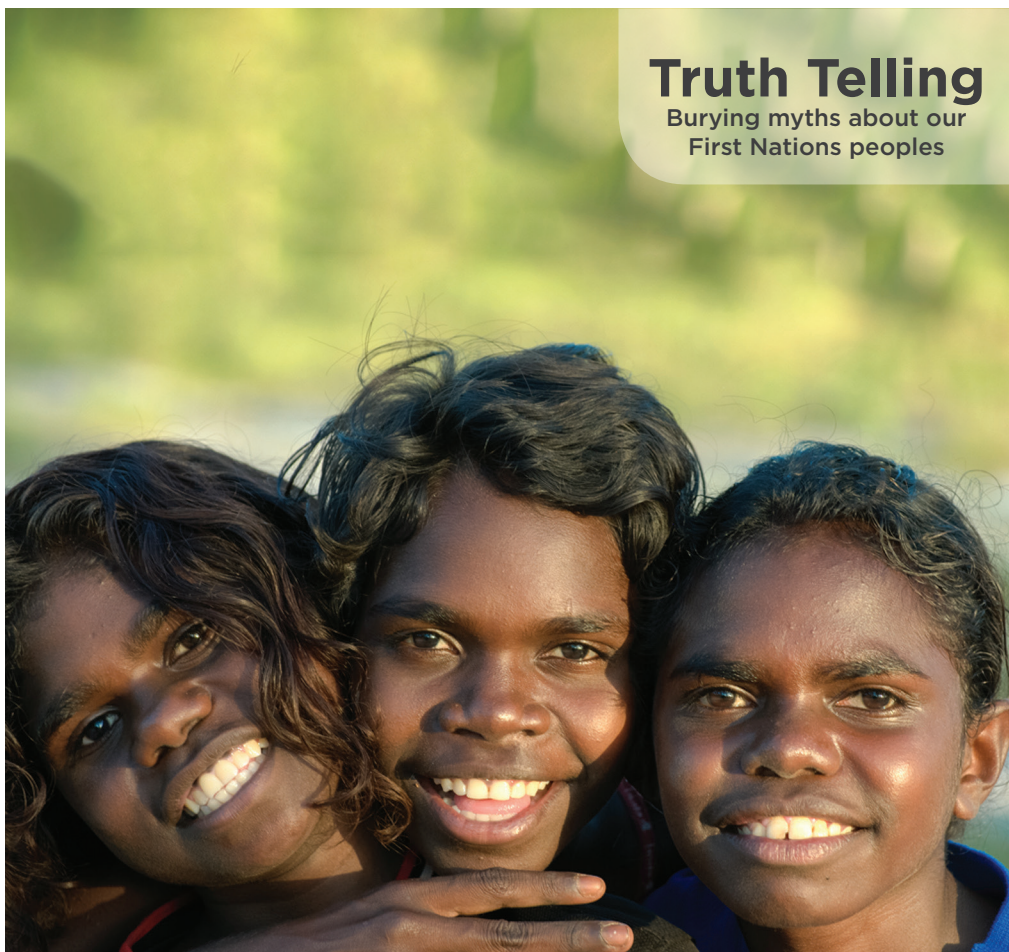


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WARCRY

CULTURE & SPIRITUALITY



Truth Telling

Burying myths about our
First Nations peoples



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Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

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- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

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From the editor

How do we know what truth is? It's a big question. The theme of truth runs strong throughout this issue of *Warcry*.

Apparently, we now live in a post-truth environment. This is the idea that people who don't agree with us haven't made their decisions based on truth, but instead have been guided by their feelings and emotions.

The view of Christians, however, is that there is absolute truth. It stands to reason that if you're going to have an absolute truth, then it must come from an absolute. Christians claim that 'absolute' is God, and that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

Christianity says that truth is found in a person, and that person is Jesus. From him come the words of truth.

There is so much confusion and darkness in the world, but the light and truth of Jesus Christ continues to shine through. I suggest you take a look.

Scott Simpson, **Assistant Editor-in-Chief**

Burying 'Brown People' myths

Reconciliation Week is an appropriate time for 'truth-telling' about our First Nations peoples.

