Acknowledgements

This book was written in order to demystify key elements of legal discourse, and to illustrate the inner mechanics of an increasingly powerful body of law. Importantly this is not a book about defining indigenous knowledge, rather it is about the capacity of western law to make and remake that very category. The politics of the book is simple – unmasking the history, function and operation of intellectual property law actually provides the possibility for re-imagining how it could be used to advance indigenous interests in knowledge control, access and use. Given the complexity of colonial relationships within Australia as elsewhere, I firmly believe that finding a productive way forward in law and politics is not a task for indigenous people alone. It is the responsibility of us all.

This book initially developed out of my PhD thesis completed in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales. Since then it has been reworked and informed by all my experiences working with indigenous people, families and communities in Australia, the United States and Indonesia.

My greatest debt is to Kathy Bowrey who has been an intellectually stimulating supervisor, but more than this, an incredibly generous and supportive friend at all points in this journey.

A four-year research fellowship at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) provided new perspectives crucial for this work. Indeed it was within this context that the possibility for extending the work practically became a reality. The resulting experiences within contemporary indigenous political contexts have been invaluable and inevitably have been woven into the arguments in the book. The time at AIATSIS was the most formative period for me and it would not have been possible without the generosity in time and thought provided by Steve Kinnane, Craig Greene, Kirstie Parker, Carol Ryan, Luke Taylor, Peter Veth, Barry Cundy, Dianne Hosking, Patrick Sullivan, Toni Bauman, Lisa Strelein, Glen Kelly, Donna Oxenham and Mick Dodson at AIATSIS, as well as the support of those beyond the Institute namely, Martin Nakata, Jill McKeough, Brad Sherman, Leanne Wiseman, Colin Golvan, Charles Prouse, Terri Janke, Peter Drahos, Mark McMillan and Megan Davis.

A Rockefeller Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution in 2005 enabled me to re-position my thoughts within a context beyond Australia. For
this opportunity and the engaging conversation that ensued I would like to thank Richard Kurin, Sita Reddy, Lesley Fordred-Green, Atesh Sonneborn, James Early and Carla Borden.

My last year as a Fellow at the International Center for Advanced Studies at New York University provided the time I needed to complete the manuscript and to reflect upon the necessity of inter-disciplinary conversations within this field. This was a particularly stimulating experience and I would like to thank Tom Bender and Tim Mitchell for the opportunity, as well as all the 2006–7 Fellows. In particular Maïmuna Huq, Diana Yoon, Deb Cowen, Wei-ha Wu, Xying Wang, Julia Elyachar, Alondra Nelson, Miriam Ticktin, Peggy Summers, Ella Shohat, Ulla Berg, Sherene Seikaly and Chris Otter.

Outside these fellowships, my work would not be possible without the ongoing support and encouragement of Fred Myers, Faye Ginsberg, Haidy Geismar, Wend Wendland, Peter Jaszi, Arun Agrawal, Sally Engel Merry, Elspeth Probyn, Tim Rowse, John Frow, Sonia Smallacombe, Bina D’Costa, Beth Povinelli, Rizaldi Saigian, Agus Sardjono and Ignatias Harianto.

Finally, my family and friends have been a constant support in providing space to test new ideas. For the love and laughter that has kept me going I am particularly indebted to Sophie Anderson, Sue Anderson, Ron Anderson, Brenden McCumstie, Wayne Deans, Lidia Tamplenizza, Courtney Botfield, Annie Lee, Smokey Forrester, Sally Heckel, Matt Giffin, TJ Volonis, Mel O’Hanolan, Rich Baz, Andy Russell, Peter Mahomet, Sarah-Jane Clarke and Andrea Geyer.