

NANCY HILL WOOD

The Chair of the 2005 NSW Sorry Day Committee is Nancy Hill Wood. Nancy has lived on the Northern Beaches for 38 years and is a respected Elder in the community. Her voice is strong in the ongoing campaign for a fair and appropriate resolution to the issue of the *Stolen Wages*.

Nancy is a long standing and valued member of the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater. In 1999 the Support Group published a book of her poetry *Nobody's Child*.

Nancy was born in Kyogle, northern NSW, and when only a few weeks old was placed in the Bomaderry Children's Home, 1000km away from her family's community. At twelve years of age she was sent to the Cootamundra Girls' Home. Here she scrubbed floors, cleaned windows and when she turned fifteen was sent to work for a succession of local families as part of her 'training'.

Three years later Nancy was put on a train for Sydney with just a small suitcase of personal belongings. In 1967 Nancy married Tony Wood and they raised four adopted Aboriginal children. They now have eight grandchildren.

During Reconciliation Week Nancy was featured in The Manly Daily and also on the ABC TV program *Message Sticks* for NAIDOC Week. This program was titled *Best of Friends* - Nancy and Tony were interviewed about their family life and experiences together in what is termed 'a mixed marriage'.

A photograph of Nancy and her two grandchildren Nathan and Mackaylla recently appeared in the Education Feature

of The Manly Daily. Nathan and Mackaylla are students at Terrey Hills Public School where they had participated in an Aboriginal art project.

In Conversation with Nancy Hill Wood, Chair of NSW Sorry Day Committee

In the weeks following this year's *Sorry Day - National Day of Healing* (May 26) I spoke with Nancy about the NSW Sorry Day events held at First Fleet Park and the Museum of Contemporary Art. We talked about the highlight of the Day and she expressed a concern.

"*Sorry Day* was a wonderful event and it is very important for the Stolen Generations to tell their stories" Nancy said. "The highlight of the Day was me being the Chairperson and having a voice and speaking to and for our people. I am becoming strong and proud. Once Kooris begin to talk they are free and can say things that are important to them. You have to say it as it is.

My concern is that the name has been changed from *Sorry Day / Journey of Healing* to *National Day of Healing*. I was really hurt by that name change. How dare they (National Sorry Day Committee) change it, after what we've suffered. The (National) Committee were sweeping our pain and suffering under the carpet. The name should always remain *Sorry Day*. That's the way we all recognise who we are and that's important for our healing!"

Leigh Bowden



Photograph of Nancy taken recently in Cairns where she met some of her family.

Future Sorry Days

A special meeting, organised by the NSW Sorry Day Committee and Stolen Generations Link-Up (NSW), was held in July to discuss the decision for the change of name from *Sorry Day* to *National Day of Healing*.

The Board of Directors of Stolen Generations Link-Up (NSW) maintains that "the name of *Sorry Day* remains the same until such time as the Federal Government of Australia makes an apology to the Aboriginal people of Australia ... We continually grapple with prejudice and the dismissive comment that now, as the Stolen Generations are acknowledged, it is the end of the matter and to move on."

The Support Group has held an event on May 26 since 1999 when the *Journey of Healing*, also known as *Sorry Day*, was commemorated.

On May 26 2006 we plan to support the special events organised in the City by the NSW Sorry Day Committee. We will be holding our own event on the Northern Beaches on another day.

Tribute for Father Ted Kennedy

There are people who mysteriously come into our lives and awaken seeds of possibilities that are life changing. Ted Kennedy was one of those unique people.

Thirty-three years ago Ted opened the presbytery door to Aunty Helen and so began his extraordinary journey at Redfern and for many of us our journey was entwined with his. His early days, with that rag tag group of lay and religious people who threw their lot in with him and the poor, were tumultuous and life changing.

Ted lived his beliefs through a lens that was crystal clear and authentic to the true values of the gospels. He lived his life committed to justice for the poor, the marginalised and those who are rejected by society and the church. A special place in his heart was with the Aboriginal people of Redfern and beyond. They recognised him as a true friend as did the mentally ill, the refugee, homosexual people and those who are seen as 'other' in our world.

