



Professor calls to end silence on bloodshed

■ Sydney

Academics and indigenous activists have pushed for recognition of the frontier wars as World War One centenary commemorations ramp up.

They want Australians to broaden their understanding of Australian warfare urgently to include the mass murder of Aboriginal people, particularly during colonial times.

History Professor Heather Goodall told a conference at Sydney's University of Technology Australia should be asking "serious questions" as it began four years of WWI centenary commemorations.

"The first and most important (question) being whether we can understand and remember the wars inside Australia," she said.

"We remember the lives given at Gallipoli and on the Western Front, but we ignore the bloodshed on our own home soil."

The frontier wars is the name given to the mass killings of Aboriginal Australians from 1842-1862 and beyond.

Governments after 1875 routinely denied the massacres, forcing historians to contend with this

blackspot in the nation's history.

Heritage activist Meredith Walker told the audience more than 100 massacres had taken place in the 19th century in Queensland and NSW at Myall Creek, East Ballina, Dharawal and Ten-terfield.

A descendent of those killed in the 1928 Coniston Massacre in the Northern Territory, Francis Jupurrurla Kelly, said the trauma of the violence still lingered in Aboriginal communities.

"The bones of our massacred families are still lying there, on the surface of the red soil," he said.

"We live with this story, this pain, every day in our communities."

Academics at the conference also highlighted the hero-to-pariah treatment of Aboriginal diggers, who returned from the war with no recognition or compensation.

Ms Walker said about 20 memorials around Australia had been erected recognising the efforts of the estimated 1000 indigenous Anzacs.

However, "most were put in after 2000 as attempts at reconciliation".

The conference continues today.

AAP