

Guringai Festival: Saltwater Sweetwater Gathering



Courtesy of ATSIC, National Media and Marketing Office
Photograph: Kerry Trapnell

The 2004 *Guringai Festival*—the fourth—is a celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage across the eleven local government areas of Northern Sydney. The festival will be launched on Monday May 24 at Willoughby Civic Centre and will continue until the close of NAIDOC Week (July 4 to 11).

The ASG is holding four events and details of these are included on the enclosed Calendar of Events. Brochures outlining the full programme are available from local libraries and community centres.

Two of the festival highlights on the Northern Beaches are the *Journey of Healing* and *Whale Songlines*.

Journey of Healing

The *Journey of Healing* will be held on Wednesday May 26 commencing at 6pm. The venue is the Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen. Please bring a flower and any donations to the supper will be appreciated.

On 26 May, 1997, a report tabled in the Federal Parliament shook Australia. *Bringing Them Home* detailed painful evidence of the removal of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. It recommended that a 'Sorry Day' be held. A year later over half a million people responded, signing Sorry Books and taking part in ceremonies on Sorry Day. In May 1999, this people's movement launched a *Journey of Healing*.

Sorry Day events are held annually on May 26

This year marks the 6th anniversary of Sorry Day and it is appropriate that the theme for this year is "Unfinished Business". Seven years have passed since the *Bringing Them Home* report was tabled in Parliament on May 26, 1997.

This report contained 54 main recommendations covering acknowledgement and apology, guarantees against repetition, and restitution and rehabilitation measures. If one takes account of sub-clauses in the recommendations there are 83 recommendations.

In 2002 Dr Peter O'Brien, assisted by John Bond, prepared a report for the National Sorry Day Committee reporting on the progress in implementing the recommendations of *Bringing Them Home*. This report asked the question in its title "Are We Helping Them Home?". It found that despite two rounds of Federal Government funding in 1998 and 2002, where \$63 million and \$54 million respectively were set aside, this funding "was directed to only 17 of *Bringing Them Home* recommendations – mainly those dealing with rehabilitation, mental health and family reunion. Some attention was paid to records and languages. Most recommendations received no attention including those dealing with apology and reparations".

It went on to say that "The failure of the Federal Government to respond to so many of the recommendations has been a serious disappointment. Whilst welcoming the response that has been made,

members of the stolen generation remain bewildered and hurt at the lack of commitment which they believe indicates a reluctance to accept as truth what they have related of their experiences".

Unfinished business! The Sorry Day Committee suggest that this theme can be supplemented by subsidiary themes such as 'It's time to heal the hurts and right the wrongs', 'remembering our mothers and fathers', or other phrases which Stolen Generation people feel would highlight their concerns. Now is a good time to acknowledge that these initial injustices experienced by the Stolen Generations were further compounded by the experience of the "Stolen Wages".

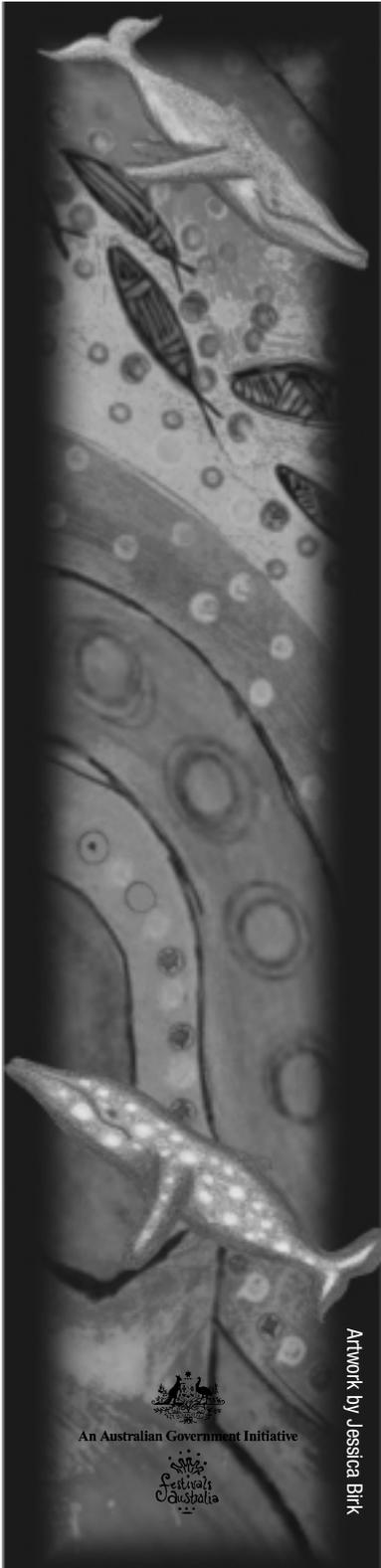
So it is in this context that the ASG invites residents of the Northern Beaches to participate in the *Journey of Healing* 2004. Susan Moylan-Coombs will MC the evening and weave together a programme that includes an exhibition of art and poetry by local students, dance performances by Aboriginal Dance Troupe *Goanna Dreaming*, poetry reading, a candlelight ceremony, and the creation of a piece of art guided by artist Nikky McCarthy, followed by a light supper.