BY MIKE FROST

When I was in school in the 1960s we were all made to read a book entitled, *The Dreamtime: Australian Aboriginal Myths in Paintings* (1965). That book was dedicated "To the Brown People, who handed down these Dreamtime Myths". Those 'Brown People' — the original inhabitants of the nation of Australia — were presented to us as simple, primitive, childlike people. Their stories were quaint. Their children were cute. They lived aesthetic lives as hunter-gatherers in the wild interior of our country.

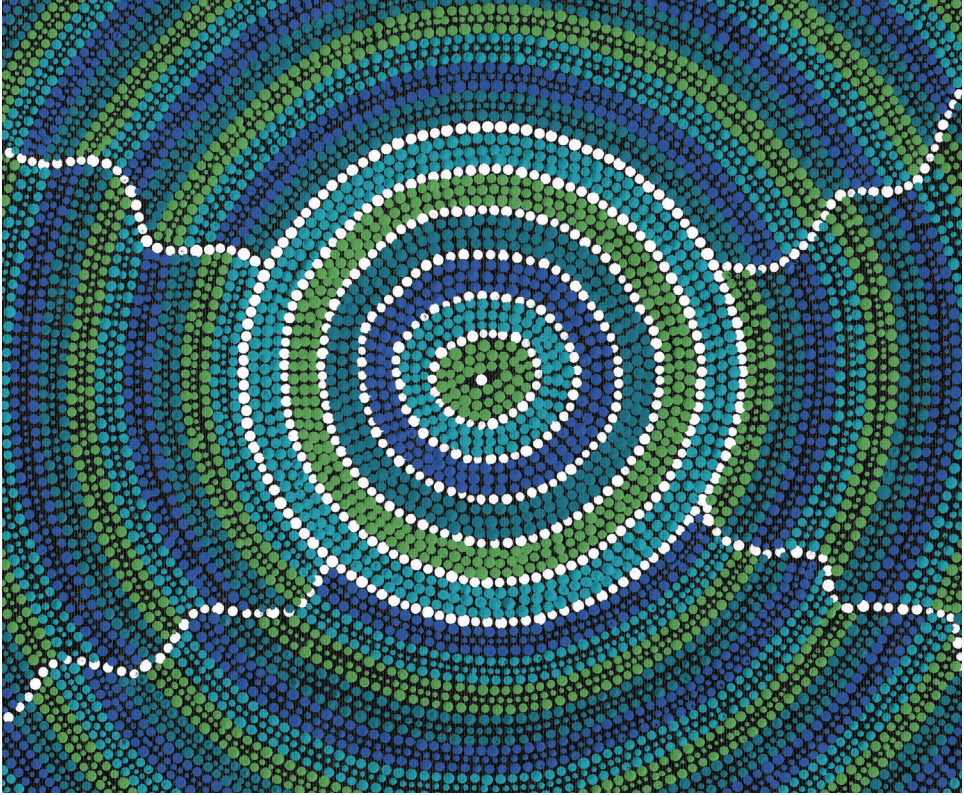
More recently, I've discovered that so much of what I was taught about the original inhabitants of this great land was based on misinformation or racism. Here are a series of myths you were probably also taught. It's time to bury them for good.

MYTH: THERE IS ONLY ONE ABORIGINAL CULTURE

That book I mentioned earlier, *The Dreamtime*, is a collection of origin stories written by anthropologist

Charles Mountford and illustrated with the surrealist paintings of artist Ainslie Roberts. But neither Mountford nor Roberts were Aboriginal people. In fact, Roberts was British. And they retold the Aboriginal myths as over-simplified, popularised and radically contracted versions of the original stories. Mountford stripped the stories of all cultural specificities, presenting a kind of uniform pan-Aboriginal culture. This reflected the belief of the time that Aboriginal storytelling was a primitive way of understanding the world that existed at "the very dawn of time, when all men were of one race".

