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Governor Macquarie’s Job Descriptions and the Bureaucratic Control of the Convict Labour Process

Bill Robbins

Using primary and archival documentation this paper argues Governor Macquarie developed a range of complex and sophisticated management policies, practices and strategies which were designed to motivate convict workers and to positively extract productive labour from them. Indeed the range of policies adopted by Macquarie was surprisingly modern and nowhere is this more apparent than in his development of clear job statements and work regulations for a number of key jobs in the convict system. In practice these operated in a similar manner to the modern job description. This article examines the regulations developed for the management of a produce market, a turnpike road, the Sydney police, the superintendent of government stock and the government dock yards. It is argued that these regulations and work rules must be seen as the earliest forms of job description in the history of Australian labour management.

Mary Gilmore reminded Australians in her poem, Old Botany Bay, that the ‘Knotted hands/that set us high’ were those of convicts, the old lags, forgotten and ignored but whose work laid the foundations of European settlement. Gilmore was right to emphasise the importance of work in history. Work, modern or ancient, is not simply a technological activity but is the result of human design, interaction and compromise. Work is not even an exclusively economic activity. As Raelene Frances reminds us, the organisation of work reflects social and individual dimensions of hierarchy, status, skill and gender. It reflects values, attitudes, motives and interactions that might otherwise remain hidden. Work says something interesting about an individual; worker or manager alike. But, the political nature of work also says a great deal about the character of a society. Convict New South Wales was not a work gulag, it was not a slave society and nor was it a holiday camp. Through an analysis of work it becomes apparent that convict NSW was a society that was fluid and volatile and contested.

The purpose of this article is to examine a particular aspect of the management of the convict labour process in order to add something further to our growing appreciation of the complexity of convict society. Under Governor Macquarie some work tasks, work regulations and controls were deliberately written for some positions within the convict system in ways that were similar to the modern job description. Like the job descriptions of today, Macquarie’s descriptions, his discrete, clear sets of instructions and responsibilities, were intended to enhance labour productivity and increase managerial controls. They clarified, they directed, they created points of performance evaluation. These rudimentary forms of job description were, however, no accident. They were consistent with the bureaucratic, formalised and elaborate approach to the management of convict labour that is more than apparent during the years of the Macquarie administration. This article will outline, in varying degrees of detail, the five sets of job descriptions created by Macquarie from 1810 to 1821 and offer an explanation for how such a curiously ‘modern’ feature of labour management came to make such an early appearance in the landscape of Australian work.
Convict Literature and Convict Labour Process

John Hirst broke new ground in convict historiography by arguing that many popular notions and perceptions of the darkness and cruelty of convict society were simplistic and exaggerated. In reality, he argued, convicts enjoyed many more freedoms, business and social opportunities and were much less brutalised or scrutinized than is often thought. The enemies, the opponents, of transportation simplified perceptions of the convict system by exaggerating its ills and excesses. A similar re-examination of the ‘foundations’ of convict society and convict experience was made by a collection of writers in Convict Workers. In this collection detailed analyses looking at who the convicts were and what they did once they arrived challenged and reinterpreted existing orthodoxy. The contributors, in their own way, argued that convicts were more skilled, more literate and perhaps less likely to have been professional or career criminals than has hitherto been understood. In addition, contributors argued that the way convict work was organised and managed reflected motives of rationality and productivity rather than simply punishment. Although the bold assertions of the contributors to Convict Workers attracted a chorus of criticisms when first published many of their ideas have survived or demanded closer attention.

There have been a number of other contributors who have argued the complexity of convict society. Alan Atkinson also observed that the ability and willingness of convicts to resist government control was not extinguished by their lowly status. Connell and Irving recognised convict resistance but located this more closely with the convict reaction to and impact on the nature of work. And feminist writers like Summers, Alford, Aveling, Robinson and Oxley have highlighted, in quite different ways, the importance of gender in understanding the nature of convict society. However few writers have actually addressed convict labour or the labour process of convict society generally. The labour process is a term which relates to the character of the organisation, management and performance of work in a society. Those that have looked at work have usually examined specific studies of an occupation or work activity rather than a general analysis. Ralph Hawkins looked at the convict timber workers, Grace Karskens at the road and bridge gangs and more recently Sue Rosen has looked at the work of the road gangs on the construction of a convict road to Bathurst in the 1830s. Barry Dyster has also looked at a broad range of occupations and work tasks within the building industry in Sydney.

