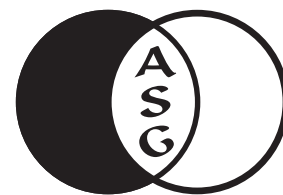


# ELIMATTA



Spring 2003

## A TRIBUTE TO SUE

Susan Osborn, dear friend and colleague, passed away on 8th July 2003. Sue's last six months were spent mainly in hospital as she struggled to recover from massive operations she had in January. She had such a terrible time. At each step of her ordeal she was comforted by the encircling love, care and hope of her family and of her friends. If only love could have pulled Sue through she would be with us today.

The Aboriginal Support Group was Sue's last great passion and she brought many gifts along with her commitment. Megan van Frank called Sue the Computer Goddess and indeed she was. She became editor and layout and design genius for our publications. *Elimatta*, our newsletter, *A Story to Tell*, our 20 year history, our brochures and our bookmark are amongst the many tangible reminders of Sue's skill and dedication.

Whatever the task, working with Sue was always a pleasure. It often felt more like play than work. Working with Sue, talking with her, sharing our laughter, pain, memories, joys, fears, hopes and frustrations, all made the work easier. Sue brought a quiet dignity and self-deprecating honesty to it all.

Sue was 62, born in wartime, growing up in the so-called certainty of the 50's, marrying young, raising a family in love and respect, always a reader, returning to study and becoming a computer whiz. She was funny, compassionate, wise, quiet and thoughtful. Somehow Sue fitted in being woman, wife, mother, grandmother, friend, neighbour, sister, daughter, auntie, computer pal, tutor and all the tasks she completed for our group.

Going to Rob and Sue's, to the Osborn's was always to be welcome, to be fed, to be helped and listened to and I always left feeling valued.

To Rob, Cate, Kev and Lisa we send our deep sympathy. We are all grieving for Sue. I miss her so much and am grateful for our times together.

*Lizzie Landers*

## SONG

(A poem read at Sue's memorial service)

Life is ours in vain  
Lacking love, which never  
Counts the loss or gain  
But remember, ever  
Love is linked with pain.

Light and sister shade  
Shape each mortal morrow  
Seek not to evade  
Love's companion Sorrow,  
And be not dismayed.

Grief is not in vain,  
It's for our completeness  
If the fates ordain  
Love to bring life sweetness,  
Welcome too is pain.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal

From: *My People*

A Kath Walker Collection

The Jacaranda Press 1970

## The Circle Widens

During the weeks of the Guringai Festival, I was present at two events which demonstrate the widening of acknowledgement of the cause of Indigenous Australians and commitment to support them, by people in our area.

On 1st June, the members of the Sacred Heart Church at Mona Vale, invited three speakers from varied support services, to one of the first discussions related to their commitment to Social Justice.

I had been invited to speak of the aims and ongoing actions of our local Aboriginal Support Group. I especially stressed that we need to learn from Indigenous people themselves what were and are, and the problems facing Aboriginal people, before we can attempt to judge how we could be of support.

Sister Mary Slattery, of the Order of Franciscan Missionary of Mary had a fascinating, and at times chilling, story to tell of the difficulties placed before her in her teaching at the Palm Island Settlement, in Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen's day.

Sister Mary is, however, a high spirited person and despite the deliberate attempt by government bureaucrats to stifle her work, she did overcome the petty, as well as major, obstacles put in her way. I was inspired by her, as were the folk from the Sacred Heart Church.

Ann White told a heartening story of the foundation of the Woolitji Co-operative in northern New South Wales, which established an Aboriginal Culture Centre.

I was happy to speak at the Church on behalf of the Aboriginal Support Group, and am heartened by the Church members' embrace of the idea of social justice on behalf of Indigenous people, as well as others in the community who have need of support.

St. David's Uniting Church, Dee Why was host to a joyous folk concert on 15th June, where musicians "Loosely Woven" and the St. David Singers, were joined by famed folk singer Phyl Lobl.

Wayne Richmond, a member of the Support Group, organised the concert, which was quite rumbustious in mood, with lots of joyous joining in song by the audience..

The generous sharing of donations, on the day resulted in a sum of \$327.00 being donated to the Support Group.

