photo you can see Charles Perkins. Charles Perkins was elected president of the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) in 1964 and it was his driving need to make a difference that helped make the Freedom Ride possible. Other significant people were Anne Curthoys who would later write a history of these events and Jim Spigelman who would go to become the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In total, there were 29 students from Sydney University. For most of the journey, Perkins was the only Aboriginal person on the bus (Curthoy, A 2002) and media attention focused upon him as a result. The role of the non-Indigenous people involved is often not emphasised. Pat Watford, an Indigenous woman from Walgett noted very clearly the impact of his involvement: “It hurts you white people ... to see the whites from Sydney up here ... Trouble is it’s hurting the white to see other whites fighting for blacks” (Curthoy, A 2002).

**Events that represent changes and continuities**

One of the significant protests in the Freedom Rides was at Moree, where segregation was known to be practised. The Freedom Riders brought Aboriginal children in from nearby reserves and attempted to assist them in entering the local pool which had a race-based ban. The angry reaction of white townspeople was reported in the news. The Daily Mirror reported that “Violence Explode[d] in Racist Town” (Stone G, 1965). The lead statement from this article was even more direct: “White women jeered and spat at girl freedom riders today as racial violence broke out for the first time in Moree” (Stone G, 1965). In terms of its goal, this visit raised awareness of the conditions facing Aboriginal Australians in country New South Wales. This photograph shows the children swimming together in the local pool at Moree and appeared on the front cover of the national press in 1965 (The Australian, 1965).

**Significance**

The Freedom Rides were a significant historical event that drew attention to Aboriginal issues and raised public debate. Even at the time, the Freedom Ride was controversial. Ian Spalding noted that “Reasonable questions can be asked about the wisdom or efficacy of projecting outsiders into those local situations where social class and colour are tied inextricably. Certainly, city students of either the long- or short-haired variety would rarely constitute the ideal group for such a purpose ”(Spalding, I 1965).

Along these lines were other criticisms which implied that the Freedom Riders blew into these towns, and then left the locals to deal with the aftermath. Such criticisms are hard to believe when you consider that the Walgett Aborigines’ Progressive Association, appealed to Perkins and other Aboriginal activists to return to Walgett to assist them in their fight to secure equality. A general assessment was that the Freedom Ride and the publicity it had gained did raise awareness of discrimination and strengthened later campaigns to eradicate such discrimination. Anne Curthoys reinforces this in her 2002 lecture to the National Museum “ ... many [freedom riders] had continued an engagement with Indigenous people throughout their lives. They had not simply passed through, and they had not forgotten what they had learnt ... the Freedom Ride had been important aspect of the moral formation of a generation (Curthoys, A 2002).
The Cabinet papers show that the Freedom Rides may have also had some influence on the government. The summary of these papers on the National Museum of Australia makes it clear that Cabinet members were aware that the Freedom Rides had shed light on discriminatory practices in New South Wales, which then began to define what Australians would come to see as discrimination. This, in the next six months, would lead to the Attorney General to “... conclude that it should hold a referendum to empower it to amend section 51 (xxvi) so that it could implement its policy to the advantage of the Aboriginal people” (Taffe S, 2008).

Did the Freedom Ride change the world? No. It contributes to other events which makes significant changes such as the 1967 referendum which acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ right to be included in the census and to be considered citizens in their own country.

**Conclusion**

The Freedom Ride was a significant historical event that drew attention to Aboriginal issues. It is also an important symbol of activism. It is a narrative which tells our community that white and Aboriginal Australians can come together and work for shared goals. It provides inspiration in the form of Charles Perkins, an Aboriginal man who made a stand for equality and justice. It is a story that should be valued by our community. Change cannot be always measured in numbers [next slide]. Symbols matter, because the symbol, as shown here [refer to slide] is often the thing we remember.