As a kid I read these stories and looked at Ainslie Roberts' paintings, and assumed Aboriginal people belonged to one big, primitive nation. But the reality is that before the arrival of British colonisers in 1788, Australia was inhabited by over 500 different clan groups or 'nations' around the continent, many with distinctive cultures, beliefs and languages. So it follows that Aboriginal peoples will hold a variety of views on things like



Artist: Lisa Ennis
 Wakka Wakka & Kullilla descendant
 @dreaming_hart

the date of Australia Day, or a treaty, or acknowledgement in the constitution, or monuments to white colonisers. To speak of them as some monolithic group as if they're all the same as each other is to reduce them to the 'Brown People' I learned about in school.

MYTH: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE INHERENTLY PASSIVE AND LAZY

The broader narrative has been that Aboriginal people in general were as James Cook had described them: "weak, timid, cowardly and incurious". And that

narrative has been so dominant it has affected the Australian understanding of First Nations peoples more than anything else. It led to the wholesale and continuous denial of the Frontier Wars, to the patronising and evil policy of forcibly removing infants from their families of origin, to the more recent Northern Territory Intervention.

You hear that narrative played out in the refrain by many white Australians that Aboriginal peoples are lazy, that they are all given free houses and cars, and that they live comfortably on ►

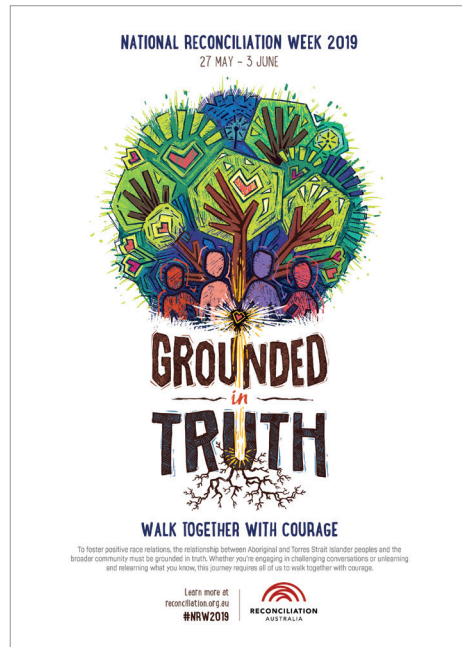
generous social security benefits. None of this is true. In her article, “Here’s the truth about the ‘free ride’ that some Australians think Indigenous peoples get”, Bronwyn Carlson, Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies at the University of Wollongong, busts these myths and concludes: “Characterisation of Indigenous Australians as recipients of a ‘free ride’ and who are seen to be motivated to rort the public purse has its roots in an ignorance of Indigenous experiences of dispossession, colonisation and ongoing colonial violence.”

MYTH: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WERE JUST HUNTER-GATHERERS

When I was young, one of the common phrases used by teachers if you were late to class was, “Did you decide to go walkabout?” Even when you were caught daydreaming in class you were accused of going walkabout.

Walkabout is in fact a male rite of passage during which Aboriginal adolescents undergo a journey that involves living in the bush for periods as long as six months. They are making the spiritual and traditional transition into manhood. But in my school walkabout was used to describe tardiness or a lack of attention.

The assumption was that Aboriginal peoples had some in-built nomadic predisposition to wander aimlessly; that they were instinctively transient. I suppose this came from the myth that deep down ‘Brown People’ were all nomads and drifters. After all, they were originally just hunter-gatherers, eking out an existence in the wild deserts of central Australia, weren’t they?



National Reconciliation Week 2019 Poster

This myth is incredibly pervasive. It also bled into this ‘primitive culture’ myth, and was used to justify the lie of terra nullius — that the continent was empty, uninhabited, unworked. As Professor Megan Davis, Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, University of New South Wales, has explained, the early colonisers took the view that they could claim any land for settlement because “the land is desert and uncultivated and it is inhabited by backward people”.

But in a fascinating new book, *Dark Emu*, Aboriginal historian Bruce Pascoe shows that even before colonisation Aboriginal peoples lived in villages with permanent buildings made of clay-coated wood. They baked bread, created art galleries and maintained cemeteries.

Pascoe writes: "If we look at the evidence presented to us by the explorers and explain to our children that Aboriginal people did build houses, did build dams, did sow, irrigate and till the land, did alter the course of rivers, did sew their clothes, and did construct a system of pan-continental government that generated peace and prosperity, then it is likely we will admire and love our land all the more."