Ingrid Storm



Warringah Council

Whale songlines



Artwork by Jessica Birk

An Australian Government Initiative



On Sunday May 30 Freshwater Beach will come alive with a unique community celebration – *Whale Songlines*. Starting just before dusk, the event will commence with the Lantern Parade featuring all the children who have participated in the school workshops. Then the *Whale Songlines* story will be performed with the giant whale and “spirit” people, operated by members of the community who built them. This is a new project developed by Warringah Council’s Cultural Services Team as part of the 2004 *Guringai Festival*. It has arisen from the perceived need for the community to celebrate the migration of the whales along our coastline. For the past few years Sydneysiders have been delighted by visits from the whales on their journey north to feed and mate.

When thinking about the whale migration, it is hard to ignore the many Indigenous engravings that feature whales along the Northern Beaches coastline. The Guringai people must have watched these magnificent creatures on their journey hundreds of years ago, as we do today. I was searching for a celebration that hadn’t been experienced here before, something that could involve the community on a level that required more than just turning up to watch. One of the most exciting things about community celebrations is the opportunity to participate. I have long been interested in spectacle events featuring giant lanterns and big images – not that dissimilar to the Millennium Celebrations we saw here on Sydney Harbour. I wanted to create something that would relate to this community and would capture its imagination. And so, *Whale Songlines* was born.

Whale Songlines is a three tiered project:

Creating a story

Indigenous writer Susan Moylan-Coombs has been commissioned to write a story for *Whale Songlines*. We wanted to create something that was based on the traditions of Indigenous culture, that would give the community its own story in relation to the whale migration.

Community & School Workshops

One of the most important parts of increasing awareness about Aboriginal

culture and heritage is to get information to the schools. Late last year we sought expressions of interest from schools on the peninsula who wanted to be involved in lantern making workshops. We were overwhelmed when 18 schools and over 3,000 children wanted to participate! The first stage in the process was for teachers to attend the Lantern “Masterclasses” with Phil Relf, the lantern construction coordinator.

Then, an Indigenous storyteller visited each of the classes to tell stories and discuss Aboriginal culture and heritage. Each student has been asked to make a small triangular lantern and decorate it, hopefully inspired by the visit of the storyteller.

The final part of this process is for the students to participate in the parade that will commence the performance of *Whale Songlines*.

Community Workshops

Local artist Jessica Birk has been commissioned to design the large puppets for *Whale Songlines*. Jessica will be designing the three “spirit” people and the whale. The community workshops are being held to construct these figures under the supervision of Jessica and Phil Relf. We are inviting all the community to be involved – the whale itself will be 10 metres long! The workshops are being held every Saturday in Cromer. If you are interested in attending one or more of the workshops on **Saturday April 24, May 1 and May 8** and being part of this important community project, please contact us on **9942 2672**. We would love to see you there.

The Australian Government is proud to be associated with the *Guringai Festival*. The *Whale Songlines* project was made possible by Festivals Australia, an Australian Government program which supports cultural activity at regional and community festivals.

Warringah Council has matched the funding from Festivals Australia. If you would like further information about *Whale Songlines* please contact Warringah Council’s Events and Cultural Services Team on (02) 9942 2672.

Karen Gardner
Warringah Council

RIOT and REASON

You cannot isolate rioting teenagers in Redfern for examination without asking what led to such civil disobedience.

Thinking people know that police and indigenous Australians have an inherited culture of mutual distrust, hate, abuse of authority and fatal bashings. Throughout Australia's history to the present day we know about the systematic murders of Aborigines, of moving blacks out of the way of whites, of sinister legislation to deliberately demoralise a race of people by permanently removing children from their families and of wholesale social neglect. We should not be surprised that such episodes of social engineering and systematic violence should spawn anxiety and disorder.

Australia was illegally invaded by Britain and, as we witness in Iran, the Middle East, East Timor, Vietnam and Ireland, there are no guarantees occupation will be amiable. Those whose homelands are attacked will react long after the initial occupation by invaders.

What happened in Redfern last Sunday night? It doesn't make sense. Teenagers don't just rush out onto the streets in large numbers and pelt extremely well-armed, innocent riot policemen with rocks and firecrackers.

Officers initially said a police car was routinely patrolling Redfern when a 17-year-old, Thomas (T.J.) Hickey, was seen speeding by on his bike in the opposite direction. Moments later the boy died tragically when his bike went out of control. Three Aboriginal eyewitnesses said he was being pursued by a police car. Later that night the "official" police story had changed. Police said they were there to arrest a man but they still maintained they did not pursue Hickey. We read later police had blocked off Everleigh St and posted men at the barricade at about 1pm. Six hours later police numbers had swollen considerably – fusing the powder keg. No one should be surprised that the Aboriginal community saw this as "immediately antagonistic" (Sydney Morning Herald, February 17). By nightfall angry young teenage boys reacted to their homes being surrounded by armed riot police. They struck out at them and their nearest neighbourhood symbol of government authority, the railway station.

