



ABORIGINAL SUPPORT GROUP CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater marked its 25th anniversary with a party at the trusty old Scout Hall alongside Narrabeen Lake. People travelled from far and wide to be there – up from Canberra, out from Lightning Ridge, and from all over Sydney. Talks given by various Group members were interspersed with a musical performance by Nature Nature, a duo of didgeridoo and flute played by Henry Phineasa and David McBurney. The formal presentations were ably facilitated by Kevin McCreton, with Acknowledgment of Country by Ian Raymond.

Enid McLraith began by telling the story of how the Group began in 1979 – a chance meeting on a bus by three people with similar interests in Aboriginal issues at a time when talk of a Treaty was in the air. Jill Perkins then spoke about how the Group evolved from those early days – from a gathering of like-minded people learning about the larger issues

underpinning the idea of a Treaty, to a group of people capable of providing support for Aboriginal people when it was requested. Jill recalled how the Group took guidance from people like Kevin Cook, head of Tranby College, and developed the ethos of 'support' for Aboriginal people, rather than speaking or acting on their behalf. Jill remembered working with Koori friends and other Group members to support many efforts over the years, including the Long March in 1988, rescue of Australia Hall (site of the 1938 Day of Mourning Protest), marching for Land Rights, as well as organising numerous events in the local community to highlight issues of land, culture, health, education, deaths in custody, stolen generations, racism, and reconciliation.

Remarks by Helen Ford focussed on how the ASG has continued its efforts to keep these issues on the community agenda since the 'height' of the reconciliation movement in 2000. She mentioned the



Enid McLraith Founding Member of ASG speaking at the 25th birthday
Photo Courtesy Pat Fisher

Group's focus on information initiatives, including the launch of resources such as *A Story to Tell* and the website, as well as organising regular Information Nights. Helen also referred to the Group's continued support for Biala, the Guringai Festival and NAIDOC Week, as well as success in working with local councils, members of the local Aboriginal community, and the larger reconciliation network. Both Jill and Helen paid tribute to the many stalwarts of the Group – Aboriginal and non – many of them passed on now, but many of them still working hard.

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Jackie O'Hare and grandchildren Kalina and Jordan Davis cutting the birthday cake at the 25th Anniversary
Photo Courtesy Pat Fisher

FAREWELL JACKIE AND FAMILY

Jackie O'Hare has left Narrabeen. Cassie, Kalina, Jordan and Kai have moved to Dubbo, so Jackie will not be driving regularly to Sydney from Lightning Ridge. We will miss her presence at our meetings.

We thank Jackie for her dedication and commitment to the Support Group. She was always there welcoming, organising, keeping contact details of members up to

date, helping with *Elimatta* and storing all our records. Cassie and Kai were also enthusiastic members of the Group and contributed greatly to many events especially those involving young people in the community.

We will miss them all. We hope they will visit us often and wish them well in their new surroundings.

Helen Ford

Whale

SONGLINES

– Warringah Community Event of the Year

At the 2005 Australia Day Celebrations at Warringah Civic Centre the Community Event of the Year Award was presented to *Whale Songlines*, one of the highlights of last year's *Guringai Festival*. *Whale Songlines* was held on May 30 at Freshwater Beach watched by thousands of people. It was a celebration of the migration of the whales along our coastline and acknowledged Aboriginal culture and heritage on the Northern Beaches. Three months of enthusiastic community participation culminated with the lantern parade, music and dance, all complementing the contemporary story performance. As they were moved across the

sand the colourful glowing 10 metre whale puppet – the star of the show – and the giant spirit puppets, all designed by local artist Jessica Birk, seemed to blend into the background of the gently breaking waves.

Karen Gardner, Events Co-ordinator, Cultural Services Team, Warringah Council, accepted the Community Event of the Year Award on behalf of the hundreds of people who had been involved in the *Whale Songlines* workshops and performance.