It is argued here and elsewhere that the labour process that evolved in convict New South Wales was more complex and variable than has generally been appreciated. Convict workers were not completely powerless in shaping the labour process and the rewards for and intensity of their labour. As workers they possessed, individually and collectively, some influence. The convict worker was not some form of slave to be commanded or even punished at the whim of a state bureaucracy or private employer. Controls on the flogging of convict workers began in 1800 with the intervention of Governor King and again in 1812 with new regulations by Governor Macquarie. The growth in convict wages as a result of convict bargaining was also so significant that as early as 1796 Governor Hunter tried to establish a maximum convict wage. Convicts were also highly inventive in restricting the level of labour effort they provided to the state or private employers from almost the moment of settlement till well into the 1820s.
While the legal status of convicted felons transported to NSW is more than apparent – they were not free – this does not translate into slavery in the sphere of work. It was more complex than that. An examination of the nature of the labour process under which many convicts laboured suggests a more complex and less slave-like experience. It also suggests that the convict working experience changed over time. Convict workers, it is true, did not possess the right to strike or to bargain with their government employer over the terms and conditions of their work, but then neither did many free workers. Evidence suggests levels of convict worker exploitation were significantly mitigated and restrained by the actions of convicts, at least until the departure of Governor Macquarie. Convict workers, in spite of their legal status, were protected by that great industrial relations leveller: a shortage of labour. Consequently, government managers of convict labour were, until the end of 1821, often required to show greater, even remarkable, restraint when commanding convict labour than has normally been recognised. They needed, as will be seen below, to develop more elaborate and sophisticated management controls and tools (such as job descriptions). Similarly, there is considerable evidence of convict initiated attempts to modify the nature and intensity of their labour. If they were ‘slaves’ they were considerably more powerful and interactive over their labour process than, for example, most anti-bellum slaves of North America. In other words, the convict labour process was not constructed entirely by the state and nor was the convict contribution one of mere criminal recalcitrance.

While there is much evidence to suggest the productive effectiveness of convict gangs and workers it is also true that they were not always model workers. They could be difficult. But, an uncooperative or ill-disciplined workforce reluctance to work regularly for its ‘masters’ was not an exclusively Australian colonial phenomenon. It was not an inherent feature of a convict society. During the first 50 years of the colony employers in Britain were also highly vocal in criticising their reluctant workers. Free workers in the new factory towns of England and Scotland, untainted by any criminal conviction, were invariably sullen, hostile conscripts to the new disciplines of factory work. To the dismay and anger of their betters these workers stubbornly displayed pre-industrial attitudes and work practices incompatible with the rigours of machine based industry. It is argued here that the complaints of contemporary observers of convict labour such as Collins, Tench, Hunter, and, in particular, Thomas Bigge merely echoed the sentiments of Josiah Wedgwood, Andrew Ure and others in Britain. The words of the critics of the convict work ethic need to be tempered by an appreciation that most employers of labour in the nineteenth century shared a jaundiced view of their workers. The making of the modern worker in Britain (and elsewhere) was a slow struggle which needed the active intervention of the law, hunger, transportation, the military and religion to create new social and consumer attitudes.

On the other hand, while convict workers resisted the power of the state and private employers it may be that they offered less resistance to the new emerging world of work than some labourers in the new British factory towns. This acceptance of the modernity of work however, had less to do with the ruthlessness of the state. In New South Wales there was no need to defeat a pre-industrial labouring class clinging to traditional rights, values and aspirations. If these had been held by convicts when sent to New South Sales they would surely have evaporated on the voyage out. It is hard to imagine anything more modernising than the forced, mass migration that was transportation; Sydney Cove prepared even the most traditional labourer for the world of the new. As a consequence, we see a range of entrepreneurial ventures and
behaviours amongst convict workers. They displayed complex, multi-layered and
highly discerning attitudes to work. For instance, the sawyers of the Hawkesbury
River district in the late 1790s engaged not in work minimisation but in a profit driven
venture which involved the private contracting of their labour for maximum financial
reward.\textsuperscript{23} Later, in Sydney in the early 1820s, a convict gang was offered the
opportunity to engage in a private, profit taking venture in exchange for greater
productivity.\textsuperscript{24} Both were transactional arrangements which displayed more traces of
modernity than tradition or simple coercion. Indeed, the first half of the convict
system in NSW may have encouraged in the working class attitudes of independence
more closely associated with the contractor and sub-contractor rather than the factory
employee or permanent farm-hand; the ethos of mateship may have been tempered by
a propensity toward private, risk-taking enterprise. The convict preparedness to
embrace an entrepreneurial or discerning attitude to work arose because the shortage
of labour offered many convicts the freedom to choose and even bargain.\textsuperscript{25}

Ironically our grasp of work relations within the convict system in NSW is
little informed by the analysis of management and labour process theorists. Amongst
management academics there has also been an explicit or implicit assumption that
convict labour management was simple and brutal.\textsuperscript{26} A common view is that the
development of sophisticated human resource management practices (like job
descriptions) was an exclusively twentieth century phenomena and that colonial
management was explicitly a basic, crude and unstructured activity.\textsuperscript{27} This attitude is
of course strongly reinforced by labour process theory itself; the very theoretical
framework of workplace analysis. While labour process theory offers a systematic
framework for analysing the organisation of work, its broad historical sweep has
largely dismissed early labour management approaches as inherently ‘simple’.\textsuperscript{28} On
the one hand labour process theory is an excellent methodology for identifying and
analysing the nature of work performance and control and for understanding the
dynamics of the interaction between the managers and the performers of work in a
given society.\textsuperscript{29} On the other hand, as a model for outlining or predicting the evolution
of stages of labour process development, it can be too prescriptive.