Pascoe goes on to show that after the Frontier Wars, which included the burning of villages by white settlers, there was little left to show of this pre-colonised culture after 1860.

MYTH: AUSTRALIA WAS AN UNTAMED WILDERNESS BEFORE SETTLEMENT

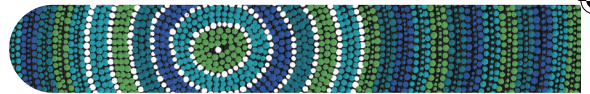
Far from living in untamed wasteland, Aboriginal peoples established a sophisticated form of land management, carefully tended irrigation and extensive farming and fish-trapping practices. In his book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*, Bill Gammage reveals that early explorers and settlers were astonished to discover the cultivated nature of the Australian landscape.

The original inhabitants used fire to tend and improve the terrain. They made conscious decisions on when to burn and what not to burn, and how often, in order to regulate plants and animals. They cleared undergrowth, and put grass on good soil, clearings in dense and open forest, and tree or scrub clumps in grassland. Their land management was so expert that the first European visitors believed they had stumbled on a 'gentleman's estate' of gardens and farms.

I remember being flabbergasted when I read Gammage's book. I had no idea that Aboriginal peoples had been so good at cultivation and land management. I can't look at the Australian landscape the same way any more.

The fact is that the primitive 'Brown People' I learned about in school don't resemble the sophistication and complexity of the Indigenous peoples of this continent. We need to relinquish the old tropes and narratives, abandon the racist assumptions of the past, and learn anew what remarkable peoples we now share these islands with.

Mike Frost is the Head of Missiology at Morling College. He blogs at mikefrost.net



SALVOS AND INDIGENOUS MINISTRY

The Salvation Army works with Indigenous people and communities across Australia. At the heart of our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a commitment to reconciliation. To find out more, go to salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-programs/



Paradox of *Execution Island*

A new movie reveals amazing peace found in the final few minutes of Sukumaran and Chan's lives.

BY MARK HADLEY

It's possible this article will take longer to read than the movie it's about. *Execution Island* runs for only 12 minutes. However, the impact of watching the final moments of Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan's lives is likely to last much longer.

Sukumaran and Chan are two members of the infamous 'Bali Nine', a group of Australians convicted for attempting to smuggle 8.3kg of heroin into this country. Sukumaran and Chan were accused of being the ringleaders of the attempt,

and each sentenced to execution by firing squad. *Execution Island* presents the last three hours they spend on Nusa Kambangan prison island, and the spiritual journey they made during that time.

The primary voice of *Execution Island* is neither of the accused, but the Rev. Christie Buckingham. Rev. Buckingham served as spiritual advisor for Myuran Sukumaran during his incarceration. It was both her duty and her promise to stand by him as he was led away to his



death. Her account supplies the film's emotive narration.

What follows is a dramatic re-enactment of the last few hours, told in the space of a few minutes. Though actors are standing in the space of the condemned, it's easy to believe you are witnessing the last moments of someone's life. It's also impossible to watch without the question arising in your mind, "How would I behave if I were in that man's shoes?" The answer, as far as Sukumaran and Chan are concerned, is a paradox that will confuse many. As they are marched towards death, they are filled with joy.

Execution Island might sound as though it is a well-constructed piece of Christian propaganda. Certainly there is a political attack on the death penalty that runs like an undercurrent throughout.

However, the transformation in the character of the two Australians remains the most compelling content because it is strongly attested to by witnesses within and without the film.

At the time of their execution, then Prime Minister Tony Abbott stated that the executions were "cruel and unnecessary" because both men had been "fully rehabilitated" during their incarceration. Sukumaran had become an accomplished artist, while Chan became an ordained minister and established a church inside the prison. Both men had involved themselves in the lives of their fellow inmates, becoming English teachers and mentors for struggling individuals. But what viewers really need to ask is what empowered them to make this 180-degree change from drug traffickers to model citizens?

Thankfully *Execution Island* provides an answer.