2005 GURINGAI FESTIVAL

This year's *Guringai Festival* has the theme of **People and Place**. A celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage across Northern Sydney, the festival runs from May 26, on the eve of Reconciliation week (May 27 to June 3) until July 10 at the close of NAIDOC Week.

The ASG will be commemorating the **Journey of Healing** on Thursday 26 at a venue on the Northern Beaches yet to be decided.

Black Chicks TALKING

For those who were at the *Black Chicks Talking* night on Monday 1st November 2004 I am sure you will agree with me that we are all thankful to our local 'black chicks' for opening their hearts and talking frankly about their lives to a room full of people. For me, I know that sharing my life experiences is difficult at the best of times but to listen to the hardships of our panel – Aunty Nancy Wood, Nikki McCarthy, Kai Graham and Marissa Barker – proved to me how proud and brave they must be to make us all aware of both the restrictions and the freedom they feel as Aboriginal women.

Though these women come from different nations such as Bundjalung, Gamilaroi and Wiradjuri, the age bracket being as vast as the geography, Nikki felt that their lives are 'diverse, but connected with culture': a bond that I can only imagine.

The award-winning documentary *Black Chicks Talking* directed by Leah Purcell was shown and issues that were brought up on the video were discussed with our panel. Aunty Nancy felt that it was an effort for her but she 'got strong, got a voice and was proud' of who she was.

She knows where she comes from and her advice to the younger Aboriginal people was to 'believe in the spirit from your homeland, and speak up for what you believe in. Aboriginal people are more genuine and open to helping others. White people are too concerned with money troubles.' To Aunty Nancy, it's not about money, it's about freedom.

Kai said that '*the video confronts issues you do not want to face but opens your eyes and makes you proud*'. Nikki went on to say that the issue of people asking what part Aboriginal you are '*touched a nerve with us all. It challenges our authenticity. We struggle to maintain our culture, even through government denial, and family protection; hiding the truth from their kin due to their battle with racism and identity issues with the Stolen Generations. Sometimes I feel so drained because Aboriginal justice and issues seem to be going nowhere, then I thank God for people like you coming to this night. Education is important from birth for cultural diversity to improve racism.*'

Marissa has just completed her HSC. She said that she only faced questions of her Aboriginality when she moved to Sydney to live at Biala Aboriginal Girls' Hostel, Allambie Heights, to finish her schooling. Growing up with her family, including

grandparents June and Roy Barker, and going to school in Lightning Ridge, she said that she lived in '*a tight knit community*' with her culture being accepted and celebrated in school, not hidden as in the video. After Marissa started school in Sydney, her peers required verbal confirmation from her long time friend Eliza whether Marissa was really Aboriginal. This was insulting to her. Kai's upbringing was different as she felt she was not accepted by the white or black community because of her skin colour. However, she finds Aboriginal culture a gift because she is privy to information and the past of her ancestors. She finds there is a great resistance regarding education, as history lessons at her school only touched briefly on Australian history pre-settlement. '*It makes it hard for Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids to learn. Elders have to go through the struggles to teach kids and improve their lives. Thank you to Aunty Nancy for everything she had to go through to make the younger generations proud and culturally educated*'.

During question and answer time Nikki was asked the question '*What do you like about being a black chick?*' Summing up the feel of the evening, Nikki simply replied '*Being a black chick rocks!*'

Cassie Davis



CROC FESTIVAL™

What a wonderful year it has been for us to witness young talent across NSW. Shortly after the *Bingin Dreaming Expo* (featured in a previous *Elimatta*) and the Warringah Council Art Exhibition, we were asked to conduct a 2 day workshop as part of the *Croc Festival*, a type of Rock Eisteddfod Challenge and life skill festival for country kids.