This article adds new evidence and analysis to an emerging orthodoxy. Like
Hirst and Nicholas \textit{et al} this article contests the idea convict work was always
inherently brutalised and clumsily controlled or even performed. It rejects the notion
that the convict worker needed to be driven and terrorised to his/her work or that
management practices and regulations were simple and unsophisticated. It challenges
the view that there was no systematic structure to the way convict labour was
organised or controlled and that there was an inherently \textit{simple} model of labour
management in convict New South Wales. Instead, it is argued that the management
of convict labour under the administration of Governor Macquarie came to display
many features of a \textit{bureaucratic} approach.\textsuperscript{30} During the Macquarie administration the
function of managing convict labour utilised a range of sophisticated policies,
practices and controls that were designed explicitly to improve labour performance.
While some of these have been discussed elsewhere\textsuperscript{31} it is worth briefly recalling
Macquarie’s initiatives: improving convict supervision so as to tighten the span of
supervisor control; reducing negative and increasing positive reward systems to
improve convict motivation; rationally matching convict skills with convict
employment; transforming work measurements into regular and detailed weekly
reports; and, in the construction of convict job descriptions.
What is a Job Description?

The job description is now commonly seen as an integral part of the overall function of Job Analysis which is essentially ‘the process of identifying the tasks, responsibilities and context of a role, and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform them’. The job description is regarded as the job specific aspects rather than the qualities required of the individual job incumbent or candidate. In constructing a job description the document involved will identify the job in question; specify a job summary; identify tasks and responsibilities; outline the relationships between jobs, establish authority levels and standards of performance. In other words a job description describes ‘what the job is called, what is done, where it is done and how it is done’.

Of course, at a deeper level a job description is much more than a neutral, rational document setting out the roles and responsibilities of a particular job. It is a strategy, a tool of management; a mechanism for the rationalisation, the organisation, the quantification of a job and its attendant tasks in a way that is controlled and initiated by management for the objectives of management. A job description is not normally a worker generated document. Workers are more inclined to look to custom and practice, to traditional task divisions, to informal task allocating arrangements; a fluid, organic even idiosyncratic job description. The worker induced job division and description is, however, no more deliberate and self-serving than the management job description but few management or Human Resources textbooks are prepared to make this pluralistic observation. Scientific Management was designed specifically to relocate job knowledge to management and the job description must be seen as a mechanism of this transference. Indeed, it was the Gilbreths, a husband and wife duo of Taylorist disciples, who first translated worker knowledge and function into modern job descriptions in the form of work instruction cards.

In the Macquarie work system the job description was no less a deliberate, rational strategy designed to both increase work performance and work control. The job description under Macquarie was a management initiative. In some cases it was an attempt to formalise the functions and tasks of a new job, in others it was a response to the chaos of a past incumbent in existing jobs. In either case, the job descriptions written or authorised by Macquarie were designed to increase and formalise control over the job incumbents and other convict workers. In this way they were conscious contributions to the bureaucratisation of the convict labour process. Virtually all job descriptions demanded the recording of information and the forwarding of this to superiors in the hierarchy of command; all were concerned to construct ways of measuring performance; all were concerned not only with efficiency but also with control. Macquarie’s job descriptions were highly original and therefore significant in the history of labour management. However, not only were they unique in Australia, they were also highly unusual in British industry at this time. Indeed the army, navy and perhaps the church were the only large bureaucratic organisations at the time which had forms of job descriptions which were at all similar. Both the Army and Navy had developed clear statements on the roles and responsibilities of various classifications of personnel. In this way the role and duty of a ship’s Captain could be distinguished from a First Mate or a Sergeant from a Private. Macquarie almost certainly relied on the exactness of his military training and experience in designing this approach but its application to a penal work force in 1810 was extraordinary.
Governor Macquarie’s Early Labour Regulations

Lachlan Macquarie began his role as Governor with vigour and enthusiasm. Within days of being sworn in as Governor he prescribed new and increased hours of convict work. These new hours were not, however, excessive; probably 9 hours per day in summer and 7 hours in winter; at a time when British factory workers were commonly working 16 hours per day. By the end of 1810 Macquarie enlarged the streets of Sydney, straightened many, constructed footpaths on either side, imposed better and more stringent building regulations, required the building of 4 foot high picket fences around properties, enclosed park lands, granted freehold title to many properties and standardised street names. The layout of central Sydney today derives much from the civic planning imposed by Macquarie. He also rebuilt bridges and improved the surface of roads. Another project was the construction of ‘a centrical [sic] and commodious place in the Town of Sydney for holding the Public Market’. This involved the construction of a house for the

Clerk of the Market and his assistants; a market House or Store for the reception of all kinds of Grain, Goods, Merchandise, or other Necessary Articles; Stalls for the Convenience of such persons as may bring any Articles for Sale there; and Pens for the Accommodation of such Horned Cattle, sheep, or swine as may be brought.