Police on patrol and our law courts do not deal with white Australians and indigenous people in the same manner – as equals. Aboriginal people want equality but most doubt it can ever be achieved.

No worries, blacks are equal now, the whites say. After 200 years of oppression, of us digging a gigantic hole for them, we voted them equal in 1967, remember? Let them claw themselves out, they're officially equal. Right?

From a comfortable position at the top, let's look into this hole: Aboriginal Australians have one of the highest infant mortality rates, the lowest adult life expectancy rate, highest incidence of blindness, highest incidence of diabetes, highest unemployment rate, most arrested, most convicted, most deaths in police custody, most illiterate and lowest poverty level of any people in any developed country in the world.

Let us rightly tag our baggage: we have deliberate social neglect here driven by white arrogance, mass xenophobia and pandering politicians. You can't win votes fixing the problems of oppressed Abos. It's better to talk tough against them or simply bulldoze them out of the way.

Philip McLaren

Internationally published author Philip McLaren, who was born and raised in Redfern and now lives on the Northern Beaches, was guest speaker at the ASG Information Night in May 2003. The subject of his talk was *A Long Way To Go From Redfern*.

Philip's article first appeared in the Manly Daily dated 21/2/04.

Subsequently a letter was published in The Manly Daily. The writer had "read with sadness and disgust Philip McLaren's article" and stated that the young people in Redfern were "just a bunch of hooligans". In response, on 26/2/04 the following letter was sent to The Manly Daily on behalf of members of the ASG. It was not published.

The Letters Editor
The Manly Daily

We members of the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater fully endorse the views expressed by Aboriginal author, Philip McLaren, in his article "Riot and Reason", published in last Saturday's Manly Daily (21/02) and we are saddened to read Gerry Martens' letter (26/02) which shows so little compassion towards the plight of Aboriginal youth in Redfern. His assumption that "young indigenous people in Redfern would not know so much about the so-called 'stolen generation' is preposterous when so many of their parents and grandparents were taken away in their youth to institutions.

The Cootamundra home for Aboriginal girls was maintained by the Welfare Board till 1968 while Kinchella Boy's Home near Kempsey was only closed in 1970 showing how recently these policies of forced removal were abandoned. As Philip McLaren rightly stated "We should not be surprised that such episodes of social engineering and systematic violence should spawn anxiety and disorder".

Compassionate Australians do not blame the victims but try instead to bring about more social justice and equity for Indigenous Australians so that they can enjoy better health, employment, housing, opportunities similar to everyone else. When that day comes, we can indeed be satisfied that we are compassionate and generous. However, we are far from this today and Indigenous communities continue to be targets of prejudice and misinformation.

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing this for Elimatta to let the readers know my feelings as an Indigenous Australian. I will forward a copy of this to Mr. Bob Carr for his attention.

The threat of terrorism against Australia has never been more imminent as it is today. Yet how can top level security like our secret service organisations keep us protected when even at a police level they cannot control the children and youths who rioted in Everleigh Street Redfern.

These youths only had rocks and firecrackers. The mind boggles at what would have happened if they had weapons. The emotions and frustration of the people of Everleigh Street have been boiling over for over 15 years that I know of.

Look at the millions of dollars the Australian Government is spending on the war overseas, then hypocritically helping the people repair their war torn ravaged villages. **Yet nothing is spent here to create peace for our own Indigenous people's dignity.**

Racism unfortunately exists not only towards some Aboriginal people but also is demonstrated by Aboriginal people towards the mainstream people usually because it is embedded into childhood years and is allowed to grow and it doesn't stop. It spreads like an infection that cannot be controlled.

The only way to get rid of racism is to start where it begins and put a stop to it immediately.

The plight of the Redfern Aboriginal people all comes back to human rights. It has only been 37 years since we have been recognised as being humans. The Everleigh Street people should be given a choice of where they want to live and the respect and dignity that goes with it.

The Australian Government is wrong...wrong...wrong if it thinks "two wrongs can make a right". We have had our land taken from us – our Mother Earth, our Spiritual connection, our language, our cultural connection and our rights as Aboriginal people, hidden by every means possible under Government policies.

We are entitled to our rights and have been waiting for them for over 200 years. I would say we are polite, peaceful and patient people to still be waiting for justice.

Where is the help that we should be getting to get our lives back together and have our say about what we want in return for an invasion that has taken everything from us? Where is the United Nations when we need it? Why are charities on commercial televisions asking Australians to give money to poverty stricken people overseas when charity begins at home and the poverty of our Indigenous Australians is at the same level as third world countries?