This happened in September. *Indigenous Festivals of Australia* conducted these massive festivals around Australia, with us joining up with them for the Moree Festival. Year 1 to 12 students camped out at the local school, practising their performances for the evening concerts, then looked forward to the long day of various activities on their timetables. Educational stalls for science, communication skills and for possible future career paths (including reiki and various sports) were offered. Our stall focused on Aboriginal art on tiles. Non-Indigenous children were a little apprehensive about painting Aboriginal designs but, as we went through Dreamtime stories, they created their own image of their favourite story, creating a 'modern Aboriginal type' design. Though our time was short, the students and teachers alike enjoyed their task thoroughly and had a memento to take home with them. One teacher assured us hers was going onto her kitchen wall!

The older students were given an insight into Kai's life and how art had helped her to get away from the negative influences that once consumed her. After the group's teary therapy session had finished they produced some wonderful artworks, many at first believing that they could not be artistic. Being eyewitnesses for such youthful optimism and effort was the most rewarding experience for us and we continue to be amazed by how much art workshops can bring people the confidence and self-respect we hope for them. Indeed, all the activity co-ordinators were magnificent and gave the pupils a great friendly environment in which to learn. We are enriched and feel privileged to have been included in such a wonderful event and hope their success continues to grow for the benefit of all involved.

Kai Graham and Cassie Davis



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Nikki McCarthy spoke about her involvement with the ASG, and what that has meant to her as an artist and as an Aboriginal woman in the local community. Nikki said her mob have been 'fighting the fight' for so long that they're plain worn out and that support from the community is so refreshing. Nancy Wood wrapped up the presentations by reading one of the poems from her book, *Nobody's Child*, which was launched in 1999 at the Group's 20th anniversary. As the crowd sang 'Happy Birthday', Jackie O'Hare and her two grandchildren blew out the candles on an enormous cake, which served as the centrepiece for a delicious and plentiful supper.

As I sat there listening to the words of these many women – all of them long-time activists – I thought about how much of their lives had been spent on the front lines of a conflict in Australia, 'fighting the fight' as Nikki had said. Although these women have been there in some form for

a long time, the conflict itself is older still, and is played out daily in a thousand different ways. Its essence is the struggle for respect and justice for the first people of this country, and the creation of society we can all feel proud to live in. All of us have different roles in that conflict, and different things to offer toward its resolution. As I listened to the presentations and looked over the crowd, I thought about the personal dedication and extraordinary trust shown by those around me. All of them – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – have committed a part of themselves to the resolution of that conflict, to the creation of 'right' relationships, and to the hard work and patience that entails.

I considered my own six years with the Group (a drop in the bucket really), which started with one of Dave Watts' sites classes, a reconciliation study circle, and a racism awareness workshop – opportunities available in my community thanks to the ASG. How much I have

learned since then – not only about the true history of this country, but about the fraught nature of Australian race politics and social change. I realise that my own small journey is part of what the ASG has been about for years, and will continue to be about.

I had come to the day with mixed feelings about what it meant to 'celebrate' 25 years of working for social change that sometimes seems as far away as ever. These feelings were moderated by the realisation that what was being celebrated was not some ethereal idea of 'progress' (or lack thereof), nor the efforts of one part of the community 'on behalf' of the other, but the relationships built between people of all backgrounds through working together toward a common vision of their – of our – community. Such partnerships and dedication should absolutely be celebrated.

Megan van Frank



BLACK ART

WHITE BUSINESS

Aboriginal art for the white world was once the preserve of an educated few. It now reaches out and engages us all, but there are few guidelines from Aboriginal Australia to help white society understand its completely different culture. Appreciation of Aboriginal art can be a slow learning curve. Some artists' names, even when accompanied by Possum, Rusty, Rover, Aeroplane, can be difficult to understand and the identity and interpretation of styles, dates, and regions can be a bewildering exercise. As we reach out and grapple with such issues, we tend to respond to the aesthetics without a full realization of the purpose.

The Market

From the time Aboriginal art emerged from the museum shelves and the writings of academics, white influence has guided black art in a steady stream from the production line to the market. This involves a chain of enterprise from the community or individual maker to the dealers, and from the point of sale to exhibition by private collectors or public institutions. Although there are some black/white partnerships, there is little black presence evident in the dealing, nor in the informed viewpoint or critique needed to guide us through the subtleties of the large volume and diversity of Aboriginal art today. It is a system of great complexity, and some would argue, inequity.