This new market was designed to improve and stimulate trade and commerce and to raise colonial income. Macquarie, like Governors before and after him, was often constrained by the level of income allocated by the British government to the colony and by restrictions on what it could be spent on. A creative solution to these restraints was to generate income locally. For this reason the market had to be an efficient and accountable enterprise. It needed to be run by a Clerk, ‘a competent person … with a Suitable Salary and with an Assistant under him …[with] … the power of Settling and Arranging all Matters tending to the Order, Regularity, Peace and Quietness of the Market’. Macquarie’s approach to this market, however, had another significance; a new initiative in the management of convict labour.

Within the regulations on the operation of the market were detailed instructions on the work of the Clerk of the Market and his assistant. The Clerk was charged with the superintendence of the market, the collection of fees, the keeping of records, the weighting of the produce brought to the market, the checking of the accuracy of scales throughout the market, the inspection of the quality of goods offered for sale and its opening and closing at the designated times. The Clerk was also required to keep written records and present to the local Magistrates ‘every Friday … the Average Prices’ of produce sold. He was also required to provide them and the Governor with a quarterly account of market income. The point of this detail was obviously the efficient and profitable operation of the market.

Moreover, this was not an isolated incident. The regulations governing the management of the turn-pike road from Sydney to Parramatta, proclaimed on the same day, also stipulated in some detail the roles and duties of the Toll Keeper and his assistants. These were not as elaborate as some other regulations but they nevertheless make clear what staff were required to do. Attention to this sort of detail was probably also motivated by the need to raise revenue: efficient labour management produced more income.
A further example of the thorough and meticulous approach of Macquarie to the management of the assets and infrastructure of the colony was the detailed contract and agreement given to the contractors regulating the construction of the Sydney Hospital.50 This building was often referred to as the Rum Hospital because the payment for its construction by private contractors was not calculated in cash, but as a monopoly for the importation and sale of rum.51 What is of interest here is the detail of this document which not only set out the specifics of the transaction but also the actual work of the carpenters and joiners employed on the project. This was not a job description but it illustrates Macquarie’s more systematic and documented approach to the management of a project and the labour employed in it. It too had revenue/expenditure implications.

The Sydney Police Job Descriptions

The first unambiguous and detailed job descriptions in Australian history are those contained in the Regulations for the Police of Sydney in 1811. This in-depth and complex document was produced by Macquarie in order to outline the roles of individual police officers, to delineate the levels of responsibilities as well as make clear the structures of command. While these were ostensibly about the reformation and rationalisation of the function of policing in Sydney52 they were, in practice, much more than a law and order issue. Macquarie was also reacting to the corrupt and inefficient system of policing he had inherited.53 In other words, the detailed descriptions of each of the jobs created or clarified by Macquarie were an attempt to reform and improve the management of this particular part of the convict labour process; the majority of the men employed then as police were convicts. These job descriptions were part of the Governor’s systematic bureaucratisation of colonial administration and the labour process generally.

In the reorganisation of policing in Sydney Macquarie divided the town into Five Districts and created a range of new or more clearly delineated police positions. The hierarchy of command and function for a district is set out in Diagram 1. From this it is apparent that Macquarie created or reformed the police hierarchy into the positions of Police Superintendent, Chief Constable, District Constable, Night Constable and Ordinary Constable.54 It should also be noted that Macquarie was not merely transplanting British policing reforms. His restructure of Sydney police predates the implementation of the reforms of Robert Peel, which ultimately created the modern British police force.55 Interestingly, Peel worked in the Colonial Office in London and was familiar with Macquarie’s reforms and administration.56

The head of policing in 1811 was the Superintendent (D’Arcy Wentworth57) who had ‘the general ordering and Control over all Constables’ and was responsible for overseeing the whole of the policing operations.58 It was to him, for example, that all of the police reports were brought and any reports on the behaviour or effectiveness of the constables. The Superintendent appears to have been paid £100 per annum which was amongst the highest in the government bureaucracy at that time.59 However this was not simply a managerial role; the Superintendent was required also to be a Magistrate.60
Diagram 1
Hierarchy of Command of Sydney Police, 1811

The Superintendent was required to ‘Carefully Keep a Book’ on all those charged and to ‘keep a Register, in which he shall enter the Names and places of Abode of every Housekeeper in the Town of Sydney’. He was also able to record ‘the Names of their Children and Servants, and also the Names of such Strangers or other persons as shall be resident with them’. The control the state exerted over the citizens, free and convict, of Sydney was highly significant at this time and contrasts with the much fewer public controls over the citizens of British towns.

The Chief Constable was the more strategic manager of policing in Sydney. It is not clear who the Chief Constable was in 1811 but in 1813 it was John Redman with a salary of £60 per year. He was in charge of all five Police Districts and for the rostering and management of the District Constables attached to each although he did not directly control the rostering and supervision of District staff. On the other hand he was required to deal with any constables whose conduct was reported to him by the District Constable. In this way he had disciplinary functions. In practice he seems to have been more the direct intermediary between the constables and the Superintendent and was required ‘to do his utmost … to preserve Publick [sic] Decorum’. In doing this he was required to compile all the written reports given to him from each District and present them to the Superintendent and to oversee the operation of licensed premises, prevent the operation of houses of ill repute and keep up to date the register of convicts.