*Enid McIlraith*

# GURINGAI FESTIVAL 2003

## Coee Classic Surfing Event

Mother Nature provided a spiritual environment at North Steyne, Manly, for the running of the 2003 COOEE CLASSIC on Saturday 5th July. Under a warm winter sun, with clean waves up to 2m, an enthusiastic group of surfers enjoyed a spirit of Reconciliation with our Koori brothers and sisters as we celebrated NAIDOC Week locally through the Guringai Festival.

The Guringai people were the traditional Northern Sydney Aborigines and the COOEE CLASSIC acknowledges their culture by giving each division a Guringai language title.

First to hit the water were the Bougigal (Junior Men) who contended with the usual Manly Saturday morning crowd by attacking the waves with radical enthusiasm. Winner of this division was Dee Why's Dean McColl.

The Kuri (Open Men) was won by Christo Hall who was the Junior Champ when the COOEE CLASSIC was held in 1996, also at Manly Beach. None out of the twenty-four surfers in the Kuri division were at Sydney Airport the next day heading off to compete in the WQS in South Africa!

Narrabeen's Ellen Black confirmed her recent good form at State level to secure a fine win in the Nugon (Open Women).

The involvement of Adam Hennessey of the *Manly Daily* and the North Steyne Board-

riders in the 2003 COOEE CLASSIC added an extra dimension to our event organization. The camaraderie was strong and the vibe was relaxed. An injured Indigenous Surfing Champ, Paul Evans, limped along to present trophies and prizes. Several factors contributed to a successful day – excellent surf, top surfers and committed support. The COOEE CLASSIC is recognised by Manly Council and the MATSIC Committee as a unique part of local celebrations. It is open to surfers of any race, creed or colour and we are proud to focus on our Aboriginal heritage and culture through surfing.

We receive no monetary funding and therefore must work with an extremely limited budget to produce such an enjoyable day for all of the community. This year we even managed to have a cash purse of \$500 for the Kuri finalists as well as providing the infrastructure for a high quality board-riding contest including professional judges.

Without the generous support provided by our sponsors the event could not take place.

Thank you all, very much, for your contribution to the 2003 COOEE CLASSIC.

**Pat O'Neill**  
Contest Co-ordinator

## NGURRA CAMP

The 2003 GURINGAI FESTIVAL ended at Manly Council forecourt on Sunday July 13 with the NGURRA CAMP. This was something new to our area and was very well received. The weather was perfect, the site was just right, the people coming from the ferry into the Corso came over to look, listen, chat and receive the Reconciliation Hand sticker which they had no hesitation in wearing.

Before the official opening of the event by Cr. Jean Hay, Mayor of Manly, the Acknowledgement of Country was made by Susan Moylan Coombs, Chairperson of MATSIC (Manly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee). They were joined by Leonne Brown from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and Dennis Foley, author of *Repossession of our Spirit*. Traditional Owners of Northern Sydney, for the forum Honouring The Ancestors, the theme of the 2003 GURINGAI FESTIVAL. Use of a roving microphone gave members of the audience the opportunity to express opinions and ask questions of the panel, ensuring a lively and informative discussion.

There were great activities such as didgeridoo and painting workshops with Adam Hill and TAJ, a talk on the local heritage by Steve McCarthy, live music with Nadeena Dixon and Emma Donovan, original art work by Nikki McCarthy and Jessica Birk on sale, and to close the day unscheduled great dancing by Albert David and his family, Torres Strait Islander dancers.

ANTaR and the ASGMWP shared a booth where people could seek information, buy books and CD's and receive free book-marks, badges and stickers. All the time there was a great aroma wafting across from the Gelam Tail food stall which had a wide selection of cooked seafood, about which we heard only praise.

A great day was had by all so next year – see you there!

*Pat Fisher*

## SALTWATER DREAMING

**Talk by Dennis Foley, Fullbright scholar and celebrated Indigenous author of *Repossession of our Spirit: Traditional Owners of Northern Sydney*.**

I was grateful to Dennis for clearing up a common misconception that 'the Dreaming' is vague and aery-faery. He emphasised that it is precise lore and law which has been passed down through the generations. He used the example of the origin of lore about fresh and salt water in the Guringai area and how laws to preserve this precious resource were observed. In doing so he cleared up another misconception that males were always dominant, by explaining the roles of men and women in the community. Sadly, only the matriarchal language has survived so Dennis had to use this in acknowledging original owners of the land.