The art market, like the housing boom, has forced prices out of reach of all but the seriously wealthy, who buy art on the advice of consultants for investment or prestige. The strong market created by the system favours an elite few, predominantly white, artists, making some of them millionaires.

In contrast, Aboriginal artists and their families, with few exceptions, have rarely profited by their success. Even important ones like Rover Thomas, represented in the Holmes 'a Court collection and internationally in the Venice Biennale, have received little attention from high profile media, or received serious analysis and criticism.

In July 2004, an outstanding Rover Thomas painting was offered for sale by Sotheby's auction house in Sydney. What made it newsworthy was that Sotheby's was confident that they would be the one to sell the first Aboriginal work to break the one million dollar benchmark. Was Sotheby's explanation of their failure – that not enough gallery money is devoted to Aboriginal works – the right one, or had they made the barrier too high?

Albert Namatjira's popular success with his light filled water colour landscapes illustrates the black/white double standard. Although his skill was undeniable, not everybody approved of his painting in the European manner. It not only crossed cultural divides, but demonstrated an understanding and mastery of technical subtleties Aboriginal people were not supposed to possess. The verdict was a condescending acknowledgement of his talent, and the dubious fame of being the first Aboriginal artist to do it 'whitefella' way. Today Namatjira's work still sells well at auction, but it is the sellers and dealers who profit. His family does not own the copyright to his work.

Emily Kame Kngwarreye paintings offer a unique Aboriginal perspective. In her colourful dream weaving abstractions she interpreted country in a way the market understood and paid for. In her late eighties with failing eyesight, her designs and brushings looser and wider, she kept up the production the market was demanding. It was sad to see the dignified old lady, not in comfortable surroundings, but kneeling to paint on dusty ground. The assumption that Aboriginal art is more 'spiritually motivated' than western art can be misleading. The artist may be 'unworldly' in the monetary sense in that they do not necessarily practice their art for profit. This does not mean that they are disinterested in being paid for their work when it is sold.

Acknowledgement and Ownership

When the Dja Dja Warrung people of Victoria slapped an emergency declaration order on artwork on loan to Museum Victoria from the British Museum and Kew Gardens, it was widely reported in the media. At issue was the question of ownership of several bark etchings sent to Britain in the 19th century by a relative of Governor John Hunter. These images were some of the earliest surviving examples of this type of Aboriginal art. Gary Murray of the Dja Dja Warrung people said, "We believe that these artefacts connect us to our country, our culture and ancestry. If you haven't got a past then you haven't got a future ... They belong to Australia ... We are concerned that the British don't seem to have changed their attitude in the 200 years since they colonized us ... If we had their crown jewels they would be knocking our doors down." Murray was not asking for the return of the artefacts, only an acknowledgement that they belonged to his people. The two British institutions issued a joint statement in response saying they were "committed to exercising stewardship of the collections for the benefit of a world-wide public, and for future generations." This was the same explanation given to the Greek Government when it requested return of the Elgin Marbles. Legitimate preservation of irreplaceable artifacts or cultural hijacking? This incident highlights a basic conflict of values between many public institutions and Indigenous peoples over the ownership of material culture. While many Australian institutions have admirable records of repatriating cultural heritage taken during colonization and encouraging Indigenous access to collections, many overseas institutions lag in this area. Britain in particular has laws preventing repatriation, laws which continue to be challenged by Indigenous people worldwide.

National Blind Spot

Australia still lags however in giving proper acclaim to its Indigenous artists. For example, in August 2004, the announcement of the *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* with a photograph of the winner but not the winning entry. The winner of this annual \$40,000 award was a distinguished artist, educator, and health worker, Gulumbu Yunupingu, from east Arnhem Land.