The next and probably the most important position within the Macquarie hierarchy of police was the District Constable with a salary of £50 per annum. He was both a direct supervisor of all subordinate constables as well as, when needed, an
operational constable himself. In other words he had both managerial and operational duties. As can be seen from Diagram 1, the District Constable was in charge of a District of Sydney and had six subordinates below him. He rostered constables to the various positions and duties and directly supervised their conduct giving ‘them such Instructions as [he] may deem necessary’. 66 In maintaining discipline he had to rely on his official power to ‘report every Instance of Disobedience, Misconduct, or other Negligence in the Constables under him to the Chief Constable’. 67 In supervising the constables he would have observed their activities on patrol and in his regular visits ‘to the Watch-house of his District’. 68 The District Constable was also directly responsible for conveying any prisoners in his custody to the Superintendent. The District Constables were required to collect the written reports of the Night Constables at 7 o’clock each morning and take these to the Chief Constable. Indeed, the District Constables were also required to ‘attend at a certain hour every Afternoon at the House of the Chief Constable to hear and receive such other Instructions as the Chief Constable may give’. 69

The Night Constables were the charge officers. They ran the District station or watch house and they received prisoners who were brought in. In this capacity they were required to process those charged with offences, record all details of their offence, particulars and behaviour. They were also responsible for the proper care and restraint of each prisoner and for handing him or her over to the District Constable in the morning. The Night Constable also wrote a report of the operations of their district watch house and was required to hand this to the District Constable by 7 o’clock every morning. A Night Constable was paid the convict salary of £10 per annum, making him almost certainly a convict.

Armed with a cutlass and a rattle (which, when turned, made a clattering sound) the Ordinary Constables patrolled the streets and called the time at every, half hour interval. They were expected to ‘stop every prisoner and suspicious person who was out after the curfew of 9 o’clock and arrest them if they had no good reason for their nocturnal wanderings. These prisoners were to be taken to the watch-house and left in charge of the Night Constable. The Ordinary Constables were given the ‘discretionary power of Calling at the house where prisoners reside or any other Suspicious Houses, at any time during the Night’. 70 In the event of ‘any fray, Riot or Disturbance’ the Ordinary Constables were to ‘do their utmost to restore the peace’ and if the emergency was beyond their individual capacity to resolve they were expected to ‘Spring their Rattles’ which was a call for assistance to all other patrolling constables. 71 All were expected to give assistance. In patrolling the streets the Ordinary Constables were required to check the security of houses and government offices or buildings to ensure they were locked and undisturbed. They were also required to enforce the licensing laws for public houses and were given the authority to enter houses they thought to be of ill repute. Naturally, they were also required to pursue any one they thought to be a burglar or housebreaker or ‘Riotous and disorderly’. 72 Ordinary Constables were serving convicts and as such were paid an annual salary of £10.

The regulations on the Sydney Police were in effect a series of job descriptions because they provided considerable detail on the specific duties and responsibilities of each person appointed to one of these positions. They established the hierarchy of command, made clear the reporting channels and mechanisms, established starting and finishing times (at least for the lowlier positions) and made a distinction between regular duties and those which might have arisen from time to time. They were intended to guide the behaviour of each of the incumbents and to
allow each person to understand where they fitted into the chain of command. This approach also allowed a more formal and structured degree of scrutiny of the performance of each of the constables reflecting the fact that the imperative for their creation was efficiency. These job descriptions addressed the inefficient and ad hoc approach which existed prior to 1811.

**The Superintendent of Government Stock Job Description**

At six pages in length and over 2,500 words long this was a highly specific and comprehensive document. It was written in June 1813 to mark the appointment of George Thomas Palmer, Esquire, to the position of Superintendent of Government Stock. Again the impetus for this document was the need to reform the management of a government enterprise. The corruption of convict stock workers and others and the incompetence of the Superintendent, John Jamieson, demanded a new, more regulated system of control. The fall of Jamieson was dramatic and sudden. The scandal involved not only theft but also violent murder. Macquarie reported:

> a deep and daring System of Plunder and Robbery of the Government Tame Herds was discovered to have been long practised by the Overseers and Stockmen employed in taking Care of the Cattle. They had Stolen and Sold great Numbers of Government Horned Cattle to Settlers and other persons; and had Slaughtered also a Considerable Number for their own use.\(^73\)

Faced with a trial and conviction some of the convict workers turned ‘King’s Evidence’ and this widened the net of culpability. One of the settlers caught as a receiver of stolen goods was a Matthew Kearns who, ‘Cruelly and barbarously Conspired (Aided therein by his own Son and Brother) to Murder one of those Men who had … [given] … Evidence for the Crown’. Kearns hired two assassins who murdered the informer ‘at Night in one of the Streets in the Town of Parramatta’. These men were caught, as were the three Kearns, and all were sentenced to be hanged. The Kearns were executed in Sydney but the two assassins, in some gesture of moral symmetry perhaps, ‘were hanged at Parramatta on the very Spot where the Murder was Committed’. All the other men convicted in the thefts of cattle, some of whom were originally also sentenced to be hanged, were ‘transported to work in the Coal Mines at Newcastle’.\(^74\)