This being 2004, I see a great number of people from all nationalities – Egyptians, Lebanese, Vietnamese, Italian, Fijian, New Zealanders, Chinese – being given Housing Department houses after a very short waiting period when Aboriginal people are stuck in Everleigh Street Redfern. They also have to wait years to get a home under the Housing for Aboriginal Priority Scheme.

I am sure these problems stem from a lack of respect and understanding by the Government who constantly add insult to injury to our Indigenous population causing poverty, lack of education and the frustrations of trying to get a connection to land, culture and spirituality when no freedom of choice is given to these Aboriginal citizens.

Personally I had to wait 8 years for a Housing Department house. I got one choice at Walker Street, Waterloo, and had to notify the Department within 1 day whether I would take the townhouse or not get one at all.

Walker Street is the rival to Everleigh Street. After 9 years of writing constant letters trying to get relocated to my Northern Beaches homeland I finally got a townhouse on the Northern Beaches.

I cringed when I found that in 1994 the State Government had sold 55 acres of land at Lane Cove to the University of Technology for \$1. It is only 100 years ago that the Australian Museum would buy our people's heads for \$1 for their collection. All I can say is that I would pay double the price of the UTS land. I'd pay \$2 – that's 100% profit for the Government. Aboriginal people don't receive offers like that do they?

There are only 250,000 Australian Aboriginal people left on this planet. This against 20 million mainstream people. Surely if there is any justice whatsoever the mainstream people should by now understand that we are helplessly outnumbered – scattered from our groups and families, stolen, and some even afraid today to declare their Aboriginality for fear of being killed and sent to mission stations.

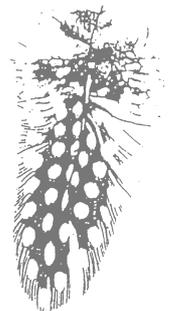
Your compassion for us as human beings and our health problems alone should be reason enough for helping us by campaigning to the Government about our problems – we don't treat animals this badly.

Something would have to be done if the Australian people petitioned Parliaments on behalf of Aboriginal people. We don't want land rights and the Harbour Bridge. We want **HUMAN RIGHTS**.

Gundra ha
(*bless you all* in Wiradjuri language)

Yours sincerely,

Nikki McCarthy
March 29, 2004



THE WOODFORD BAY RECONCILIATION MEMORIAL CEREMONY: JOURNEY OF THE SPIRIT

Saturday February 7, 2004, was hot and hushed. Over five hundred people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, from across Sydney and NSW, were gathered on a grassy foreshore at Woodford Bay, Longueville, Sydney. There were in Cameraygal country for an important and historic event – to give public acknowledgement of Aboriginal resistance to British invasion.

People stood as a mark of respect as Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, and Robert Welsh, Chairperson of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, raised two small branches of eucalyptus leaves to jointly unveil the Reconciliation Memorial Plaque. This landmark ceremony and plaque was organised by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC), Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation (LCRR), Lane Cove Historical Society, Lane Cove Council and community, negotiating and working together to bring about positive change and the truth-telling of our shared Australian history.

Children formed an Honour Guard for the arrival of the Governor and of Robert Welsh, who were then received by Elders representing Aboriginal Nations from both sides of the Harbour. The Memorial Ceremony was jointly MC'd by Charlene Davison, a Biripi woman and member of LCRR, and by Ricky Lyons, Executive member of MLALC. Uncle Charles Madden, Eora Elder, gave the Welcome to Country. The MLALC is custodian of the Sydney metropolitan region.

The Ceremony Was Layered in Meaning.

Spiritual (arranged by MLALC)

Prior to unveiling of the Memorial Plaque there was a Sacred Smoking Ceremony conducted by Budjedi Elder Uncle Max Eulo. A Song of Mourning was performed on didgeridoo by Matthew Doyle and a Dance of Mourning performed by the men and women of the Garrabarra Dance Company.

Traditionally the ceremony released the spirits of the Cameraygal men, women and children who had been denied their funeral rights by reason of the British invasion which had commenced in 1788. Their spirits were free at last to reach their home in the stars, allowing their rebirth to begin.

Historical

Woodford Bay was the site of the very early British settlement where, in the 1790's, a stockade has been built to protect the British invaders from attacks by the Eora people, including the Cameraygal. It appeared that the stockade remained in use until 1840.

At Woodford Bay there were already two existing plaques, both commemorating white history. This third plaque, the Reconciliation Memorial Plaque 2004, mounted on rock and placed between the two existing plaques, gives long-awaited balance to our shared Australian history. It reads:

*Memorial Plaque to honour and recognise
the Cameraygal people who defended their country
by resisting British invasion*

Jointly unveiled by

*Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW
Robert Welsh, Chairperson,
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
7 February 2004*

*Lane Cove Council Lane Cove Historical Society
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation
Councillor John May, Mayor Peter Brown, General Manager*

Social

At the close of the Reconciliation Memorial Ceremony, everyone was invited for refreshments provided by members of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim Faith Groups – and to mingle together in the Spirit of Reconciliation.