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Her winning entry *Garak* was selected from 103 finalists, and depicted a story about two constellations told by her father when Gulumbu was a child. The painting represents the seasonal calendar of the Yolgnu people and in Gulumbu's version linked all people on earth with the stars in the sky. The work comprises three graceful memorial poles studded with a myriad of tiny painted stars.

The high standard of entries and diverse range of media proves that Aboriginal art is alive, thriving and needs no special pleading. All the more reason that *Garak* should have received as much attention in the dailies as the concurrent Art Gallery of New South Wales event, the 2004 Dobell Drawing Award, which featured highly that same weekend in all the media.

The omission exposes one of our blind spots. The *Telstra*, now in its 21st year, is a huge enterprise and the centrepiece of the Garma Festival, the Top End's major tourist attraction when Darwin really turns it on. The local Larrakia people host a spectacle of colour and creativity for visitors from all over the world. For the rest of Australia it might be a foreign country. The *Telstra* should by rights rank with the major exhibitions of European works that come with great fanfare from overseas museums.

For Australia's Fashion Week, instead of importing expensive materials for interior and dress design, imagine making use of the vibrant Tiwi-designed fabrics and showcasing the ceramics, weavings, painting and music of Indigenous creativity. What an opportunity this represents for Australia to raise our tourist profile and improve our national image.

The Future

Interest in Aboriginal art is welcomed, but if it is to last, there must be a better understanding of its values, and should be conducted with a different attitude to the historical white patronage and the social inequalities that have characterized that interest. If attention to Aboriginal art fails to translate into an acknowledgement of the larger problems facing Aboriginal people, it is not much more than hypocrisy.

Aboriginal artists should have a voice in their art processes. Courses are needed for Aboriginal students to study and gain experience in marketing, curatorial and management skills, as well as in the practical and creative processes. More importantly, we must learn from them how to communicate with Aboriginal art rather than read through the lines of the academic journal art speak. Finally, it is essential that we learn to understand the place of Aboriginal art within our national heritage, valuing rare works as Australian national treasures.

Ria Murch

GREETINGS FROM WIRADJURI COUNTRY

Recently I walked through a stunning exhibition with the artist who had organised it in celebration of *International Day of People with a Disability* December 3, 2004. Aboriginal artist Nyree Reynolds had worked with Koori and white students from The Lodge in Millthorpe, NSW, and younger students from Cowra. None had had art classes before.

The opening of the exhibition on Friday November 26 at the Millthorpe School of Arts was a great success with all the paintings framed, a credit to the students and teacher. For people who have so little recognition in their lives it was a wonderful, positive experience and a night to remember. Nyree loves working with people with disability and hopes to continue her workshops in 2005.

Recently the Australian Spiritualist Association asked Nyree to design a cover for its national magazine. Her work is included in an exhibition for the Department of State and Regional Development. She has been invited by the

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to be an Ambassador for Seniors Week 2005.

Always interested in art, Nyree went to art school in 1964-65 but with family commitments it was not until 1997 that she started to really paint again. She paints contemporary political work of people, always including the spiritual aspect and also portraits of pets and animals.

Growing up ignorant of her Aboriginality it was only late in her life that she found her Gamillaroi connections.

Her work at Bathurst and Orange TAFE Colleges has resulted in a huge wall mural created by students in the Koori Work Skills Course. A very successful Koori art exhibition at Orange TAFE resulted in eight paintings being sold, a great tribute to teacher and students.

In her home town of Blayney Nyree has been instrumental in having the Aboriginal flag flown for the NAIDOC Week celebrations after a very hard and long

battle of negotiations. She feels cultural training is needed for the councillors to accept *Acknowledgment of Country* at the opening of their meetings.

When asked what her plans for the future were Nyree Reynolds said with a laugh 'I would like to link my disability students with disability students in other countries. I can just see the Millthorpe people doing Chinese paintings and expanding their lives'.

Nyree signs her paintings Nygari.