Furthermore, it is rarely acknowledged that when the first white men, Blaxland, Wentworth, and Lawson crossed the Blue Mountains they followed a well-worn Aboriginal track along the ridges. Similarly, in the Northern Sydney region, many of the roads followed well-worn Aboriginal tracks.

Susan Moylan Coombs, Chairperson of the Guringai Festival, and one of the Stolen Generation, pleaded with those present to break down ignorance and prejudice by telling others of what they had learnt so that: "by acknowledging the past and those who have gone before us, hopefully, we can make better decisions in the future."

**Val Horniman**  
(Member of MATSIC Committee)

**GURINAGI FESTIVAL SATURDAY,  
12TH JULY, 2003**

at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum,  
**HONOURING THE ANCESTORS:  
"Affirming Aboriginal Culture  
and Heritage"**

## CLOSE OF GURINGAI FESTIVAL



The 2003 Guringai Festival with the theme of "Honouring the Ancestors" provided a moving experience for many who attended the various functions. As a gesture of thanks to those who contributed to the success of the Festival, a gathering was held at Narrabeen Surf Club on August 1st. Representatives of Manly, Ku-ring-gai, Pittwater and Lane Cove Councils and Reconciliation groups were present.

After a delightful afternoon tea the participants spoke in turn of the highlights of their own experience of the festival. The Journey of Healing on the fifth anniversary of the National Sorry Day, organised by the Aboriginal Support Group with its acknowledgment of the Stolen Generation and need for Reconciliation, was a profound experience for all who participated.

Many thanks must go to Susan Moylan Coombs, the director and driving force of the festival.

*Laurice Penfold*

## RECOLLECTIONS OF BREWARRINA ABORIGINAL "MISSION" IN 1954

On the night of August 4th more than 50 people gathered to hear Aboriginal Support Group member, Dr Ruth A. Fink Latukefu talk about her recollections of the four months she spent at the Government Aboriginal Station in Brewarrina in 1954. As a young anthropologist, Ruth was sent to Brewarrina by Professor A.P. Elkin, of Sydney University, to study the community living on the Station which, at that time, was managed by the Aborigines Welfare Board of NSW. The Brewarrina region had traditionally been a centre of trade and ritual for the Aboriginal tribes of northern NSW and southern Queensland and the stone fishing traps on the Barwon River remain an important historical site. The original owners of the country in Brewarrina are the Ngemba or Ngiyampaa people. Like other Indigenous people in Australia and overseas, the Brewarrina people were systematically deprived of their land and after that they had become pauperised and made dependent on government support, and were treated as social outcasts.

The picture of life for Aboriginal people in Brewarrina in 1954, as painted by Ruth, was a chilling portrait of the reality of absolute power. For many of us listening to Ruth, the cultural arrogance displayed by the white authorities and the white community at large was breathtaking.

In the 1870's the township of Brewarrina was thriving but its Council confined the Aboriginal people to camps on the opposite side of the Barwon River and imposed a curfew to keep them out of town after 6.00pm. The Aborigines Protection Board (which Aborigines called the Persecution Board) established the "Mission", which never was a mission in the religious sense, nine miles south of the town.

In 1954, the policy of assimilation was at its height and in Brewarrina some Aboriginal people held a certificate of "Citizenship Rights" which exempted them from the provisions of the Aborigines Welfare Act and entitled them to receive social security benefits, to vote, and if they chose, to obtain alcohol. However, for this privilege they had to legally renounce Aboriginal cultural ties and not associate with Aboriginal people other than their immediate kin. But those Aboriginal people who tried to assimilate continually encountered prejudice from the white community. Ruth found that teachers and other whites in authority believed it was wrong for any white person to allow Aborigines to treat them as equals and that the Aborigines should always be reminded of the superiority of whites. Despite the official government policy of assimilation, the reality of life was segregation. Most Aborigines had to live on the Mission and schooling was segregated, as were patients in the hospital and patrons at the cinema. The residents had no voice in the running of the Mission and often had to endure interference in their private lives as well as being treated like children. Ruth saw no serious efforts to provide any economic activities for the people on the Mission, probably because white station owners did not want any competition or loss of the Mission workforce that was readily available to them.

