

SYDNEY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE FIND FINAL RESTING PLACE

3 MARCH, 2005

NORTH HEAD, MANLY, NSW

I was asked to write this article for Elimatta about this moving ceremony because I was privileged to be there. It's a hard task for me, not only because of the content, but because I am by blood a Queenslander, although born and lived most of my life in Sydney, part of it on the Northern Beaches. So I have decided to liberally quote (in italics) from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Media Release of 3 March 2005, particularly its excerpts from the excellent speech given by Rob Welsh, Chairperson of MLALC, at the opening of ceremonies.

Clair Jackson

The remains of 14 Sydney Aboriginal people found their final resting place in the Sydney Harbour National Park at North Head today. The reburial, organised by the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, is part of the largest ever repatriation of Aboriginal remains from Australian Museums to a metropolitan Aboriginal community in NSW. Metro Land Council Chairperson, Rob Welsh, said the bodies of the Aboriginal people were originally taken from the Manly area.

This was not only an emotional and dignified occasion but also a historic one. For one hundred years, Aboriginal people from many parts of this continent have petitioned British and European countries and Australian institutions for the return of their people from scientific institutions and museums, where they were sent in the

19th and 20th centuries as colonial souvenirs and for ethnographic study. Not until the late 20th century have some of these people, our ancestors, begun to be returned to their own lands to rest in their rightful place.

"When the Europeans invaded, they didn't just take our land, they also stole the bodies of our people. They thought we were going to die out, so they wanted to measure and study us in the names of science and progress," Mr Welsh said. "But we didn't die out and today we took our ancestors to their final resting place, in their own country, with their own people." Mr Welsh said that later on, other bodies of Aboriginal people were uncovered during building work and stored away.

On the news recently an item stated that human bones had been unearthed in road construction in Gallipoli, Turkey. The Australian Government requested work stop immediately for their identification and reburial as they may be bones of Australian or Turkish soldiers from the ANZAC campaign and should be awarded their dignity. I do not in any way wish to deny rightful dignity to these war dead; I merely wish to draw a parallel and open an avenue for thought and comment.

This reburial at North Head was a direct result of the long road of activism by Aboriginal people in Australia and around the world and their supporters. Long entrenched attitudes here and in many countries have been slowly changing through this groundswell. So that it is now possible for institutions which hold human



remains to develop Repatriation Policies for the correct and dignified return of these people.

This initiative has been taken by three Australian institutions, to their credit: the National Museum of Australia (Canberra), the Australian Museum (Sydney) and the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

"Our people will never forget what happened to their ancestors all those years ago, but we can't fault the modern approach of DEC and the two Museums. Their vision and hard work has meant that today we will not only be burying the remains of our ancestors, but also some of the bitterness and misunderstandings of the past," Mr Welsh said.

Lisa Corbyn, DEC Director-General, Mike Pickering, Director of Repatriation Unit, National Museum of Australia, and Frank Howarth, Director of the Australian Museum, represented their organisations and spoke about their Repatriation policies, plans and commitment.

Mr Welsh urged other government agencies and research institutions to follow the example of DEC, the Australian Museum and the National Museum of Australia.

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"We hope that the examples set by the Australian Museum and National Museum of Australia will encourage other institutions that the benefits of building understanding with Aboriginal people far outweigh the scientific value of continuing to hold on to the remains of our ancestors," he said.

"The NSW Department of Environment and Conservation is still the only Land Management agency in Australia that has an Aboriginal repatriation program."

DEC Director-General, Lisa Corbyn, said the Department has been actively working with Aboriginal communities in NSW to return Aboriginal ancestral remains, as DEC recognises and acknowledges the cultural significance of the repatriation process for many Aboriginal communities. Also that "DEC is committed to ensuring the process is made accessible for all Aboriginal communities to have the opportunity to participate and seek the return of their ancestral remains."

Both the remains and site had been prepared for the reburial by Metro Land Council site management trainees.

"Last year Metro employed 14 young Aboriginal people as site management trainees. Our trainees prepared the remains in the traditional way and helped identify and prepare the burial site."

And this is where I'd like to come in, as one of the most moving aspects of the ceremonies for me was to see these 14 young Indigenous people, young women and young men, being given and accepting their place and importance in the

knowledge and tradition; knowing that they are the bearers to future generations. You could see it on their faces and in their movements.

As we know, most of these people being returned probably died of smallpox within one year of British arrival in 1788 – one label read 'Balmoral Beach'. The Welcome to Country was performed by Allan Madden, Education and Cultural Officer, Metro Land Council and a Welcome Home by Elder Beryl Beller.

At the end of the speeches, Rob Welsh announced that all present could be at the reburial, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This gesture was welcomed with discreet tears by some; the full spirit was tangible. The smoking (for purification – for the spirits) began as we entered the prepared area for speeches, below the burial site, and continued at the burial site. As we left, after the welcomes and speeches, we all passed through the purifying smoking onto the bush path, single file. The bush itself went still then – no breeze, no rustlings, no bird noises – still.

During the speeches, smoke wafting, we stood and sat around the clearing, around these fourteen Guringai people, men, women and one baby, who were each wrapped around in their shrouds of soft paperbark tied with reeds, lying again on the earth of their country.

I almost forgot to say it was a clear, bright, early autumn Sydney day, hottish with a lovely sea breeze.

The first Guringais to enter the bush path were the mother and baby, carried by Elder Beryl Beller, who is a mother, auntie,

grandmother. The Metro trainees respectfully carried the thirteen others: girls the women, boys the men. The burial site was in a prepared bush clearing and the dear people were reburied. The bush was still – deep quietness of remembrance, love, acknowledgment, sadness, joy – rightness. As we wound our way down the bush path, about halfway down, white cockies turned up chortling and smaller chucklings woke and rustled and the breeze returned. The spirits were pleased.