June Mason

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



The Aboriginal Support Group acknowledges with thanks a grant it has recently received from Manly Council towards the promotion, invitations and programs for this year's **Journey of Healing** and the **2005 Calendar of Events**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor,

While I was holidaying with a friend I found this apology to Native American Indians and would like you to print it in *Elimatta* as I feel this is what should be said to our Indigenous Australians too.

Amends to the Native Americans

To the nations of the Native American Indians as a citizen of the United States I say please forgive me and please forgive us.

On behalf of my ancestors and the group conscience of all America I deeply apologize for the wrongs, so cruel, that have been inflicted upon your people.

So many lives lost yet still they haven't the psyche of all people of goodwill.

We ask that the Spirit of God give us absolution.

We as a Nation have wronged. Now we as a Nation make amends. How sorry we are for the suffering of your people. If we could rewrite history we would, we cannot, but God can.

May history begin again? May the spirit of your people now be reborn, for we can embrace and honor the spirit of the Native American Tribes; we bless and commit to the good of your children and your children's children.

May we begin anew.

May your star rise high in the sky of this nation and all others.

May the wrongs of the past now be made right that your nation might be blessed, that our nation may be blessed, so be it.

Please God make these things right in love, in healing, in mercy, in grace, Amen.

Illuminator: p216-217: Author Marianne Williamson,
Random House New York 1994

Dorothy Raskall, Narrabeen

Dear Editor,

Tsunami Disaster

My family and I send our prayers, love and compassion to the people in all the countries that have suffered one of the world's largest natural disasters.

War in Iraq

It amazes me that the Australian Government has spent millions of dollars contributing to war on Iraq and Iran. This money could have helped our own country.

We want to help the tsunami victims but where did we get the money to send when we are told by the Government they can't help the health crisis here due to lack of funds and staff for the hospitals.

The media is constantly informing us that we are suffering a health care crisis. In NSW and in other states people are being turned away from being admitted to hospitals.

Yet the Australian Government instantly sent expert medical teams from the Armed Forces to the tsunami areas when they were needed. But before the disaster we could have used these

medical teams many times for our own needs here at home. What I do want to say to all the new Australians especially those people who do not know about our Aboriginal history and have never studied Indigenous culture is – why don't Australian politicians who know the history of Indigenous Australians help our own Indigenous people who are still suffering here.

They would rather spend millions on a war overseas than correct the shameful tragedies that have been inflicted on our Indigenous people.

To any reader who doesn't know our history this is a brief account of some of the unpunished atrocities committed against our Indigenous people. We have been put into slavery. Our land taken from us and never been paid any money for this. We have had our children taken from us. Our heads have been cut off and sold for a dollar and then sent for studies to England. We have had jobs and our wages taken from us. We have had our families torn apart. We have worn dog tags to identify us as Aboriginal. We have been called half-caste but you never hear a half-Irish half-English person called that. Our rights to practice our culture taken from us. Our language taken. Our mothers and fathers taken. Blankets covered in smallpox were given to us as gifts to kill us (this is as cruel as any natural disaster). Our women and children raped. Our deaths in custody. Our women's breasts cut off and used as purses. Our men's ears cut off and nailed to walls. We have been hunted and shot for sport. Our babies buried in the sand and our heads kicked off for sport. Yes this is in Australia. Can you imagine any person doing this and getting away with these crimes?

There is so much more that has been done to us for me to write in this short letter but please do your research and you will have compassion and empathy for us.

Next time an Aboriginal person looks at you with hostile eyes or if you see them drunk (because they want to escape reality) think about what pain they have had to deal with, the pain they still have and are going through. We want to hear the words sorry for the pain and injustice that never goes away. We want our dignity back, our human rights back and compensation for the evil that we have had to endure.

I know the current population of Australia did not take part in these acts of war against Indigenous Australians and I do not put blame on them but there is a horrible past and the Government has to be accountable.