Ruth concluded her recollections by saying that the most important thing she learned at the Mission was to listen to men and women who, despite their limited formal education, had wisdom and intelligence and understood the situation in which they found themselves.

*Carol Gerard*

## NORTH SYDNEY ABORIGINAL SOCIAL PLAN

Susan Moylan Coombs has been appointed Project Officer for the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan. Susan, who attended Harbord Primary School and Manly Girls High School, has lived on the Northern Beaches for over 35 years. She is a TAFE teacher of Aboriginal Studies.

Susan is the Chair of the Manly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee, the Northern Sydney Region Reconciliation Network and the founding Director of the Guringai Festival. She also serves on the Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Northern Sydney Area Health Advisory Committee and the Department of Community Services Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

The Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan has been developed through a partnership between eleven Northern Sydney Councils and a range of Commonwealth and State Government departments. The plan aims to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Sydney region, and to develop co-operation on Indigenous issues between community groups, government agencies and individuals.

Susan brings to the position of Project Officer her valuable skills and expertise. She is based at the Manly Community Centre, 12 Wentworth Street, Manly and can be contacted on 9977 1066.

# MANLY COUNCIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE COUNTRY

Buoyed by the highly successful Ngurra Camp finale to the Guringai Festival, Manly Council, at its 21st July meeting, adopted a Motion to Acknowledge Country at the commencement of its Ordinary Meetings and at major public events in Manly.

Responding to a motion introduced by Councillors Barbara Aird and Judy Lambert, the majority of Councillors voted in favour of Acknowledging Country. This means that from now on, an Acknowledgement of Country will take place at the beginning of each monthly Ordinary Meeting as well as at major events hosted by Manly Council.

During debate on this item, it was suggested that while the person Acknowledging Country is free to determine the words used at the beginning of each meeting, the Acknowledgement provided by the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater, provides a good point of reference for those seeking some appropriate words with which to express respect for the Guringai people as the traditional owners of the land in the Manly area.

In its 2003/04 Budget, Manly Council also provided for the employment of a part-time Aboriginal Heritage Officer. On the advice of Manly's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee, this position for an Aboriginal Australian will be Manly-specific in nature, but will seek to

work in close liaison and cooperation with other Aboriginal Heritage Officer(s) employed in the northern Sydney region.

Together, these initiatives are another step in building a stronger relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Manly and are a reflection of the benefits coming from a strong and active Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee in Manly which is capably led by Chair Susan Moylan Coombs.

**Judy Lambert**

*Editorial Note:*

*We wish to acknowledge that Manly Council flew the Aboriginal flag during NAIDOC Week 1993. This was the first occasion this had happened on the Northern Beaches.*

*We also wish to acknowledge that it is the policy of Ku-ring-gai Council that the Mayor acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land at the start of the Council meetings.*

*From September 9th 2003, Mosman Council is recognising the traditional inhabitants of the land and acknowledging Aboriginal Elders, past and present, at the start of the meetings.*

*North Sydney Council is about to introduce an acknowledgement and Willoughby City Council is considering a similar statement.*

## HERMANNSBURG FILM LEGACY

A silent movie shot by artist Arthur Murch in 1934 was a valuable resource for the makers of *The Dreaming and the Dreamer*, a documentary history of Hermannsburg Mission Station which was shown on the ABC Compass program on May 4, 2003. The story of Hermannsburg is over one hundred years old. It starts in Hanover, Germany with charismatic Lutheran Pastor Louis Harm's dream to escape civilisation and bring enlightenment to the most remote ends of the earth.

The *Dreaming and the Dreamer* tells of the long journey from Germany in 1850 to the land "where no white man has been before." The Aboriginal descendants take up the story from the first contact to the sometimes disturbing situation in Hermannsburg today, where white (civilisation) has caught up. Every Tuesday is burial day.

Director Johnathon Mathews and writer Prue Colville weave a complex tale of heroic endeavour and idealism, the struggle of missionaries Carl and Theodore Strehlow, their legacy and the many disillusionments of their dream.

Threaded into the mix is film footage from the documentary made by Arthur Murch in 1934. Decades before artists John Olsen and Sidney Nolan painted the remote and hauntingly beautiful desert country, Murch, who had recently returned from an overseas

scholarship studying European art, enthusiastically accepted an invitation to join a Sydney University medical survey to Hermannsburg. He filmed the day-to-day activities of the Mission including the donkey and camel teams which were the life line of the remote station.