Jamieson, though incompetent and inefficient, was thought not to have been involved in the crimes committed by the men under his charge. He was dismissed and Macquarie took the opportunity to design a new framework of control and accountability. He also took the opportunity to dismiss ‘all the old Overseers and Stockmen’ even though they had not been charged with the crime of theft, and ‘replaced them with new ones, in order to break up the Chain of Connexion formed by the old Stockmen with the People of the Country’. A sweeping, indiscriminate change of personnel expressed in terms that hint at the management-speak of the future. More important was the restructure of the position of Superintendent of Government Stock. Macquarie appointed George Palmer ‘a Young Man, of good Education, high Honor [sic] and Integrity, active, diligent, and intelligent.’ But, just to make sure, Macquarie designed ‘very full and particular Instructions for his Guidance’.\(^75\)

Superintendent of Government Stock was a significant position. It involved responsibility for 3,799 horned cattle, 1,172 sheep and 76 horses and for the superintendency of 44 convict stockmen.\(^76\) The value of the stock and the importance
of it in terms of government transport, breeding and food supplies made this a critical position. However, what distinguishes the duty statement for this position was the detailed way in which the functions, roles, responsibilities and levels of authority were so clearly and formally articulated. It also established the relationship between Superintendent and other stock workers, both up and down in the hierarchy of convict administration.

The Superintendent was required to divide the cattle, sheep and horses into herds for ease of management. This advice was very detailed and specific. In the case of the horned cattle there were to be 15 individual herds and two men per herd were to be appointed as stockmen. The herds were not simply a division of the total number of cattle but were to reflect such distinguishing features as breed, sex, age, breeding qualities, health, strength and condition. The allocation of individual cows to one of these types of herd was the responsibility of the Superintendent although considerably detailed criterion was laid down in the document to guide these decisions. A similar division of the sheep in flocks was also stipulated. Apart from the daily care of the livestock the Superintendent was also responsible for taking animals to market and, most importantly, for branding or marking them. In terms of the Superintendent’s daily management of the stock, the job description went so far as to specify the nature of stockyards, the quality of grazing fields, the mustering of livestock and their lodging at nights. The nature and organisation of the stockyards was so detailed it specified how, when and where they should be constructed. However, while firmly detailed in many respects, there were, nevertheless, aspects of their construction which Macquarie left ‘entirely to your Own discretion’ indicating some degree of independence or judgement was allowed. The document specified that the stockyards would also consist of ‘a Hut for the accommodation of the Stockmen’ while there were also to be ‘two Huts of a larger and Superior Quality built for the residence and Accommodation of the two Principle Overseers’. In addition these were to be sited in such a way that maximised the gaze and scrutiny of the two overseers. There was a spatial dimension to overseer control.

The staffing of the government stock gangs was also specified in considerable detail. In total there were to be 44 convict workers, two of whom were to be the Principle Overseers (senior supervisors). These men were in charge of half of the men and livestock each and were required to report directly to the Superintendent ‘every Saturday of each Week, of the state of the Stock … So as to Enable [the Superintendent] to make up the required weekly return thereof on the following Monday’. In other words, one level of supervisor was required to formally report on his activities in order that the Superintendent could report, in this case, directly to the Governor.

The stockmen were also formally divided with two men per herd of cattle, five men taking care of the flocks of sheep, two men with the horses, two men as transport drivers and three men working in the government dairy. While the duties of these convict workers were not detailed in the Superintendent’s job description it is relatively clear that their work was the daily and direct care of livestock. On the other hand, the documentation does specify things the men should not do. For example, the men were not allowed to have visitors at their stockyard, they were not allowed to wander around the countryside nor were they permitted to have significant ‘intercourse with the Towns in the Vicinity of their respective Stock-Yards’ and they were forbidden to raise any livestock of their own. To help ensure this isolation the Superintendent was required to supervise the distribution of weekly rations by the Principle Overseer. On the other hand, the convict workers and overseers were
permitted to grow their own vegetables and to raise as many hens and pigs as they wished. More significant in terms of labour management, the Superintendent was required to make himself ‘acquainted with the Names, Characters and Capacities of the Overseers and Stockmen’ in order to better control the behaviour of the men under him. In other words, although there were overseers the Superintendent was expected to have a hands-on approach to the management of his subordinates. Similarly, any act of dishonesty on the part of the convict workers was to be seen explicitly as a failure of supervision. Control of labour was a prime responsibility of the Superintendent.

In order to control the management of the government stock the Superintendent was required to muster the cattle etc each month in order to keep accurate records of their number and condition. This was not only a means of controlling stock but also the activities of the men. From the regular musters the Superintendent was also required to compile ‘Monthly Returns’ which were to be communicated to the Governor in writing. These Monthly Reports were partly the outcome of the musters but also the quantification of activities in the Principle Overseers’ Weekly Reports. In this way the Superintendent was required to report both on a weekly and monthly basis and each report was to be ‘Carefully entered in a Book to be kept by you for that purpose’. This is clearly a bureaucratic response; written, formal reports contained within the sacred leaves of a book. There was further detail on how the cattle themselves were to be managed; how they were to be allocated to herds and separated into breeds so that the English, Cape and Bengal breeds were all kept apart. The decision to put the cattle with bulls was also specifically regulated.