There are only about 400,000 Aboriginal people left in Australia. If the Government gave us one million dollars each for the past 200 years it would be a small compensation for what we have endured. It probably amounts to just a dollar a day compensation. The Australian Government is spending millions waging war against Iraq. Isn't doing the right thing to our Indigenous people better than doing wrong? Isn't peace better than war and much cheaper? Imagine.

*Nikki Mc Carthy, Dabee Tribe – Wiradjuri Nation
Narrabeen Beach NSW*

MONA VALE SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

Since starting our Social Justice Group at Sacred Heart Church, Mona Vale, we have endeavoured to establish contact with the Aboriginal Support Group at Narrabeen. In July 2003 Enid McIlraith was invited along with two other speakers, to outline the work of the Support Group. Again in 2004 Enid attended our Parish Display and was available to talk about the work of the Group. Brian Croghan, one of the founding members of our Social Justice Group, has become a participating member of the Aboriginal Support Group.

"Social justice and human rights are at the heart of the mission of the Catholic Church. For many years Pope John Paul II and his predecessors have stressed the importance of supporting the cause of the poor and disadvantaged and seeking justice for those without a voice."

This quote is taken from "Seeking Social Justice" pamphlet of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and sums up the role and purpose of a social justice group at the parish level. We are a group of individuals endeavouring to educate ourselves and our fellow parishioners in the social justice issues confronting the poor within our immediate community and world wide and then trying to find ways in which we can work to bring about effective change in society.

Our group started in November 2002 with a membership of one and has since expanded to a membership of 22 ranging in age from 17 years to 80+. Largely due to changes in the parish it took some time to get the group 'off the ground', Several of the members of the Social Justice Group have a particular interest in

Aboriginal issues. In the early 70's, I was privileged to be able to teach Aboriginal children on Palm Island, Queensland, for one year. This experience had a most profound effect on my young life. It not only helped formulate my sense of social justice but also gave me a great respect for the attachment of the Aboriginal race to their ancient culture and the consequent responsibility that this understanding bestows upon us.

The Sacred Heart Social Justice Group is very interested in the work of the Aboriginal Support Group and hopes there will be more opportunities for interaction in the future.

Gwenda Gilligan
Co-ordinator

NSW RECONCILIATION COUNCIL AGM and ANNUAL CONFERENCE October 29 - 30, 2004

The Annual Conference was opened by Aunty Ali Golding who did the Welcome to Country and spoke to the gathering. Lois Birk and I attended as representatives of the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater.

Priorities, directions and the theme for Reconciliation Week were discussed. Some of the suggestions were a film festival, getting people elected to local councils, language programs, Aboriginal Studies in schools and the introduction of Reconciliation Awards as part of the Australia Day Celebrations.

Linda Burney spoke on her role as Ambassador for Reconciliation for NSW. She said there is a need for everyone to keep working very closely with other people of like-mind, to keep networking nationally. In respect of the problems of local Reconciliation Groups her advice was not to get despondent but to keep going. Directions re protocols should be coming from the Aboriginal community but this is a two-way process. Workshops on cultural awareness may be needed within the

community – and more get-togethers.

There were several workshops to choose from at the conference. I attended one on the memorial project by the Darug people re the 1795 Battle of Richmond Hill on the Hawkesbury River.

I also attended the Aboriginal Employment Strategy workshop conducted by Cathy Duncan and her husband Percy, both very vibrant and committed people. The AES program started in Moree and now operates in Tamworth and Dubbo with plans to continue expanding hopefully to Sydney. This program finds jobs for Aboriginal people without the assistance of government agencies and in areas where Indigenous people are not usually employed. The corporate world is being very supportive. David Jones and Myers have offered employment. One aim is to break down the stereotype that Aboriginal people cannot or do not want to work.

These two days were very worthwhile, interesting and friendly.

Carol Ritchie

FREEDOM RIDE 2005

In February 1965, Charles Perkins and a busload of thirty students from Sydney University set off on the original *Freedom Ride* through New South Wales bringing to public attention discriminatory segregation policies, including those that excluded Aboriginal people from public places such as swimming pools.