His film was shown on many occasions by the Lutheran Synod in South Australia to raise funds to pipe water from the Todd River Kaprilya Springs three miles away to provide Hermannsburg with a permanent water supply. In *The Dreaming and the Dreamer* we are shown the results in the abundant yield of fresh vegetables grown at the Mission. The fresh foods largely ended the need for transport over long distances and were successful in ending the scourge of scurvy and nutritional diseases.

From the survey team's base at Hermannsburg, Murch made trips into inaccessible country, travelling for two weeks at a time on camel back. At the base of the precipitous Mt. Liebig he wrote "In this setting I met and painted the strong featured diverse personalities of the Aranda, Ngarlia and Pentu Pui. The colour of the red earth at sunset reflected through the spectrum from hill to hill is so brilliant that, if I painted it, people would think me mad."

In Mt. Liebig he suggested that two Pentu Pui Aborigines, unaccustomed to white

man, draw for him their most recognisable symbols – the kangaroo and the emu. "They were not familiar with the very naturalistic pictorial style of the north; for their tribal mode was hieroglyphic symbols; eg the footprint. Without precedent each man drew from memory the creature, as it would be seen against the horizon. These 10 or 15 drawings were the purest example of drawings I have seen. They helped me understand how at the stage of picture writing synthesised symbols took over and multi purpose symbols were used."

Murch called this form of writing the pictogram. Hezekial, one of the great characters of Hermannsburg, was an inspired tracker and Murch greatly admired his interpretative skills; he believed that the pictogram and tracking were the world's oldest form of writing and were essential for survival and for hunting food.

Three of Arthur Murch's paintings can be seen at the Art Gallery of NSW – his Gosse's Ranges and the portraits of Allen, a sensitive Hermannsburg Aranda boy, and Boney Bream Tilmuth, the Afghan camelier mailman who operated the longest mail run in the world.

The Cojo film *The Dreaming and the Dreamer* and Murch's 1934 Hermannsburg film can be viewed on request with the stipulation that there is no charge for viewing.

**Ria Murch**

[www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net)

## LAUNCHED AT LAST

There was quite a crowd gathered at the Nelson Heather Centre on Monday, 1st September 2003 to celebrate the launch of the Aboriginal Support Group's new website [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net). The website will improve contact between ASG and to enable them to share information more effectively within the wider community. Its launch marks the beginning of an exciting new era of communication for the Northern Beaches.

Following a relaxed gathering over wine and cheese, the program got underway with a didgeridoo performance by Livo (Steve) Davis, talented artist and long-time friend of the Support Group. Susan Moylan Coombs then offered an Acknowledgement of Country in which she paid respect to the Guringai people, traditional owners of the Northern Beaches area.

Megan van Frank facilitated the evening program and began by informing the audience how the website came about. She told how Sue Osborn hatched the idea in 2000 as a way of creating a centralised public resource specifically focused on Aboriginal issues on the Northern Beaches. The idea of reaching a larger audience through such a project was received enthusiastically by ASG members, but the website moved to the backburner while production of the ASG book was in progress. Fortunately the project was soon rescued from the backburner by two new group members, Mark Walsh and Kevin McCreton, who had skills in website development and project management.

Cecily McGee wrote a successful proposal to Warringah Council's Cultural Development Grant Program, which provided funding to develop and host the site. Mark and Kevin built the site's basic architecture, and Vanessa Walsh worked with the Website Working Group – Anna Bell, Lizzie Landers, Pat Frater and Megan van Frank – to produce its content. Susan Moylan Coombs, representing the Guringai Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), then reviewed the content for cultural appropriateness prior to the site launch. The website truly represents the power of creative collaboration between many people of diverse talents.

Warringah Council's support of the website through a Cultural Development grant was also gratefully acknowledged during the evening. Coralie Hicks was present to receive thanks on behalf of the Council and remarked on the success of this partnership between local government and a community group and how terrific it is to have this kind of local resource.