In the document detailing the work of the Superintendent of Stock there were also a number of broad outcomes that were required. To this end the new Superintendent was required to stop the theft of government stock and to raise the quality of livestock ‘from the poor, reduced, and weakly State they are in at present’ and the objective was to make the government stock ‘equal to – if not Surpass – those belonging’ to the private sector. In other words there were measurable outcomes even if these were somewhat vague and ill defined. Having said that, there would be less difficulty in establishing these measures of improvement in 1813 because virtually every person, including the Governor, would have had a greater familiarity and contact with livestock than is likely to be widely found today.

Conclusion

The management of convict labour during the Governorship of Lachlan Macquarie was systematically organised, rationally motivated and relied on elaborate controls and mechanisms of administration. It was not motivated by the penal imperatives that guided the administrations of his successors, Governors Brisbane and Darling. There was nothing within his approach to conjure images of the gulag. Macquarie created a system of labour management which was bureaucratic in nature and was not the simple, brutal and ad hoc system that popular culture has imagined or labour process theorists might expect or predict. Macquarie instigated many reforms consistent with a bureaucratic and rational system of labour management administration but this article has examined only one manifestation: the job description. Although this was one of many tools in the armoury of Macquarie’s labour process controls it has been overlooked. This is all the more surprising given that Macquarie’s use of the job description was no experiment. It was a concerted reform, an enduring one.
Macquarie took his first steps toward the making of job descriptions at the very beginning of his administration in early 1810. He was still writing and defining job instructions in his final year in 1821, when he wrote a small document of instructions for the Government Dock Yard. An important activity in a settlement dependent on shipping, this last job description outlined the responsibilities of the Master Attendant - the superintendent of the management of government ship building and repair. In addition, it also distinguished the roles of other key personnel such as the Master Carpenter and the government Boatswain.\(^85\)

The existence of job descriptions in convict New South Wales raises a number of questions: firstly, why did Macquarie create such a distinct, complex and relatively benign system of labour management? Secondly, why did he specifically write the job descriptions he did? And, thirdly, why are there not job descriptions for other convict jobs? In answer to the first question there are essentially two rafts of reasons: personal and functional. As a Scot, Macquarie was the product of humble social origins, of a semi-universal education system and of the Scottish Enlightenment.\(^86\) All configured to provide him with an understanding of humanity, a belief in self sufficiency and a modest egalitarianism which made him receptive to talent regardless of class and social status. Macquarie was also a product of another great institution, the British Army, in which he learned the hierarchy of command, the need for organisation and the demands of engineering.\(^87\) Equipped with these qualities Macquarie was able to respond to that other raft of circumstance: the functional.

When he arrived in Sydney Macquarie found a settlement fractured by rebellion and in physical decay and disrepair.\(^88\) To rebuild the colony, to create order and structure, Macquarie needed systems, priorities, income and a cooperative and efficient workforce. In the latter case he had no choice but to rely on and to motivate the relatively large convict workforce. Macquarie was perhaps also fortunate in that his political masters, the Colonial Secretaries in Britain, were for some time preoccupied by European rebellion and war and this gave him, or allowed him to take, greater liberties. A further variable in this colonial context was a shortage of labour. This allowed convict workers to take greater liberties and perhaps further compelled Macquarie’s approach to labour management. Control through brute force was less of an option for Macquarie than for his successors. Instead, he had to find more elaborate and sophisticated ways of better motivating, controlling and organising his convict workers. The job description was one such way.

A further reason for the bureaucratisation of the convict labour process may have arisen from the very scale of the public employment of convict workers that characterised the Macquarie era. The state’s direct responsibility for the supervision of convict workers was highly significant. During Macquarie’s administration the convict labour gangs were at their most highly developed and employed large numbers of convicts performing a wide variety of tasks.\(^89\) The scale of employment, in other words, may have been a positive incentive toward the formalisation of job functions and duties. A large work force under a quasi-military bureaucracy is surely likely to produce a formalised system of administration. Certainly, we can say that when the employment of labour by an enterprise reaches a critical size, there will be an imperative to structure more clearly and to formalise more explicitly job roles and responsibilities.\(^90\)

The answer to the question - why these job descriptions? - is relatively straightforward. With the descriptions for the market and the turnpike road Macquarie was imposing control and order on new enterprises not existing ones. In this way he was able to impose his sense of administrative protocol from the outset. In
addition, both these new enterprises had direct revenue raising implications. The government earned income from the operation of the market and the use of the road. This was particularly attractive income; it was locally raised and could be spent with less scrutiny and censure from Britain. There was a financial imperative toward efficiency in these activities.