Myself, I was given a gift – which I won't tell, in the same way as I didn't tell the ceremony – so I didn't stay for the lunch but walked off through the bush (thanks NPWS). I was told that the good lunch was quiet, confident and happy – perhaps still awed. We had all talked long and gently before the ceremonies.

I have tears now in writing this down. Guringai are not my specific people, but their spirits welcomed me as a youngster when I lived in their country. They are strong, proud east coast blood, as my people are and generous, as they let me feel at home here. They are our ancestors and the backbone of this continent for all our history – from 'Dreamtime to Machinetime'. And yay! this old lady is dancing! because these Guringai today are home again!

Clair Jackson

REMEMBERING PAULINE McLEOD

Pauline McLeod died on May 22, 2003. Pauline was recognised as a Master Story Teller, both nationally and internationally. People, young and old, were spellbound by her stories. She was also a poet, an actor and an animator – and a special friend of our Group.

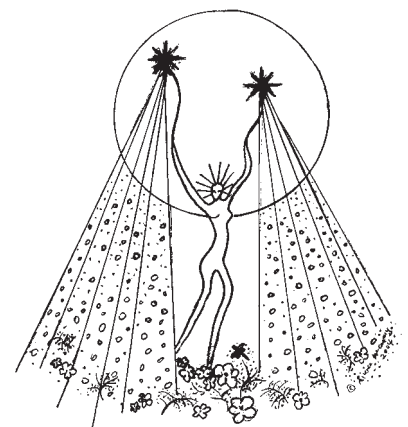
In remembrance of this wonderful woman, two awards, the *Pauline McLeod Award for Reconciliation* and the *Pauline McLeod Youth Award for Reconciliation*,

have been established. Sponsored by the Eastern Region Local Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum the awards aim to recognise those who have worked diligently in promoting Reconciliation.

Nominations for these awards close on Friday May 13, 2005.

For further details contact

Patrizia Favorito 9399 0941



Artwork by Nikki McCarthy

2005 GURINGAI FESTIVAL



Photo courtesy of ATSIC

The theme of this year's **GURINGAI FESTIVAL** is **Belonging: People and Place** – an acknowledgement of the Guringai people who have come before us and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community living in Northern Sydney today.

With more than forty events taking place across nine local government areas this is a great chance for everyone to experience and celebrate Indigenous culture and heritage. Special events include bush walks, performances, film screenings, talks and art exhibitions. The festival runs from Tuesday May 24 until Sunday July 10 at the close of NAIDOC Week

Pittwater Council will launch the *2005 GURINGAI FESTIVAL* at Central Plaza, behind the Mona Vale Library, on Tuesday May 24, 11am to 1pm. There will be storytelling, a performance by Aboriginal dancers, speakers and a *Puddle of Hands*. The MC for the launch will be Lee Mladenovic, Chairperson of this year's *GURINGAI FESTIVAL*. Lee is Branch Officer of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council at its Northern Sydney Office, 30 Fisher Road, Dee Why. Susan Moylan Coombs, the founder of the *GURINGAI FESTIVAL*, was Chairperson – and the driving force behind its success – for the first 4 years.

Join members of the Aboriginal Support Group to commemorate the *National Day of Healing* on Thursday May 26, the seventh anniversary of Sorry Day. The venue is the Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen, from 6.15pm until 8.30pm. Local artist Nikki McCarthy will be the MC for the evening. *Nature Nature*, with Henry Phineasa on

didgeridoo and David McBurney on flute, will be performing. They delighted us with their music at the Support Group's 25th birthday celebrations last November.

Fourteen year old Corey Kirk, a Year 9 student at Pittwater High School will be singing. Corey is a member of the Sydney Children's Choir and Gondwana Voices with whom she has recently completed a recording in conjunction with the ABC. She has just returned from Tokyo and Nagoya where she performed with the Sydney Children's Choir, representing Australia at the 2005 World Expo.

There will be a lakeside ceremony, face painting and boomerang decoration followed by supper. More information is given on the enclosed yellow flyer.

On Wednesday June 8 the film *The Tracker* directed by Rolf de Heer will be screened at Collaroy Cinema. David Gulpilil won the 2002 AFI Best Actor Award for his role in the film which is set in the Australian Outback in the 1920s. It also stars Gary Sweet and local actor Grant Page. This is a free screening thanks once again to the support of Warringah Council and Josephine and Roy Mustaca of the Collaroy Cinema.

NO BOOKINGS are being taken for the film this year. The cinema doors will open at 9.30am for the 10am screening.

The third *GURINGAI FESTIVAL* event organised by the Support Group is the **LINKUP Film Screening and panel of speakers** on Monday July 4. The film to be screened which shows the work of Linkup is from the haunting series *Missing*, written and directed by Rachel Landers. The series was recently shown on SBS TV. Rachel will be one of the panel of guest speakers. George Ellis, case worker from Linkup, and members of the local community who have used this valuable service will talk about their experiences.

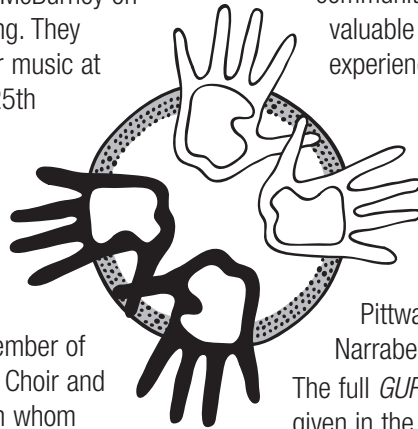
This special NAIDOC Week event will be held at 7.30pm in the Angophora Room, Nelson Heather Centre, corner of Jacksons and Pittwater Roads, North Narrabeen.