The Truth-Telling of Our Shared Australian History

The four organisations involved had prepared a joint Historical Statement *Contact and Conflict in Cameraygal Country*. This gives the true history of the Aboriginal resistance to the British invasion of the local area, including guerrilla warfare under the leadership of Pemulwuy who is not only an Aboriginal hero but also an Australian hero.

This was the "secret history" – the untold story of Cameraygal country which had previously been recorded as a "peaceful settlement". It is hoped that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities across Australia will one day work together to research and record the true history of their local area. It will be a rewarding, challenging and enriching process of value to the whole community.

A thirty minute video *Journey of the Spirit – Woodford Bay Reconciliation Memorial Ceremony* has been produced with an accompanying study kit to be used as an educational resource. Information about the ceremony can be found on:

- Lane Cove Council's website: www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au
- NSW Reconciliation Council's website: www.nswrecon.com with links to Lane Cove Reconciliation Group.

Kerrie McKenzie

Convenor, Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation

NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL

Journey of Healing

The Journey of Healing Committee in Canberra is meeting with enthusiasm, planning events for May 26 and 29. Both gatherings will be of great significance in the Capital, and throughout Australia. On the 26th we will commemorate Sorry Day. May 29 will see people from around the nation coming together to view and celebrate the erection of the memorial to all men and women of The Stolen Generations.

In 1981 when Nancy Wood and Jean Begg told their stories to the Group of being taken from their families, little did we think that one day they, and all those girls and boys, would be honoured in the nation's capital. It is so good that, as adults, many will be able to visit Canberra – perhaps with family – to see the recognition that the nation has, at last, given them. My deepest regret is that my friend, Pauline McLeod, did not live to see this day.

Hearing her story years ago, listening to the pain of her telling of the taking of her family – she and her six brothers and sisters in one swoop – my head and my heart are inscribed with her comment about her mother whom she was torn away from at age two "...it destroyed her as a mother and as a woman".

As yet, the government has not informed the Committee exactly when the "sliver" in Reconciliation Place will be unveiled. After much discussion with Indigenous Elders around the country and with a diplomatic grace and unrelenting commitment to the truth, John Brown and Audrey Kinnear have negotiated brilliantly to present a statement both honest and historic. The final words to be inscribed on the memorial were passed by both Houses of Parliament on the very last day of sitting at the end of 2003.

The design of the memorial is beautiful. Water will run down the side of the "sliver",

ochre in colour, into a pool surrounded by boulders and native vegetation. The heading "They took the children away" and statement greets the visitors as they come towards the memorial.

The other statements are inscribed on plaques attached to boulders, so that the visitors read them as they walk around. The other side of the "sliver" is blank, and the intention is to fill this space with paintings by the Stolen Generations from every region of Australia.

The picture of a solitary Aboriginal child from The Bungalow, Alice Springs, dominates another sliver. The head of a grieving mother is etched onto glass.

The sound system will play Bob Randall's song "Brown-skin baby" and Archie Roach's "They took the children away".

This poignant and impressive memorial is in a place where thousands of visitors and residents will see it. It will be a place of reflection, of confession, leading to a time when Reconciliation is more than a cosy word, easily picked up and dropped just as quickly.

Tent Embassy

The flames of the Sacred Fire burn still and the remnants of the Embassy remain. Opposite Old Parliament House, it is a place visitors frequent, and one which some Canberrans support in diverse ways. Of course it remains contentious, but since Wilson Tuckey is no longer in a position to harass, there is not so much outright antagonism to its presence. The pity is that so much of the material that had been collected over the years and on display in the office is no longer available. The fire destroyed so much of value.

On January 26 there was a significant gathering of people remembering, and remembering their past. Again in February, those who could not get to Sydney, or to Walgett, gathered to mourn the death of TJ Hickey and to send a flow of compassionate feelings to all his family.

The future? Who knows! Some Ngunnawal Elders and people support it, others do not. Is it an eyesore and a blight in the Garden City of Canberra? I don't think so. I have witnessed the pulse of life over more than 30 years and even as it stands today, a ragged remnant, its profound call to us all is unanswered still. Perhaps The Block would not be as it is today if the visionaries of '71 had been listened to.

I grieve for The Block and its people, and for all it could have been. I also rejoice in the good times – the Garden, the time Aunty Una Walker inspired people...and before that, The Black Theatre! We seldom recognise the achievements. I am suspicious still of governing bodies and developers who see it only as a 'prime piece of real estate'. If it is, why take it out of Indigenous hands? Musing...I wonder if John Howard might have been a bigger, more open-minded, less parochial and intransigent person if he had graduated from Canterbury Boys High circa 2003 – instead of in his time of imperial illusion and ethnocentric delusion.