In the case of the police and the superintendence of government stock Macquarie’s motivation was no less obvious. In both cases he was responding to crises of management and credibility. Both were clearly inefficient, indeed, widely considered to be corrupt. In the case of the police, the financial implications were relatively indirect. Of greater importance were the social implications and the need for government to project the ability to control. There were, however, financial implications associated with the management of government stock. Stock meant money. Protecting government property was also critical, indeed the execution of five of the conspirators displays how seriously this was viewed. Control, efficiency and credibility were the major motivators in the reform of this important part of government bureaucracy. On the other hand, the reason for the small dock yard job description is now less obvious but keeping secure this important activity would have been a factor. There was a long tradition in the colony of convict escape by boat and sail.91

The final question that needs to be considered is why were there not other job descriptions? The short but less compelling answer is that there probably were more. Logically, other smallish government enterprises like the Carters Barracks, the Government Slaughterhouse and the Government Wind Mills may also have had formalised operating instructions. Future research into these activities and others could fruitfully examine archival material relating to job descriptions and instructions. An additional explanation is that only some activities or parts of the convict bureaucracy might have needed job descriptions. Even though the public employment of convicts was extensive, parts of it involved work that was relatively straightforward. Some jobs, like street cleaning, gardening, loading and unloading goods and general labouring may not have required formalised accounts of job function and task. The management of men at these tasks may have been relatively uncomplicated, the performance measures transparent and the supervision constant. In contrast, jobs or roles which involved inherent levels of discretion, planning, task complexity, skill and unpredictability may have encouraged the more formal job description approach. There is some logic to this reasoning in the case of the police, the stock workers and even the Clerk of the market. Further research into the divisions in the changing nature of convict supervision could also fruitfully look for hints or evidence of the job description. It may be that the differing levels of supervisor (principal overseer, overseer, and deputy overseer) had embedded within them implicit job divisions if not descriptions.

Although Macquarie did not use the term ‘job description’, his documents were written to do what would now be expected of one: to formally regulate the performance of jobs and tasks within a defined hierarchy of responsibility. In doing this Macquarie was systematically analysing the nature of a variety of positions and articulating unambiguous instructions in order to increase performance and accountability. What this study suggests is that the development and application of management strategies such as the job description in Australia was not simply a twentieth century phenomena. The job description, in a rudimentary form, was created as early as 1810 and was one of the mechanisms used to construct a bureaucratic system of labour process control. As a consequence, the history of Australian labour
management should now be amended in order to acknowledge Governor Macquarie’s job descriptions as Australia’s first.

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**Endnotes**

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10. Dyster *Servant and Master*.


24 Bigge, Report 1822, p. 28.


27 Wright, The Management of Labour.


30 Edwards, Contested Terrain, p. 131.

31 Nicholas, Convict Workers, Dyster, Servant and Master; Robbins, Lumber Yards.


35 Compare with Frances, The Politics of Work, pp. 16-17.


38 Gilbreth, The psychology of Management.


41 Archive Office, AO Reel 6038, 20 January 1810: AO Reel 6039, 26 October 1811.


43 AO Reel 6039, Government Order 6 October 1810.


50 Ibid, pp. 401-405.


61 Ibid. p. 411.
62 Ibid. p. 412.
63 Tobias *Crime and Industrial Society*.
66 Ibid. p. 407.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid. p. 409.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid. p. 408.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid. p. 409.
76 Ibid. pp. 715-716.
77 Ibid. p. 717.
79 Ibid. p. 744.
80 Ibid. p. 745.
81 Ibid. p. 747.
82 Ibid. p. 746.
83 Ibid. pp. 746-747.
84 Ibid. p. 747.
85 Ibid. p. 748.
87 CO 201/119 Reel 106-107, Descriptions of the Jobs for Master Attendant, Master Carpenter and Boatswain at Government Dock Yard, 1821.
91 CO 201/118 Reel 106, Return of Superintendents, Clerks and Overseers, 1819-1820.
Macquarie had been appointed Lieutenant Governor. However, when the chosen Governor fell ill, Macquarie stepped into the difficult situation. He was to prove to be the most memorable and significant of all Governors. Like most of the governors before him, Macquarie’s noble ideals were undermined by harsh realities and constant opposition. In 1816 he enforced his new proclamation against trespassing on the Government Domain by having three trespassers (all free settlers) flogged. They were to receive convict labour and supplies and a monopoly on rum-imports from which they expected to recoup the cost of the building and gain considerable profits. The contract allowed them to import 45,000 (later increased to 60,000) gallons of rum to sell to the thirsty colonists. Pros of bureaucracy Although the vices of bureaucracy are evident (and are discussed in the next section), this form of organization is not totally bad. In other words, benefits to the proverbial “red tape” associated with bureaucracy do exist. For example, bureaucratic regulations and rules help ensure that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) takes appropriate precautions to safeguard the health of Americans when it is in the process of approving a new medication. Which of the following is the most likely form of control used by a firm with a functional structure and low integration? What was the name of the first person to describe bureaucratic controls? How many types of Bureaucratic Control? 1. Central authority in bureaucracy makes it effective in organizing. Advocates for bureaucracy have positive views on having hierarchy in an organization. They say that since there is a chain of command, there will be specific roles and tasks for people involved in the departments. This way, management will be able to monitor the performance of the people in lower ranks. Also, with strict regulations and policies that need to be observed, there is a big possibility that duties will be carried out in a systematic and timely manner. Following these set of rules before decision making ensures ch