The full *GURINGAI FESTIVAL* program is given in the brochure available from participating community groups, Councils and Libraries or visit

www.warringah.nsw.gov.au

Pat Frater

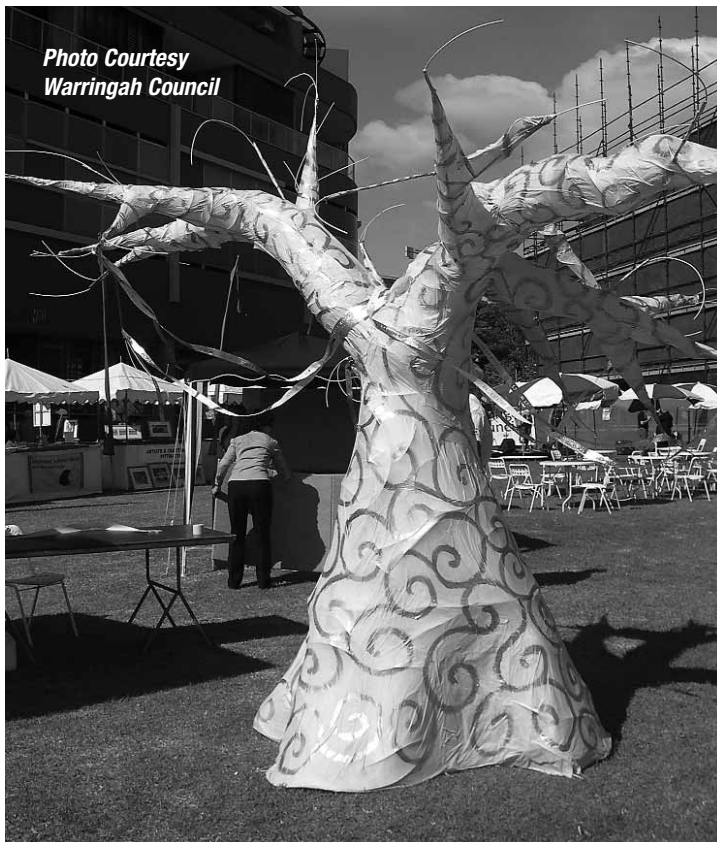
Artwork by Lisa Buxton



Watch for the ABC TV program **Message Stick** which will feature **Nature Nature** on Friday May 13 at 6pm or at 1.30pm Sunday 15 when the program is repeated.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

International Women's Day: THE WISHING TREE



– MARCH 8

Warringah Council presented a wonderful programme of events on International Women's Day in the town centre, Howard Ave, Dee Why. Prior to the actual day members of our Group had participated in sculpting a *Wishing Tree* for people to make a leaf containing a wish to add to the tree. The Aboriginal Support Group's wish was that *The Project Officer, Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan, be employed full time.*

The tree trunk was silver and on the day it glistened in the sun on a perfect Sydney autumn day and the wishes fluttered beautifully in the breeze.

The Support Group, along with a number of other community groups, had an information stall at the festivities and many of the attendees visited our stall during the course of the day. Susan Moylan-Coombs was the Master of Ceremonies for the event and did a terrific job.

Wendy Harmer made a special guest appearance at midday and gave a humorous yet meaningful speech on women's supposed attachment to housework. Other activities included live entertainment, a yoga demonstration, henna hand decorations and a belly dancing demonstration.

Carol Gerard

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY INFORMATION INTERAGENCY DAY – MARCH 15

Susan Moylan-Coombs, Project Officer, Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan, organised this forum at the Manly Community Centre.

The opening speaker Janet Wasson from the Northern Sydney Region, NSW Department of Education and Training, outlined the restructure of the region which covers Hunters Hill to Hornsby and the Northern Beaches. A review has been requested as the region had lost 3 Aboriginal staff who were replaced with 2 staff employed for a half week each only. Rose Gordon, Senior Education Officer, Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, provided information about the introduction of the *Whole of School Intervention Strategy* to supplement mainstream education funding over the next four years and the *Indigenous Tutorial*

Assistance Scheme.

To be eligible for a ITAS grant a school needs 20 enrolled Indigenous students. The only school in this region which qualifies for funding is St. Josephs at Hunters Hill with 31 Aboriginal students who are mainly boarders from country NSW.

Simon McArthur, Project Director of Ecopoint Management, gave an overview of the proposed (and controversial) development of North Head Quarantine Station by Mawland Hotel Management Group. The State Government has offered Mawland a 21 year lease with an option to extend to 45 years with the lease to be activated in June or July 2005.

Mawland has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. Simon was invited

to give this presentation to make it clear that members of the community can also have input into the management of the Quarantine Station. When the complex is completed a range of employment opportunities will be available.

Of particular interest was the presentation of the proposed design for the Aboriginal Learning Centre to be built at the Northern Beaches Campus of TAFE, Brookvale. Dillon Kombomerri of the Merrima Design Group is the architect for the building which will be located in bushland in the centre of the campus. Dillon gave us an insight into how, after lengthy consultation, the shape of a whale's dorsal fin has been incorporated into the centre's design.

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The Merrima Design Group were the architects for the new Wilcannia Hospital. Rob Cohen, Development Manager of the Gamarada Aboriginal Education and Training Unit, TAFE Northern Sydney Institute also spoke. The Gamarada Unit provides and supports Aboriginal students with a range of vocational, education and training options across seven campuses of TAFE.

The final speakers were Marcia Ella-Duncan, Chairperson, ATSC Sydney Regional Council and Leon Donovan, Manager, Sydney Indigenous Co-ordination Centre. Of the thirty two ICC's established across the country, only two of the managers are Indigenous people and Leon is one of them.

ATSC was on the eve of being officially abolished. Marcia outlined the future of Aboriginal service provision and stressed that the key words will be "mutual obligation".