Throughout the film, both Sukumaran and Chan testify to Rev. Buckingham about the profound change knowing Jesus made to their lives. As the moments tick away, Sukumaran clings to a faith in Jesus' cross that can cover any sin, a cross he describes as "... in the middle ... it's everything".

In fact, there is none of the horror you would expect from such a scene. There is actually anticipation as the pair approach not their deaths, but the culmination of their faith. And so Rev. Buckingham says with barely suppressed happiness, "Do you understand what you're about to do tonight? Are you aware that you're going to see your creator? That is a blessing in itself. It is amazing."

Execution Island focuses primarily on Sukumaran because of his particular relationship with Rev. Buckingham, but similar testimony is available to those who stood beside Chan. Salvation Army officer Major David Soper was his spiritual advisor and attests to his "shining" faith at the very end.

And so the pair head to their deaths, singing as they go. Incredible! The rest of *Execution Island* needs to be seen to be truly believed, and it will soon be made available to small groups for that purpose. But as powerful as its testimony is, I don't think watching will bring its truth all the way home. The transforming relationship Sukumaran and Chan had has to be tasted and tested to be truly understood. Thankfully, Jesus is ready to set anyone free who comes to him, and clearly no prison door can hold him back.



Sculpture by Suzie Bleach and Andrew Townsend
Exhibited at Sculptures@Bayside, Cook Park, Kyeemagh

The burden of truth

It takes courage to engage honestly with the whole story.

BY LAURIE ROBERTSON

The truth I have found in Jesus is not a burden.

Way back in 1973 I commenced as a cadet journalist with *The Barrier Daily Truth* (BDT), the morning daily newspaper for my home city of Broken Hill. I never really thought deeply about the 'truth' part of the paper's name but I know I had decided to always write the truth.

When I concluded my work at the BDT in 1978 to become a Salvation Army cadet, I was especially touched to receive two letters thanking me for my reporting honesty and objectivity. One came from the mayor (Labor Party) and the other from the Liberal Party-focused town clerk. I was stoked to think that I had managed to report truthfully — at least for these two politically opposed people.

However, in the ensuing years I have discovered that truth is far more complicated than what I thought back then. In fact, I find myself asking what so many others have throughout the centuries — "What is truth?" It seems to have so many interpretations. One person's truth perspective is the antithesis of someone else's truth perspective. I have even wondered, "Is truth a burden?"

And my musing on this matter is often triggered by Australian history. The Australian history taught in schools for many decades was not the whole story. From what I have heard, observed and learnt throughout the years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have greatly felt the burden of the untold truth. It is a heavy load for them, and increasingly so for many others.

I pray that the theme for National Reconciliation Week, 'Grounded in Truth: Walk Together with Courage', will catalyse us all to earnestly, caringly and intentionally journey together and yarn in depth. I have hugely benefited through experiencing how yarnning provides time to listen, to reflect, to discover, to build relationship, to find resolutions and to continually improve and refine them.

And my learning yarnning — my discussions — haven't only been with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I have learnt much from interaction with Jesus Christ. When he physically walked on Earth he said some controversial things. At least one of them involved truth.

In the Bible, John chapter 8 verses 31 and 32 report that he said he taught the truth and the truth will set people free: "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

What does that mean? What is your perspective? I encourage you to read the whole chapter. The truth I have found in Jesus is not a burden — it has set me free from taking the weight of the world on my shoulders. I trust him with it. Maybe that is the topic for another article, perhaps titled 'The Weight of Faith'.

Lieut-Colonel Laurie Robertson is Editor-in-Chief for The Salvation Army Australia

I am a walking miracle

Jesus turned my broken life around.

WORDS KRISTY

I am a recovering meth addict and have been clean since April 2015. I have been a victim of domestic violence. I've used dirty needles and contracted hepatitis C. I've been homeless. I've broken into houses and shops and stolen a car, leaving me with a police record two pages long. I've been to university and quit, I've had a Department of Housing property and lost it. I've had my youngest son taken from my arms by police. And I've been to prison.

I was lost. I was broken. I tried to stop but I couldn't.

After leaving prison, I was offered a place at a Salvation Army refuge. From the moment I entered, I felt a kindness and warmth that was so unexpected. I remember thinking, "If there is a heaven, this must be what it is like."