The National Museum — Without Dawn Casey

The day Dawn Casey left the National Museum was, in Don McLean's words: "...the day the music died". Those of us who were there that day in December felt grief and anger seeing a gracious, competent and impressive woman being unjustly treated. Jennifer Moran in the Canberra Sunday Times of December 14 wrote: "So Dawn Casey has had her last week at the National Museum which is a monument to some of her many qualities – persistence, organisation, collaboration, vision."

As hard as it was to witness Dawn being 'pushed' out of the Museum her time of departure could not have been more significant.

NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL *contd*

On Thursday, December 11 Dr Mick Dodson opened an impressive and valuable seminar entitled "Native Title Business: The Power of Cultural Evidence". Dr Dodson spoke powerfully and with a passion in opening the event and our tears rolled with his when he spoke of Dawn's departure. In a lighter moment he glanced around the gallery looking at the giant silhouettes of outlaws, promoting the Outlawed Exhibition, and we will all recognise the 'outlaws' on the hill who instigated Dawn's demise.

The opening of the seminar was followed by a tour of the Native Title art exhibition. Comprising works from around the country the exhibits were stimulating and very beautiful.

Friends of the Museum, outraged that Dawn was not reappointed, held a farewell for her in the courtyard at noon, expressing their dismay at her going, wishing her well in the years ahead. In her response Dawn mentioned that she had had a call from her brother in the early morning. He had read the Queensland papers and asked her: "What are you going to tell Mum?" Dawn told us that her Mum would be thinking only those who did not do their job properly would be fired. She has some explaining to do!

The exhibition was an invaluable resource during the days of the Seminar and when I was submerged in words, I was glad to take some time off to look at the paintings. There was tremendous challenge in some of the papers presented: "Native Title – What is that anyway?" (Dr James Warden) "Native Title and agreement-making" (Dr Gaye Sculthorpe) "Native Title – What has it become?" (David Ritter) to name a few presentations.

Two sessions I found invaluable were "The Role of Museums in Native Title". Of the former, Dr Gaye Sculthorpe said: "Museum collections are a rich source of cultural information relating to evidence in native

title claims. They may hold genealogical information, maps, photographs, and other records that can support oral data from claimants in presenting information about a group's connection to country. In addition, museums acknowledge and communicate with traditional owner groups in dealing with requests for repatriation of human remains and secret/sacred objects. This may involve resolving conflicting ideas about who are the right people to speak for certain areas and objects. Engagement with the native title process often elicits misunderstandings about the nature of Aboriginal relationships to land and complexities of Aboriginal traditions. Through Public programs, museums play an important educational role in increasing public understanding of these matters."

Margo Neale, convening the session on The Role of Art in Native Title said, "the function of art is to proclaim connection to country. As Yirrkala Elders pointed out, 'the land cannot speak. The art is messenger for the land'." That session explored the concept of Art as Culture made Visible, its use as title deeds both independent and in support of land claims and as a way of reconnecting with the past.

The seminar was excellent, very enlightening, and the many speakers kept the discourse alive and stimulating. Having recourse to the gallery exhibition was clarifying and wonderful. Of the many events I've been to at the Gallery, I thought Native Title was timely, and a fine event to give tribute to the wonderful work that Dawn Casey has accomplished during her commitment to the Museum. She will be sorely missed. I did my own survey at that time, talking with staff members on the floors, guides, reception people, staff in the shop and café...without exception, every woman and man expressed their great appreciation of Dawn professionally and personally.

Jill Perkins

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

RECONCILIATION WEEK

THURSDAY MAY 27
TO JUNE 3

Theme: *RIGHTS, RESPECT
and RECONCILIATION*

NAIDOC WEEK

SUNDAY JULY 4 to 11

Theme: *SELF DETERMINATION—
OUR COMMUNITY—OUR FUTURE—
OUR RESPONSIBILITY*

Greetings from Bundjalung country

ASG members Rhonda Ansiewicz and Hilary Bone are presently living in Bundjalung country at Federal, near beautiful Byron Bay. They have extended an invitation to "like-minded" people to drop-in for a cuppa should they be in the area. ☎ 66 884217

*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.*

Why Do the Indigenous People of the World Suffer?

An Australian Experience

I recently watched a documentary *Duracks Dreaming* on ABC television in the series *Dynasties*. I thought I should share my personal views about the program with you.

The Durack Family came to Australia from Northern Ireland in the early nineteenth century. They were Catholics and their land in Ireland was taken away from them and given to Protestants. Feeling persecuted they took the long journey from their homeland to Australia.

The pioneering Duracks gradually acquired huge chunks of land in The Kimberley and Northern Territory, an area equivalent to more than half of Ireland. The whole clan became "cattle kings". They were desperate for working hands, thus they employed the very Aboriginal people whose lands they occupied. The Aborigines were angry at first for losing their freedom on their own land. The Duracks offered them food and clothing but no wages for their labour which they accepted as they were dispossessed. They worked hard for their employers and the Duracks wrote that the Indigenous people were reliable, loyal and honest.