The forum was very informative and positive, covering a range of relevant local issues and highlighting directions for the future.

Pat Frater

HARMONY DAY – MARCH 21

First celebrated nationally in 1999, *Harmony Day* coincides with the *International Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. The aim is to express in a simple way that there is no place in our community for racial intolerance or disharmony. This year a *Harmony Day* event, held on the lawn outside Dee Why Library, was hosted by Warringah Council in partnership with the Northern Beaches Multicultural Network. A good crowd gathered including many of Warringah's newest citizens, 70 of whom had just participated in the Citizenship Ceremony in the Civic Centre.

Nature Nature, the duo of Henry Phineasa and David McBurney, played at the Citizenship Ceremony and then led the outdoor multi-cultural entertainment which followed.

The Message of *Harmony Day* is **YOU ME AUSTRALIAN** and the wearing of orange – a symbol of anti-racism – was evident all around.

What a thrill it was to look up and see the Aboriginal flag flying from Warringah Council's flag pole, as it does throughout the year.

Pat Frater



Photo Courtesy Warringah Council

FESTIVAL OF LAGOONS – MARCH 19

To celebrate *World Water Day* the National Parks Association of NSW organised the inaugural *Festival of Lagoons* at the Coastal Environment Centre on the shore of Narrabeen Lagoon. The ASG was invited to have an information table on what was a near-perfect autumn day.

Two sessions were held during the morning focusing on the history of community action to protect Narrabeen Lagoon and the implementation of its management plan. There was an exhibition of colourful artworks by local school children and a performance by the drumming group *Tribal Drums* who played with the lagoon as their picturesque backdrop. In the afternoon Susan Moylan-Coombs and Dennis Foley led a walk from Bilarong Reserve and spoke about the significance of Aboriginal heritage and culture in the catchment area.

Pat Frater

RECONCILIATION WORKSHOP - SENIORS WEEK EVENT – MARCH 21

A well attended showing of the short film *Baba Kiu Eria* (Barbecue Area), written by Geoffrey Atherden was held at the New Life Baptist Church, Dee Why. This was organised by the Women's Wellness Group as part of Warringah Council's Seniors Week activities. Following the screening and socialising over morning tea, discussion about the film was encouraged by myself as facilitator.

There were many interesting moments as those present delved back into their lives and relived occasions where prejudice and racism were evident. One participant shared of his work experiences in Kings Cross and of the unwritten rule of the

police force that if Aboriginal people walked down certain streets they could be arrested by the police.

Those in attendance expressed their thanks and hopes that a similar event will occur next year in Seniors Week.

If you would like to borrow *Baba Kiu Eria* or any of the films in the Support Group's library please contact me on 9918 2594.

Two new videos in the library are Dhakiyarr VS The King co-directed and written by Tom Murray and the film of last year's *Whale Songlines* produced by Warringah Council.

Lizzie Landers



FREEDOM RIDES

Freedom Ride 1965 – A reflection on the Support Group meeting of Monday 7th March 2005

I went to the meeting with little expectation. In fact I had forgotten what the agenda was. It was some weeks since I had read the *Calendar of Events*. More out of habit than with a desire to be supportive – after all, we are supposed to be part of a Support Group – I found my way to the Nelson Heather Centre at Narrabeen. Once there I was happily reminded that we would be viewing a video – *Freedom Ride* which retraces the historic journey of 1965 to Moree inspired by Charles Perkins.

As an introduction to seeing the video Lizzie Landers, Chairperson for the evening, suggested that we might think about what we were doing 40 years ago, our memories of that year, and our knowledge of Aboriginal issues back in those days.

These questions for me were the shocking part of the evening. I realised that my knowledge in 1965 came from not much more than a poorly illustrated Reader from Primary School. The only other memory was the visit to my church at Punchbowl of some Aboriginal children from Croker Island – supposedly escaping the bombing of Darwin by the Japanese in the second World War. That, I am ashamed to say, was about the sum total of my experience of the words Australian Aborigines.

In 1965 I was engrossed in my own life plans when I vaguely heard about Charles Perkins and the bus trip to Moree. I might have thought it was a bit stupid not to allow Aboriginal children into a swimming pool. I couldn't really imagine them carrying any more serious diseases than the ones I and my mates carried as we did laps in the Bankstown Olympic pool.

The situation at Moree couldn't have been any worse than the perpetually green thick water that I dived into at the pool of the prestigious school I attended as a teenager. There ear aches were common and prompted the PE teacher to toss in a

bag of salt, if he could find it in the shed. My thoughts back in 1965 were nothing more than that.

Because of the Referendum in 1967, I was forced to be a bit more conscious of Aboriginal issues and by then my church was starting to say some significant things about injustice.

Since those days I have been prodded and poked by activist friends, University lecturers, a couple of Long Service Leave stints at an Aboriginal School in Queensland, a visit to Croker Island and a bit of involvement in Redfern. As a consequence of these factors I found my way to the Nelson Heather Centre last Monday night out of habit, as I say, and saw the video – *Freedom Ride*.

I was shocked that I could have been so ignorant forty years ago. Not that my knowledge or my support of the Support Group is anything to crow about now. But my ignorance then was abysmal. That was the revelation that hit me when I viewed the video on Monday night.

What follows are a few segments from the video. It reminds us that in the 1960s Australia was becoming aware of what was happening in the southern states of America – *The Civil Rights Movement*.

- Charles Perkins in 1963 enrolled at Sydney University. This, together with travel overseas made him aware that Australian Aboriginal people deserved better and that discrimination was holding them back.
- On 12th February 1965 a bus load of students set off for Moree via Walgett. There, at the Walgett RSL it was revealed that the ideal of mateship did not include Aboriginal people. When the bus left Walgett it was rammed by a car driven by a grazier's son. Fortunately no one was injured.