The website was officially launched by Jodie Patterson, an Aboriginal journalist who has lived on the Northern Beaches for the last dozen years and traces her Aboriginal heritage through

her mother's people at La Perouse. Currently the Sydney Correspondent for the *Koori Mail*, Jodie has experience in television and web-based media, as well as a Masters degree in journalism from the University of Technology Sydney. With her background, Jodie was well placed to speak about the importance of obtaining information about Indigenous Australia from sources other than the mainstream media. She reminded the audience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have created many outlets where they speak for themselves, including the fortnightly Aboriginal newspaper *Koori Mail*. Jodie encouraged the ASG, and those who will use the new website, to continue to search out these voices and expressed pleasure that [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net) would be a central point for this kind of alternative media.

Following Jodie's cutting of the streamers, Vanessa Walsh outlined some of the design goals used to develop the site (see page 6). She then took the audience for a 'test drive' through the site demonstrating the various sections and inviting feedback. Some sections shown included:

- **Resources section**, which lists relevant books, organisations, films, and websites, many with a focus on the Northern Sydney region.
- **Inform Yourself** section, which lists courses and educational groups where people can learn more
- **Electronic access** to the ASG's newsletter *Elimatta* as well as its quarterly *Calendar of Events*.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** section, which provides some basic information about a range of subjects about indigenous Australia and the issues of reconciliation, again with a Northern Beaches flavour.
- **About Us** section, which covers the current activities of ASG and its history since 1979.

The success of the website will depend on people using it and getting the word out that it exists. There are thousands of millions of web pages on the internet so it is important to make other people aware of the website and to build on its potential. The website will be an ongoing collaboration, as all members of the ASG and those who use the site are welcome to contribute suggestions to make it useful and relevant to the community it serves.

*Valuable feedback on the website was obtained on the launch night. Should you have any comments or contributions, please contact Vanessa Walsh on (02) 9970 5456 or [vwalsh@tpg.com.au](mailto:vwalsh@tpg.com.au).*

*Have the *Koori Mail* newspaper delivered to you fortnightly for one year (\$65.00) or two years (\$120.00). Contact the Subscription Officer at (02) 6622 2666 or follow the *Koori Mail* link in the resources section at [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net).*

# Design Goals for



## www.asgmwp.net

### **Best site of it's kind in our local area**

The website has been designed to be the best site of its' kind for information about reconciliation, events, and the activities of the ASG in our local area. You'll find a wealth of information about our organisation as well as an exhaustive list of references, interesting FAQs and an events calendar. We see it as an important step in bringing this information and awareness to a broader population.

### **Living Site**

The current website by no means represents the final product. We will endeavour to constantly add and update information on a regular basis. Our home page highlights upcoming events as well as current issues that you can become involved in to make a difference. It's designed this way to show the information is current and to encourage people – whether members of the ASG, the media, schools or the general public – to use it more often.

### **User friendly and to the point**

Our website may not have all the latest flashy multimedia bells and whistles, but we do see it as being easy to use. We felt that most people who visit our site do not do so for entertainment value, but want easy-to-find, succinct information.

### **Quality information**

When material is added to our website, it is reviewed by many different people before being published. Those doing the reviewing are both from the ASG and outside it. This means that everything that we add has been verified for accuracy and relevance.

### **Best download speed**

We expect that most people who use our site will have slow internet connections, so the website has been designed with those people in mind. Designing for fast page download has also meant that we can save money by choosing a less expensive option for hosting the website.

### **Pages can be easily printed**

We anticipate that many of our website visitors would like to print various pages we offer, such as the calendar of events and our newsletter. We've designed our pages so that people can easily print any of them using any kind of browser, without having to have any special knowledge about formatting.

## **ACTION FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT 1972 - 2002**

We are disheartened to announce that after 30 years of working for social justice, Action for World Development (AWD), as we have all known it, has closed its doors. The Racism Awareness Group is continuing to run workshops and the Aboriginal Justice Support Group is continuing to meet and lobby on various Indigenous justice issues. However, AWD, NSW Inc has ceased to exist, and is the last of the state AWDs to close. Other organisations now carry on the work.

Those who work for Aboriginal rights and justice, and have spent some time with, or been influenced in some way by, AWD are invited to join in a celebration of 30 years of social justice work:

A Celebration of Thirty Years of Action for World Development:  
Who we are, what we've become and, after the close of AWD, what we are taking into the future.