Just one night later my worst nightmare happened. There was a knock at my door and a caseworker was there telling me that the police were there to take my youngest son. He was taken from my arms while I was screaming.

I was now hanging on by a thread, going through the emotions of deep sorrow and heartbreak. I needed to make a choice: run back to my old life where a quick fix (of meth) could instantly make this feeling go away, or choose to stay at The Salvation Army and get the help that I clearly needed. I chose to stay.

That Sunday, there was a refuge bus to a Salvation Army church, and I went. That day I gave my life to God. I started asking millions of questions. I would run down to the refuge office and ask my caseworker Barbara about God, about



Kristy (left) attends the Franklin Graham crusade with former caseworker Barbara

dinosaurs, or what I should be doing now. I started reading the Bible and from there I started to get to know who Jesus is. I began to understand and feel how much he loved me and that I was forgiven for everything I had done.

It was tough having my son taken away from me, but I now know that Jesus was right by my side and he was never going to leave me. I made the decision to start fighting for my kids in court. I remember going to court with my support person and reading the Bible while we waited. I also got a job in a cafe.

I was really beginning to worry about my hepatitis and the effect it was going to have on my long-term health. One night I asked my friends at church to pray for my health. It was an amazing, strong, rebuking, powerful prayer.

A few weeks later I went to hospital to start my hepatitis C medication. They did some tests and the doctor told me I didn't have anything wrong with me. This was just one of the many miracles that occurred in my life.

I was then given my own Salvation Army home. I got my youngest son back in my care and worked out a shared-care arrangement with my daughters. I have been clean from drugs now for four years.

Recently, I took up a position at The Salvation Army as a support worker for men and women in crisis and I'm finishing my Certificate IV in Community Services at TAFE.

I asked God for his help and he gave it to me. By his grace I have been saved.



Frozen yoghurt pops

1 mango, 1 cup sliced strawberries,
1 cup vanilla yoghurt, 2 tbsp honey,
wooden craft sticks, silicone cupcake
moulds, blender

Slice cheeks off mango and cut through
the flesh in a criss-cross pattern.
Spoon out mango pieces and place
in blender. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup yoghurt and 1
tablespoon honey. Blend until smooth
and pour into a jug.

Clean out blender. Add strawberries
and remaining yoghurt and honey. Blend
until smooth.

Fill cupcake moulds halfway with one
flavour and then top with the other
flavour. Stick a craft stick into the centre
of each mould. Place in freezer for 3-4
hours or until set.

Makes 6-12 pops depending on the size
of your moulds.

Have a laugh

A photojournalist was caught in a sudden
shower of rain and ran into a nearby
gloomy, vacant house to take shelter.
He heard scary sounds behind him and
turned around to see a ghost coming
towards him. He grabbed his camera to
take pictures.

When the ghost asked him what he was
doing, the journo said, "I just want to
take your picture for the newspaper."
The ghost, chuffed, posed for the
photographer.

When the photo shoot was finished,
the photojournalist thanked the ghost
and rushed to his office to show his
colleagues — but all the shots were an
indistinct grey or black.

The reason was clear: the spirit was
willing but the flash was weak.



Tip for the race of life

"Though our outer
self is wasting away,
our inner self is being
renewed day by day."
2 Corinthians
chapter 4, verse 16.

				1	6		
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	9				8		
9				3		8	
			1			9	2
	2					1	5
5	1	7				9	
		2				7	
						6	3

Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Warcry* is Tum-Tum hiding?



Answers: 1. God 2. Louis Daguerre 3. Blood vessels in the back of the eye 4. Edwin Land 5. Single lens reflex
Tum-Tum: is perched on a shoulder on page 15.

Quick quiz



- Who are people made in the image of?
(Genesis chapter 1, verse 26)
- In 1838, who took the first confirmed photograph of a person?
- What causes red eye in a photograph?
- Who invented the Polaroid instant camera in 1948?
- What does the abbreviation SLR stand for?

Want to know more?

Visit warcry.org.au/want-to-know-more or return the coupon to Warcry, PO Box 479, Blackburn VIC 3130.

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