- At Moree there was a protest at the Council Chambers, an influx of Aboriginal children in the public swimming pool and then a public meeting.
- The Freedom Ride had stirred up the debate on Aboriginal Affairs around Australia. This debate was maintained until the Referendum in 1967 and has been credited with ending the White Australia policy.

The story of the Freedom Ride moves on from 1965. On the way it has prompted my awareness of my ignorance and the desire to know more. Joining the meeting last Monday might have been out of habit. But I believe it was a good habit. After the meeting the conversation buzzed with heartfelt memories and hopes. There was a clear sense that freedom continues to ride on – not into the sunset – but into the dawning of a new day. And to be part of the Support Group is to be part of that dawn.

Acknowledgment is made of insights from the article on the ABC website – *Didj'u' know Stories* by Keiza Dawkins.

Grahame Ellis



At the Australian Museum in College Street there is a *FREEDOM RIDE* Exhibition, a permanent part of the Museum's Indigenous Collection. It is referred to by the staff as *Our Bus*.



Freedom Ride 2005 – A reflection on the Support Group meeting of Monday 4th April: 40th Anniversary of the Freedom Ride

What a special treat it was to have a preview of the half hour film made during this historical retracing of the original journey which enlightened people within Australia, as well as overseas, to the level of racism that existed in NSW in 1965. The ABC will produce a feature length documentary based on this footage later. An introduction by the film's editor Tom Tilley and the long period of question time that followed the viewing added to the occasion by raising our understanding of some of the background information on the film as well as the journey, which was funded by the Aboriginal Reconciliation Council and various government departments.

Tom was one of the twenty-six people from various backgrounds who set out from Sydney University on February 12th to spend a fortnight travelling through North Western and Northern NSW. Twelve of them were Aboriginal people. Tom was asked to be the film editor three weeks before the departure. While not able to state definite objectives of the journey he believes that the intention was to re-energise debate on Reconciliation and Indigenous issues, his awareness of which was already raised due to his own family's contact with Aboriginal people while living in the Gulf area.

While this journey did attempt to retrace that of 1965 there were a number of places that the group was particularly keen to visit. The segregation wall that still exists in the pub in Gulargambone was one of the places, similarly the Ex-Servicemen and Sports Clubs in Walgett which discriminated so openly in the 1960's. Quite a few memorable incidents and comments are made by those interviewed during the film. For example, the group happened to be present (and filming!) when an Aboriginal boy had just attempted to board a bus in order to make it to Court in Walgett that day. Despite having a valid ticket he was refused a seat. When the bus driver was questioned he gave various

excuses. One young girl offered her seat but the Aboriginal boy was still denied a seat. This was February 2005!

Young Aboriginal adults in the film expressed concerns for the need for more educated Aboriginal people in professional positions to talk to the kids in places like Inverell and to see other possible careers beyond those in the area of sports. They also commented that many families were still living on missions.

In Moree young female Aboriginal school children spoke of name calling being common and the assumptions that the community usually makes regarding their trustworthiness (or lack thereof) that affects their chances of employment in the retail area.

A female Law student agrees that more tolerance is needed and that it is assumed that an Aboriginal person is to blame if there's an incident. The breaking of the cycle of poverty is also important. She made the point that non-Aboriginals need to accept that Aboriginal spirituality is very real today and that others may also embrace it.

Others felt that they are still in the 60's and 70's in that little progress has been made – as was stated before, there are virtually no Aboriginal employees in shops. There is also a need for Aboriginal policemen and women so that they have

someone to speak on their behalf.

A lecturer in Aboriginal Studies at Lismore University stated that while progress has been made in some areas there is still a need to do more and make a difference at the "grass roots" of tolerance and reconciliation.

After the film Tom answered our questions with great thought and articulated very well further information including the work of **ReconciliACTION** which organised the recent Ride. He spoke about the difficulties of the dynamics within the group on the Ride as a result of their very varied backgrounds and offered to forward a copy of his article *Freedom Ride – Microcosm of Reconciliation* on the journey for our publication.

Tom did leave us with a sense of hope for the future to which the title of his article alludes, by pointing out that positive acts and actions are taking place in some places such as Bowraville. Here Aboriginal Culture through dance and language is being taught to all students in the Catholic school, there is an Aboriginal Elder on the Local Council and the Cinema which previously had been segregated has reopened as an Aboriginal Arts and Music Centre.

Sharon Esterman

Photo courtesy ANTaR



FREEDOM RIDE – A MICROCOSM OF RECONCILIATION



Photo courtesy Tom Tilley

'It's 9am and I'm sitting on the Freedom Ride bus en-route for the Myall Creek Memorial site. Today we'll remember one of the darkest moments of white settler history.' 19/02/05

On Australia Day 2005 the Myall Creek Memorial was vandalised. Words like 'murdered' were scratched beyond recognition on the plaques that tell the story of how the Wirrayaraay people were brutally murdered by stockmen in 1838. This sombre incident suggests that Australia is still grappling with its past and identity.

Whilst some Australians are celebrating the development of this land mass since 1788, many Australians refer to the 26th of January as 'Survival Day,' a day which mourns the atrocities of the past and celebrates the resilience of the oldest culture in the world.

Part of the aim of the Freedom Ride 2005 was to pay respect and keep alive the story of Charlie Perkins and the activists of 1965, but the main aim was to take stock of the last 40 years and to find out exactly what had (and what hadn't) changed in that time. As we met local people and accumulated video interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people the theme became clear.