**When:** Saturday, 11th October 2003.

4.00pm for 4.30 pm for a thanksgiving ritual  
and 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm for the valedinner  
(Please bring some food or beverage to share)

**Where:** Santa Maria del Monte School Hall,  
corner of The Boulevard & Carrington Avenue, Strathfield  
(only 5 minutes walk from Strathfield Station, and adequate parking)

**RSVP** Anne Byrne, tel: (02) 9747 2878

email: anneandbill@bigponmd.com

AWD look forward to seeing you there.

## **EXPLORING YOUR FAMILY TREE**

Aboriginal people tracing family history can seek help through the Community Services department.

Since 1994, about 300 Aboriginal people have been helped by DOCS to trace their family history. Director General Neil Shepherd said valuable records were held of many people who were at some time in the care of the state. "In an attempt to right some of the wrongs from the past DOCS has a specialised family tracing service to help reconnect Aboriginal people," Dr Shepherd said.

Information such as where the person was born and who their parents were is usually held in these records and provides a starting point for people to trace their history.

People who would like to trace their family history and who were clients of the Department should contact the Manly DOCS centre on **9977 6011**.

# PATHWAYS TO AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS DISPUTE SETTLEMENT FORUM – Monday May 12

During National Law Week I attended a forum *Pathways to Australian Indigenous Dispute Settlement* at Parliament House, Sydney. The Chairperson of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, Winsome Matthews, opened the session by acknowledging we were meeting on Eora land and paid respect to the spirits of the Eora people. Winsome chaired the forum with skill and good humour.

The forum focused on two NSW dispute resolution programs initiated in the past twelve months. The first, a mediation service for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the north and north west of the state, has been developed by the Community Justice Centres (CJC), NSW Attorney General's Department. The trainer for this CJC program is Loretta Kelly, a Gumbarrgirra and Dungudi woman who is a mediator, lawyer and lecturer at Southern Cross University. She has extensive experience in the design and presentation of ADR (Alternate Dispute Resolution) programs for Indigenous people.

With Lessons Learnt as her topic, Loretta spoke of the appropriateness of mediation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For the CJC program, the selection of participants from across a large area of NSW was done by telephone rather than by the preferred method of face-to-face interviews. This was due to the imposed time frame. From more than two hundred applicants, twenty four Aboriginal trainees commenced the course. Fifteen are now accredited mediators.

The course, with all Aboriginal trainers, was divided in two with an intensive residential program on the North Coast followed by smaller group training closer to the homes of the participants. As the twelve steps of the CJC mediation model were taught the need for flexibility was recognised and an Aboriginal 'flavour' was gradually added to the process.

Auntie Bernadette Wilkes, a Gumbayngirra woman and a respected Elder in the Nambucca Valley community, was the next speaker. A trainee in the course, Auntie Bernadette is now a CJC mediator. She believes that the mediation process offers "some justice in this land for the Aboriginal people", citing this as one of her reasons for participating in the program.

She described the balance achieved amongst the trainees of different ages and both sexes and commented that "men are starting to play a role".

Auntie Bernadette struck a chord with the many mediators present when she talked about the difficulties experienced with the role plays during the training, acknowledging however that they were an important part of the course.

A similar program is planned for Sydney and the south south-west of the state. The Community Justice Centres have undertaken to deliver a mediation service to all Indigenous communities throughout NSW within the next financial year.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Mediation Program (ASTSIFAM), has been developed by the Legal Aid Commission of NSW with funding from the Commonwealth Government. Two programs are operating at Dubbo and South West Sydney. Included in the funding was a component for evaluation which will be undertaken at the end of 2003 when a decision will be made about the future of the program.

Linda Fisher, the ATSIAM Training Committee Coordinator, is one of Australia's most experienced mediators and trainers and I was fortunate that she was one of my trainers before I became a CJC mediator in 1985. Linda commented on the program from a non-Aboriginal perspective. She sees mediation as being compatible with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, as it has the ability to heal conflict in the family and in the community. She spoke of the differences and the difficulties in transplanting the process from one culture to another and stated that consultation was the defining characteristic of the ATSIAM program.

There were eighteen Aboriginal trainees in the intake of twenty-four and all but one trainee finished the course. Flexibility and consultation became the "training mantra" with healing and yarning a recurrent theme. A definition of a mediator was developed as, "one who listens, helps others to listen and does not get involved". (This is a description I can relate to.) A comparison of the Sydney and Dubbo programs will be valuable.