Freedom Ride 2005 will mark the 40th anniversary with a busload of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth retracing the journey and exploring just how far Australia has come towards reconciliation.

ReconciliACTION, the youth arm of the New South Wales Reconciliation Council are the organisers of this event. There has been strong community response to the project and events have been organised in Wellington, Dubbo, Moree, Armidale, Lismore Casino, Kyogle, Kempsey and more.

Departure is from Sydney University 12th February and return to Redfern 26th February. Public are welcome to a press conference and screening of highlights at Redfern on the 26th.

At the ASG Information Night on Monday April 4th we hope to have a member of the *Freedom Ride 2005* to speak and show highlights from the video. For more information contact Samia 0408 225 035

<http://freedomride.reconciliaction.org.au>

SUE OSBORN MEMORIAL PRIZE

The annual awards ceremony of the Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group was held at Stony Range, Dee Why, as part of an Aboriginal Community Gathering on December 11, 2004.

It was a great day – barbecue, children’s activities, bushwalks – enjoyed by the many people present. An inspiring address was given by local Aboriginal barrister Lincoln Crowley who spoke of the many challenges in his early schooling. He overcame the barriers and his message was one of encouragement to the young people present not to give up.

David Harrison, on behalf of the Aboriginal Support Group, presented the Sue Osborn Memorial Prize to two young students – Michael Birk and James Moylan. These prizes are given in memory of the late Sue Osborn, who was a dedicated and valued member of the ASG.



A new walkway built by the National Parks and Wildlife Service has saved an ancient Aboriginal midden at Sydney’s Reef Beach from destruction.

Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council Cultural Education Officer, Allen Madden, said the midden was being damaged by visitors using a track that ran through it. “People were trampling over the midden every day. There’s no way it could have continued to take this kind of pressure,” Mr Madden said. “This is a National Park and an important cultural site for our people. The National Parks and Wildlife Services consulted Aboriginal people during every stage and have the support of our community on this issue. Sydney’s Aboriginal heritage is disappearing at an alarming rate. National Parks should be congratulated for taking action to stop this occurring.”

Gary Highland, Media Officer

TRANBY FESTIVAL



-WRITING, THE ART, THE POLITICS

Tranby Aboriginal College held a Festival in September 2004 to celebrate the past, present and future.

The Festival, a bold initiative by the new Executive Director, Paul Knight, was

- To re-engage the local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities within Tranby
- To welcome all to see and in some way experience the life of a Tranby student
- To promote the College and its pivotal role in human rights and the empowerment of Indigenous people
- As a fundraiser to ensure this great Indigenous institution remains viable and independent

The festival began on Education Week with the top New South Wales Higher School Certificate Aboriginal Studies students’ work on display. Marissa Barker from Biala Hostel was represented with her finely crafted handmade book on one of her grandmother’s stories. Well done Marissa.

A literary weekend followed with renowned Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers giving individual talks. I found these talks intimate, poignant, inspiring and confronting.

A cocktail party the following weekend opened the Art Exhibition with a bang. Many well known Indigenous artists displayed their work including Bronwyn Bancroft, Adam Hill, Elaine Russell, Gordon Syron, Keith Stewart, Roy Kennedy to name a few ... with rave reviews!

As well as the HSC work, the literary weekend and Art Exhibition, Indigenous short films were show-cased and the Redfern kids came for a slap-up breakfast. In all, a hectic three weeks festival at Tranby. Look out for a deadly festival in 2005!

Denise Barry

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 Monday March 7 and April 4 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.

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INDIGENOUS NEWS SUMMARY

September to December 2004

This valuable resource prepared by Dr. Ruth A. Fink Latukefu for the Support Group provides an opportunity to keep up to date with Indigenous news. As the ASG subscribes to Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times, news and opinions which have been overlooked by mainstream media are covered.

Visit www.asgmwp.net

ADVANCE NOTICE

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 organize this.

Please contact Anna Bell 99137940 if you would like to take this project on.