Whilst abject public demonstrations of racism like this have diminished greatly since 1965, the deeper divisions continue to manifest themselves. It appears the face of racial inequality has morphed into a socio-economic divide for which an

Lismore and Goondiwindi, we encountered numerous examples of police abuse, Real Estate agent prejudice, constant monitoring in shops, employment prejudice, harassment and general distrust. One of the standout cases occurred when a Country Link bus driver was caught red handed by the Freedom Ride bus discriminating against a seventeen-year-old Aboriginal boy. On coming out of the Gulargambone Hotel with its historic segregation wall still in tact, the Freedom Riders encountered a young man looking for a ride to Walgett after he'd been refused entry to the Country Link bus. As we pulled into Coonamble, we noticed the Country Link bus had stopped near the service station. Dan Syron, Indigenous leader of the trip, took the young man's valid ticket onto the bus to question the driver's actions. According to the driver "like a train, I have to leave on time," despite the fact a non-Indigenous boy was picked up several minutes afterwards. In a turn of events an outspoken young non-Indigenous girl, who also questioned the driver's treatment of the young would-be passenger, was forced off the bus by the driver at the Coonamble police station. She then quickly ran to the Freedom Riders who drove her to her destination. There was consensus amongst many of the non-Indigenous people we met that there were lots of opportunities available for Aboriginal people. The difference however was whether or not they realised that these opportunities were almost

interest-rate obsessed Australia has little answer. Racism is still a part of everyday life for Aboriginal people living in regional NSW. Throughout our journey which reached as far west as Dubbo and Walgett, and as far north as

unreachable because of the disadvantaged position that stems from generations of marginalisation. It seems that for many white Australians, with our 200-year mental historical time block, it's very difficult to contemplate the real historical context of Aboriginal suffering.

Positive community initiatives were encountered, for example the level of Indigenous cultural education at St Mary's school in Bowraville, a town that '65 Freedom Rider Aiden Foy described as a "mongrel of a place." Students of St Mary's performed a traditional welcome celebration to a melody played on gum leaves to welcome the Freedom Riders. The Apollo House Community Centre of East-Dubbo is a strong grass roots Aboriginal community initiative although it is facing a severe funding shortage and the threat of a bottle-shop opening just around the corner. The female Elders who manage the centre were outraged to discover that a letter proposing the establishment of the take-away liquor outlet was not sent to their Aboriginal-dominated housing commission neighbourhood. Effectively they were given no say in a decision that could quickly undo the progress made by the community centre.

Interestingly, it was not only the findings within the communities, but the 'creative tensions' between the Freedom Riders 2005 themselves that also provided valuable lessons about the complexity of reconciliation. The twenty-six member group contained twelve Indigenous members. The majority of the non-Indigenous team members came from stable middle class, well-educated backgrounds. The Indigenous members, whilst also mostly being involved in tertiary study, had personal and family histories involving incarceration, poverty, drug abuse, violence and family separation.

This led to vast differences in ideologies and purpose within the group, which at several stages, really shook the group.

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ANTaR

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation



NSW STRATEGY DAY

In February I attended an all day brainstorming/planning/strategy workshop at the Community Centre Addison Road, Marrickville, to chart the way forward for the NSW branch of Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR).

There were about twenty of us, mainly old stalwarts but also some enthusiastic, well qualified and electronically savvy young people. We were asked by the facilitator to say who we were, our involvement with ANTaR and what inspired us about the organisation. Many mentioned the way ANTaR supports the direction taken by Aboriginal leaders. Others, myself included, stressed the dedication and creativity of activists over the years.

From the outset, we tried to be realistic about the daunting task of keeping going effectively at a time when Aboriginal issues had been sidelined, the Government's mantra of 'practical reconciliation' was widely accepted and even leading Aboriginal personalities were divided about the way forward. We were constantly aware that ANTaR's resources, both financial and human, were limited and we had to keep within those in anything we took on. The support base was ageing and struggling to be heard, especially in the regions, and the parallel reconciliation network has similar problems.

On the positive side, ANTaR at both state and national levels, over the last several years, formed an effective national organisation with the capacity to support state and local bodies and to take issues to their communities when the way forward becomes

clearer. Recently, ANTaR has lobbied and issued fact sheets on Aboriginal health and Stolen Wages.

We agreed on the need for targeted, sustainable, effective and timely communication. Specifically, we agreed on three editions of the ANTaR NSW newsletter linked to key annual events and produced for publication in April, July and

November. Each issue will be sent to a new constituency of potential members. To fund an expanded print run, means of saving on costs will be investigated and a short, sharp monthly e-mail bulletin would be tried out. Volunteers with the right skills would be recruited from the volunteer briefing sessions to maintain the website.

ANTaR will organise at least two meetings to which members can be invited. Recognising that volunteers managing the *Sea of Hands* and stalls are getting older, ANTaR will try to mobilise more members to help.

Issues to be pursued in the coming year will include:

- NSW Land Rights Act Review
- Stolen Wages
- Health rights
- Sorry Week (May) events
- Review of Bail Act (MEL)
- Freedom Ride re-enactment and subsequent film
- CDEP changes
- Senate inquiry into management of Aboriginal affairs
- Redfern/Waterloo

Fundraising was discussed later in the afternoon.

All in all, I felt that it was a most useful exercise that should result in a re-energised ANTaR NSW which is better able to support groups such as ASG.

Andrew Macintosh

FREEDOM RIDES

Continued from Page 8

The leadership struggled to walk the tight-rope between group empowerment and the political and logistical control required for the team to achieve their objectives.

A tense moment occurred during a Yarning Circle in Kempsey (an emergency measure initiated after the group's first breakdown in Moree to provide greater daily inter-group communication). Two polar personalities, the female non-Indigenous leader and a male Indigenous group member, came head-to-head in a flurry of mismatched vocabulary resulting in the non-Indigenous leader leaving the Yarning Circle in tears.

As is the case with the national reconciliation process, the involvement of the Indigenous Freedom Riders was essential for the project to have any relevance and impact in the communities we visited.