The fourth speaker was Will Burns, a Wiradjuri man, an endorsed representative of his community in the Dubbo ATSIAM program, a TAFE teacher, mediator and coach. Will, when speaking of the need for mediators to be non-judgmental and to have basic listening skills, noted that only two of the twelve trainees in his course were men.

He raised several issues including the difficulties in bringing the parties together for mediation given the distances in western NSW that may need to be travelled. When mediating with couples in what Will termed "mixed marriages" experience is showing the benefits in matching the two mediators with the parties, an important point for family mediations.

The following issues were raised during the forum and in the lively question time:

- the presence of Elders at mediation and the role they may take
- preference for a verbal agreement rather than a written document
- informal venues – a park or riverbank – to keep parties in their "comfort zone"
- possible disruption of the flow of the mediation when breaking for private sessions
- inter and intra relationships within the families and communities of the parties and mediators and the questions surrounding confidentiality
- need for cultural competence among non-Indigenous mediators

The forum recognised that a positive start has been made along the pathway to developing culturally appropriate and acceptable mediation services for Indigenous people.

I believe that empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be one of the key factors in the success of future ADR programs.

*Pat Frater*

# FAMILIES FIRST FUN DAY

The event was held at Manly Dam on Sunday 27th July and what beautiful weather we had. The sun was shining, the birds were out, the ducks were on the water and it was great to see so many families there.

The day was hosted by Guringai Local AECG (Aboriginal Education Consultative Group) in partnership with the Cabinet Office of NSW and Department of Community Services, as part of the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy. The purpose of the day was for Aboriginal families on the Northern Beaches to get together and discuss issues. The under fives were well taken care of by the lovely ladies from Warringah Council Mobile Occasional Childcare.

Jessica and Michael Birk facilitated a discussion with a group of young people about issues affecting them. Susan Moylan Coombs and I facilitated an adults discussion group, starting with Acknowledging Country. People were a bit shy starting off but there was a lot of input from people. It was suggested that more family days like this would be great, as it was felt that we needed

to come together more often. There was a lot of discussion on Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal language being taught in schools and the employment of Aboriginal people to assist, not just in NAIDOC Week. Health and the Stolen Generation were also discussed.

It was great to see Anna, Lizzie and Carol from the Support Group, and Kerrie from NSRRN.

A big thanks to Rebecca and Peter from the Department of Sport and Recreation, who kept the young people playing games. Thank you also to Louise, Koli, Glenda, Larry, Mary, Lara, Lois, Susan and Leone for all the hard work.

The next Families First fun day is being held at Lane Cove National Park on Sunday 14th September for families living in the Hornsby, Ryde and Lower North Shore area.

**Leonne Brown**

(Member of the Executive Group  
Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy Group)

## MEALS ON WHEELS

At a recent meeting members were interested to learn about the variety of meals which Northern Beaches Food Services – “Meals on Wheels” – provide to the community. The meals can be chilled, hot or frozen and usually include a soup, main meal, dessert and fruit juice.

Cost is \$5.00 - \$6.00.

The service delivers to people who are frail, aged, disabled and their carers, or to those who are unable to shop or cook for themselves. If you would like more information please contact Donna Johnston, 9970 8399.

“Meals on Wheels” service is available in other areas.

## AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

### The Aboriginal Support Group

– Manly Warringah Pittwater  
meets on the third Monday of each month  
at 7.30 pm.

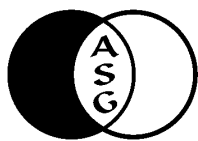
On the first Monday of each month  
we conduct an Information Night  
at 7.30pm.

*Please join us at either or both of these evenings  
at:*

**Angopohora Room,  
Nelson Heather Centre,  
Cnr Pittwater & Jackson Roads,  
North Narrabeen.**

**☎ For further information ☎  
(02) 9913 7940 (02) 9982 1685**

*In one Aboriginal Language, Elimatta means ‘our home’.  
In naming our newsletter this way, we express our dream  
for this country – a real home to both Aboriginal people and later  
settlers. That depends on us being ‘at home’ with each other,  
and to each other.*



Elimatta is produced by the Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater. If you use any material printed in Elimatta we would appreciate the extract being set in context and the source acknowledged.

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