The Durack Family's success story was based on an amicable relationship with the Aboriginal inhabitants who were neither disruptive nor violent. They were peaceful people and their needs were basic. They were also scared of the white intruders' armaments. The Duracks' care was accepted by the Aboriginal people who did not revolt against the Duracks even though they had usurped their lands. The Durack Family was not cruel but caring.

Had the Indigenous people been treated better and not killed in hordes, I believe that they would have accepted the white occupation without much resistance. But it was not to be. The colonizers killed them indiscriminately and pushed them into hostile environments hoping they would die out. Then came the *Stolen Generations* and the *Stolen Wages*. The Indigenous

people were not counted as citizens until they won the right to vote in 1967. The denigration of their culture to below human level and the distortion of the history of the land to the occupiers' credit was another blow.

G.A. Robertson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines (1820-1850), wrote about their plight (Ref. SMH *Spectrum* dated 29/2/04): "their children have witnessed the massacre of their parents and others carried away to captivity for slavery. Can we wonder at the hatred they bear against the white settlers?"

An Indian Experience

The Indigenous people of India are known as Adhivasi and have inhabited the land for millenniums. The latest sad news is that Adhivasi land in Madhya Pradesh (a State of India) was acquired to build the Narmada Dam seven years ago without giving the people any land or cash as compensation.

The villagers helped each other to survive but are in a poor state of affairs. Surrounded by water and with heavy rains, disease and infant mortality is on the increase. Having no other skills the Adhivasis only want fertile land similar to that which they had before, and not cash. They are in remote villages and some of them do not have proper Land Deeds. For them even Bhopal (the State Capital) is too far for getting their documents sorted out and Delhi is too remote as travel is beyond their means.

There are activists and many other sympathizers trying to help the Adhivasis. It is a tragic state of affairs but they are neither violent nor lazy or dishonest but very poor and illiterate. After many delegations the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh met them and promised them justice but so far the Adhivasis are still deprived of their rights.

That is the reason I am asking the question... Why?

Can anyone give me an answer?

Mina Singh Batra

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The ASG acknowledges with thanks the financial support that has been given by the following organisations for the current year:

NSW Reconciliation Council

- funding for the dance troupe *Goanna Dreaming* to perform at the *Journey of Healing* on Wednesday May 26 at Narrabeen Lake.

Warringah Council

- grant to publish and post the summer issue of *Eliamatta*. Warringah Council also donated the *Acknowledgement of Country* bookmarks and the subsequent mini "stick-on" labels which include the ASG website address.

Pittwater Council and Pittwater RSL Club

- grants to purchase films and pay guest speaker fees for information nights in 2004.

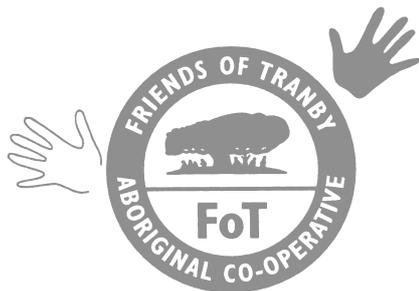
Manly Warringah Rugby League Club

- grant for promoting materials including the purchase of a banner, updating the ASG letterhead and redesigning and printing the brochures.

The funding received from Pittwater RSL and Manly Warringah Rugby League Clubs was granted under the *Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme (CDSE)*. Application is being made to three Service Clubs, in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater, for CDSE grants for the coming year. The ASG has also applied to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services for a *2004 Volunteers Small Equipment Grant* under the auspices of Warringah Council. If successful, this funding will be used to purchase a projection screen for information night films and a photocopier.

Pat Frater

Friends of Tranby



Do you have an e-mail address?
Forward it to
fot@tranby.com.au
and hear news from
the *Friends of Tranby (FoT)*.

We have had two great meetings this year, held on the first Tuesday evening of the month at Tranby, followed by lots of socialising as we enjoyed Albert's kitchen dinner (\$10, a fundraiser). A successful working bee was held in February when we gardened, swept, cleaned windows, oiled wood, lifted tiles.

There have been changes at Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College.

Jack Beetson has left, after eighteen distinguished and motivating years, to spend more time at Rollands Plains. Yvonne Jackson left after twelve dedicated years to spend time with her family. Oomera Edwards has been appointed Acting Executive Director.

There have also been changes on the Board. The new Board spent two successful days at Tranby, getting to know the staff and their roles. The new Chairperson is Paul Knight who is involved with Indigenous employment.

Some events planned by FoT this year are:

- Gundabooka Trip during the spring school break
- Belvoir Street Theatre Party to see *Life Times Three*, David Gulpilil's story of the precarious balance between his traditional life and his work in the film industry. Dates are Saturday October 9 (2pm) and Sunday 10 (5pm).



Tickets are \$40 each and selling fast. Send a cheque and full details to Friends of Tranby, 13 Mansfield Street, Glebe 2037.