Thus a (self)conscious effort was made to have Indigenous team members involved at the centre of important decision but ultimately it was the non-Indigenous members who had the power to initiate this. This reflects the constant dilemma in the national strive for a non-paternalistic reconciliatory progress.

As part of their ReconciliACTION network, the Freedom Riders see this trip as a starting point for a range of initiatives that

will continue to engage youth with reconciliation. They have presented their findings and video footage to Dr Andrew Refshauge and on May 29 will make a presentation in the Coles Theatre at the Powerhouse Museum during Reconciliation Week. Later that week they are planning a National Youth Reconciliation forum, to be held in Canberra on June 1, followed by the release of the Freedom Ride 2005 documentary in October.

Tom Tilley

Freedom Rider 2005



HAPPENINGS AT BIALA HOSTEL

The Homework Centre has been going well – most of the girls are working hard and the Homework Centre helpers are getting great satisfaction from helping the girls. There is news of the two girls who did the Higher School Certificate last year. Eliza Williams was working at Lightning Ridge through the CDEP Scheme the last time spoke to her. Marissa Barker is at Sydney University, having gained a scholarship to study Nuclear Medicine and is living on campus. Well done both of you.

This year three students, Larka, Carmel, and Nikky, are doing Year 12 – congratulations to all three of you for keeping at it and getting to this stage of your education.

Emma Franks is now playing soccer in the Under 16 team for Manly United (formerly the Dolphins). I have watched Emma play in this team a couple of times already and her natural good skills are getting even better now that she is in this team and also attending the Narrabeen Sports High School Soccer Programme. Denise Reynolds has returned to Biala this year after being away from the hostel last year.

She is playing soccer again for Manly Vale Soccer Club in her usual position as goalie. Nice to see you back Denise and I will be going to some of Denise's games after the holidays.

I was invited to go to the Easter Show with the Biala mob on Easter Saturday evening. The girls had been saving their money and most headed off for the show bag hall and those scary rides. I stayed with Lara, Alan, Molly and Keely, but both Lara and Alan went on more "dangerous" rides. A really good time was had by us all.

Alan and Lara have been working really hard, especially as they do not have a cleaner at present and therefore have extra work to do. It's great to see the good relationship between the girls and the Rutley family – they are doing a fine job.

Carol Ritchie

MORRISON FAMILY BEQUEST

Ruth Morrison was a long-time member of the Aboriginal Support Group. In her latter years she was not well enough to participate actively in the Group but she always was particularly interested in what

was happening at Biala Aboriginal Hostel for Girls at Allambie Heights. Sadly, whilst travelling with her husband Don on the Transcontinental Indian Pacific train late last year, Ruth tragically lost her life as the result of an accident.

The Morrison family is keen to create a functional memorial to celebrate Ruth's life and interests. In consultation between the family, Great Southern Railways, Lara and Alan Rutley of Biala Hostel and the ASG, plans are well advanced for making this happen – the creation of a special room for students in Years 11 and 12.

The room would contain two workstations, scanner and printer and almost "on demand" access to computers. Refurbishment would include lounge chairs, television and accessories for relaxation in a freshly painted and newly carpeted space.

This innovative project will commemorate Ruth's life and be of great benefit to Biala students.

We look forward to the plans becoming reality and bringing you news of its completion.

David Harrison

BOOK REVIEWS

Saltwater Fella by John Moriarty with Evan McHugh

Jackson's Track by Daryl Tonkin & Carolyn Landon

Both books have been published by Viking Press and sell for around \$25. The former was published in 1999 and the latter in 2000. Both are really good reads showing the dark side of humanity but, more importantly, the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

John Moriarty is the man on the front cover of the 2004/05 edition of the Sydney White Pages Residential Telephone Directory and *Saltwater Fella* is his story. John is a Yanyuwa person who was born in 1938 on the banks of the McArthur River across from the small town of Borroloola on the Northern Territory side of the Gulf of Carpentaria. He was stolen from his family at four years of age and placed in various children's homes from the Blue Mountains in New South Wales to South Australia. In later years when he met up with his mother again, he asked her, "Why did you let me go?" His mother replied, "My son, you were going to school. I took you to school every day ... then I went to pick you up this day and you were gone." His father was Irish from County Kerry.

Like many Aboriginal people, John does not know the date on which he was born and it was a shock to learn that all Aboriginal people in this situation are given April 1 as their official birthday for the purposes of documents etc. So much for European Australia being a civilised society.

There are some beautiful photos in the book of John as a little boy with his mother which were taken by a visiting anthropologist and which helped him reconnect to country. John's love of sport was his great salvation and helped him to survive whilst other boys who had been in the homes with him succumbed to the ills associated with the loss of identity and went to early graves.

1983 was a very significant year for John and his wife, Ros for that was when they established the Balarinji design studio to celebrate Aboriginal heritage through contemporary Australian design and the rest as they say is history. Apart from wonderful fashion items, Balarinji designed those fabulous Qantas Dreaming planes which are still used in Qantas promotions. Balarinji were early sponsors of Cathy Freeman. John is currently a member of the new Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the Commonwealth Government.

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THE NORTHERN SYDNEY REGION RECONCILIATION NETWORK (NSRRN)

www.nswrecon.com

The NSRR Network extends from Sydney Harbour north to Broken Bay and from the coast westwards to Ryde – encompassing the traditional country of the Guringai Nation and extending westwards into the traditional country of the Darug Nation. It comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous representatives of Local Reconciliation Groups (Mosman, Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai, Manly-Warringah-Pittwater, Bennelong & Surrounds, Epping-Beecroft, Hornsby, Harbour to Hawkesbury, Women's Reconciliation Network) and ANTaR. Members also include Indigenous representatives from Guringai and Hornsby/Ryde Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and from 'Warawara' at Macquarie University and 'Gamarada' at Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE. NSRRN liaises with Indigenous organisations and individuals providing services to Indigenous people of Northern Sydney. Our membership also includes representatives from the eleven councils of Northern Sydney – North Sydney, Lane Cove, Mosman, Ku-ring-gai, Willoughby, Ryde, Hunters Hill, Hornsby, Manly, Warringah and Pittwater. Bi-monthly lunchtime meetings are hosted by each of the eleven councils on a rotational basis.

Membership is widening to include community groups who are supportive of the process of Reconciliation. The NSRRNetwork was formed at the end of 2000 as the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation came to a close. The Network has elected executive positions which include two Co-Chairpersons (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and two Deputy Co-Chairpersons (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Our aim is "To provide a forum for members to meet and act on matters related to Indigenous issues and to the advancement of the process of Reconciliation and social justice, consistent with the Corroboree 2000 Vision Statement."

NSRRN objectives are:

1. To advocate and lobby on behalf of the NSRRN on issues relating to Indigenous people.
2. To create opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, resources, expertise and information.
3. To increase community education and awareness about Indigenous cultures and history.
4. To represent NSRRN on relevant regional, state and national forums.

In between meetings members network by email to share information and ideas, to promote activities for positive change and to support each other at community and local government level, as we journey together along the road to Reconciliation and social justice.

Larry Trudgett & Kerrie McKenzie
NSRRN Co-Chairpersons

LAW FORUM

On Wednesday June 15 the NSRRNetwork is holding a **LAW FORUM** as part of the **2005 GURINGAI FESTIVAL**.

A panel of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lawyers will discuss Aboriginal issues within the legal system. The venue is the Dougherty Centre Auditorium, 7 Victor Street, Chatswood 7pm for 7.30pm. Donations are welcome.

For further details about the forum please telephone: Kerrie McKenzie 9428 1197 or Kathryn Ridley 9777 7970 or visit www.nswrecon.com

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Those who have seen the documentary *Buried Country* may remember the boxer Lionel Rose singing *The Ballad of Jackson's Track*, a song about the place where he grew up. The book *Jackson's Track* is the story of that place where Daryl Tonkin and his brother set up a timber mill in the 1930's and where Daryl fell in love with Euphie, an Aboriginal woman, and raised a family. Jackson's Track is in West Gippsland in Victoria. Daryl's unpleasant sister Mavis badgered his brother Harry to leave the Track so Daryl invited some of Euphie's kin and their other blackfella friends to join them in a community working the timber. In his book, Tonkin notes, "The way the blackfellas arranged their lives did not always fit with the white man's values.

Their idea of work was not always in terms of paid work. There were about a dozen men living on the Track who never worked for money at all. They spent their time hunting through the bush. They were experts at snaring and trapping game and thus meat was plentiful and free to any of the woodcutters ... these men were an important part of the community and were respected and welcomed anywhere."

The community broke up in the late 1950's when a newly built road exposed their homes to the world at large and white society didn't like the untidiness beside the road. Families were offered public housing but in separate areas lest the blackfellas form a ghetto. The children of Daryl and Euphie all made successes of their lives.

Carol Gerard

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SOVL SISTERS

*Exhibition of works by Elaine Russell
and Denise Barry*

From May 26 to June 5
Hours: 11am-5pm Wed to Sunday
At the Chrissie Cotter Gallery
Pidcock St. Camperdown

The exhibition will be opened by Her
Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC,
Governor of NSW
on WEDNESDAY MAY 25, 6 to 9pm.
Enquiries 0419 423 408

**TWO SISTERS – TWO WORLDS
WALKING TOGETHER**



Glen
Street
Theatre

BANGARRA

The BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE will be performing SPIRIT at Glen Street Theatre, Glenrose, from November 2 to 6, 2005. Set to a beautiful and haunting score SPIRIT is choreographed by Stephen Page and Frances Rings. It is a lush celebration of beauty, ritual and music inspired by the Dreamtime creation stories from North East Arnhem Land.

Bangarra is a major force in Australian contemporary dance with an outstanding international reputation. It would be great if the ASG could arrange a theatre party to SPIRIT - a **VOLUNTEER IS NEEDED** to organise this. Please contact Anna Bell 9913 7940 if you would like to take this project on.

INDIGENOUS ART EXHIBITION

From June 26 to July 1

Hours 9am to 5pm daily
At Hornsby TAFE Gallery
Pacific Highway, HORNSBY

Indigenous artists are asked to submit their works for this exhibition. All proceeds will go to the artists.

Contact Dorothy Babb 9482 2994
or email dbabb@bigpond.net.au

**Hornsby Area Residents for
Reconciliation**



RSL CLUB

The Aboriginal Support Group thanks the Dee Why RSL Club for its continuing support with the grant towards the expenses of two issues of Elimatta.

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

The Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

meets on the third Monday of each month at 7.30 pm.
Information Nights are July 4 and September 5 at 7.30 pm.

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

Entrance to the centre's carpark is from Boondah Road off Jacksons Road

Elimatta is the newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater. Articles are welcome with the understanding that editorial changes may be made and that contributors agree that the material will be archived by the National Library of Australia.

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.

Please email articles where possible to annabell@alpha.net.au

If you use any of the material it would be appreciated if the extract is set in context and the source acknowledged.

Editorial Committee: Anna Bell and Pat Frater
Layout/Design: Mark Ansiewicz: (02) 9979-9112
Distribution: Jackie O'Hare, Anna Bell, Rob Osborn, Pat Russell, Carol Gerard, Don and Pat Frater.



*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.*

*The Support Group's first newsletter was
produced in March 1982.*

*The 1987 Winter edition was named
Elimatta for the first time.*

☎ For further information ☎

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