Please mark your envelope "Theatre Party"
Helen Ford

TRIBUTES TO PAULINE McLEOD

Pauline McLeod, Master Storyteller, and actor, poet, animator, short story writer and educator, died on May 22, 2003. The *Pauline E. McLeod Foundation* is currently compiling a CD of Pauline's stories to be released later this year.

Pauline McLeod Tribute Concert will be held at Sydney Town Hall on **Saturday May 29** – an evening of great entertainment. Visit the website at **www.paulinemcleod.com** for information about the event.

THE SHANAHEE, celebrating the lives and work of Pauline McLeod, John Kelly and Zoe Robb, was held recently at St. Davids Uniting Church, Dee Why. Friends and admirers of these three Master Storytellers listened to folk from the Australian Storytelling Guild (NSW) tell stories – droll, macabre or poignant.

Diane Minter, acting as MC, spoke of the day's *Shanahee* as a memorial and a celebration of their lives. Of Pauline McLeod Diane said: "Pauline was recognised as a Master Storyteller, both nationally and internationally. She was also a member of the *Stolen Generations*. In sharing and promoting her culture with people of all ages and through her generous spirit, Pauline led

both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people along the journey of understanding, acceptance and healing."

Singer and storyteller Judie Eddington was accompanied by guitarist Harry Dingle in a performance of *My Dark-Eyed Daughter*, an evocative song by Australian composer and folk singer Phil Lobl. At *the Shanahee* the song, Phil's first composition, was dedicated to Pauline McLeod who had spoken to us about being a stolen child.

The words:

*"Mother, may I go out tonight?
Yes my dark-eyed daughter...
Go where the colour of your skin won't show"*

brought tears to the eyes of many.

To raise money for the Cancer Council a CD of *the Shanahee* at St. Davids featuring *My Dark-Eyed Daughter* will be sold. It can be purchased from Wayne Richmond, 9913 7788, or from Enid McClraith, 9913 3419.

Enid McClraith

AN ISLAND IN THE FAIR

I've recently been to a couple of the Pittwater Food and Wine Fairs on a Friday over this summer where a large group of people gather in a park to listen to entertainment and try food from various cultures of the globe, The entertainment included bush bands, films, the Aboriginal dance group *Goanna Dreaming*, and for me, my 2 year old daughter.

When I look around at all the people, the first thing that comes to mind is "families". Most of the people are here with members of their family. It is glaringly obvious how much parents love their kids and vice-versa. "Nothing is more important than family" I hear these people say. But the one thing that I do not understand is why the Aboriginal Support Group stall isn't overrun with people wanting to support justice for those Australians who've had their families torn apart. After all, if any of these people attending were to have their children taken

away from them by government authorities, I should think the issue would be foremost in their minds.

Unfortunately (in my humble experience), I have seen many Australians as a self-serving, materialistic lot, even though we often portray an image of the opposite: mateship?...rubbish! For many Australians, we work hard if there is something in it for us. We take an interest in something if it will be to our personal advantage. We try to put aside those things that are hard to deal with (such as our shocking history of dispossessing Aborigines) in pursuit of living out our "relaxed, easy-going Australian dream".

However, there are the few who deserve to be proud of what they stand for, the work they perform on behalf of others, and for their incredible perseverance with little recognition. For me at the Pittwater Food

and Wine Fair it was those people on the ASG stall providing information to those interested, selling books, badges and other bits, but most importantly keeping the struggle for justice alive.

What stood out for me at the Pittwater Food and Wine Fair? An island of people who do care, in a sea of people who mostly, don't.

Mark Walsh

An information stall was also held at Warringah Council's *Festival Across The Ages* at John Fisher Park, North Curl Curl. This event, to launch Seniors Week, was a great success and the response to the ASG stall was encouraging. A great deal of information was distributed, the most popular items being the Reconciliation badges and the large maps of Australia showing the regions and language groups of Aboriginal Australia.

2003/4

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If the redesigned ASG brochure is enclosed with this newsletter our records show that your membership for the current year has yet to be received.

Please contact the Treasurer, David Harrison on **9971 4160**, if there is a chance that your payment has been overlooked or email

annabell@alpha.net.au. Otherwise we hope that you will use the brochure to renew your membership as your continued support is needed and greatly appreciated. You will understand that we can only continue sending

Elimatta to financial members.



Elimatta is produced by the Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater. Articles are welcome with the understanding that editorial changes may be made. Contributors to Elimatta are from many different cultures and backgrounds. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or members of the ASG. If you use any of the material we would appreciate the extract being set in context and the source acknowledged.

Editorial Committee: Anna Bell, Pat Frater & Megan van Frank

Layout/Design: Mark Ansiewicz – 9979-9112

Distribution: Jackie O'Hare

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 the Angophora Room,
Nelson Heather Centre,
Cnr Pittwater & Jacksons Roads,
North Narrabeen.**

For further information

(02) **9913 7940** (02) **9982 1685**

Aboriginal Support Group
Manly Warringah Pittwater.

P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

Website www.asgmwp.net