He taught us the deadly secret that you have to go to that dark and alienating place to find the rejected and the outcast and there in that brokenness you will find Jesus. The Beatitudes reflect so much of Ted's life in action. He was the Good Shepherd who tenderly cared for his flock while courageously defending their rights.

Ted was loved so much by the littlest of our brothers and sisters and this is a testament to the integrity and beauty of this holy man.

He never wanted to be the power broker but rather listened to the voice of those who suffered racism, prejudice and suffering. These people became his teachers. He understood that gospel passage 'you will always have the poor among you' because he knew we had broken our covenant with God. Ted was upright, a living treasure, hard, earthy, compassionate, welcoming sinners, a pebble in the comfortable boot of establishment, a man who spilt his guts for others. He selflessly devoted his life to the liberation of the human spirit.

He urged all that came into his life not to live vicariously through him but to seek and find through relationship with the poor the authentic truth. It was through his relationship with Aboriginal people whom he acknowledged that shaped his theology of liberation. He urged us to go to 'that place' in our lives and take with us this struggle.

Ted had the extraordinary gift of embracing us all as part of his family. He had the gift to celebrate our joys and happiness. He connected us to each other forging friendships with him and about him. Ted sought and found the good in us all and lived with our faults and imperfections because that is what Ted did the best. He loved us in our brokenness while accepting with humility his own limitations. And how he loved, with passion and loyalty. We have all been touched by his presence in our lives.

Ted was gracious and hospitable. He loved good wine, fine food (no greens please). He had a voracious appetite for literature and poetry. He had a wicked sense of humour. He had one of the finest intellects in our contemporary world yet he was so humble. He had an extraordinary gentleness that many of us have been privy to and on the receiving end of.

Ted felt deep pain and sadness at what has happened to the Aboriginal people of his beloved St Vincent's since his retirement. At times he displayed a white-hot anger at the behaviour of the priests towards the Aboriginal people and this community. It was anger steeped in his uncompromising stance against racism and injustice.

Ted loved us. And how he loved. His life and his example have sown a seed in us to continue his legacy. For Ted was splendid and holy in his fierceness of his love of Aboriginal people, and splendid and holy in conscience and in the imaginative possibilities of what it means to be fully human. His inspiring example is something we can carry in our hearts in the struggle

for justice for Aboriginal people. We are comforted in knowing he is with us as we carry his love and his dream in our hearts. We celebrate his life and grieve deeply our loss.

I know that when Ted arrived in eternity he was met by his beloved black angels Patti, Dicko, Mum Shirly, Normie, and hundreds of Aboriginal people who now have their beloved Father Ted with them. I am in no doubt that a celebration took place with the chant and dance of the corroboree resounded when singing him home.

We have lost a great man and I lost a soulmate.

Rhonda Ansiewicz

The Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater was founded in 1979 and is committed to supporting Indigenous people in their struggle for justice. The first newsletter was produced in March 1982. The 1987 Winter edition was named Elimatta for the first time.



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.



Remembering Sir Ronald Wilson

Lizzie Landers telephoned to let me know of the death of Sir Ron Wilson on Friday July 15 in Perth. I was shocked, deeply saddened.

Much has been written about Ron over the past days. Many people have mourned his death, especially Leila his wife, and their deeply loved family. His life has been in review in most of the nation's media.

Harvey's and my friendship with him goes back a long way – for Harvey, to student days. Seldom have we been in the same place together for any length of time but the relationship remained strong and each meeting was a merging of family and 'world' news. We had so many shared concerns and values.

We followed his career in the law with interest and applauded when he was appointed a High Court Judge; President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and co-Chair of the national inquiry into the *Stolen Generations*. This phenomenal inquiry culminated in that

invaluable report *Bringing them Home*.

A member of the Uniting Church, Ron made an important contribution to the ecumenical movement nationally and internationally. His involvement in international conferences was greatly appreciated and he represented his church and country with quiet dignity. Ron was President of the Uniting Church in Australia from 1988-1991, bringing to that appointment warmth and dignity and a deep passion for social justice.

Two particular memories of Ron I hold dear. Years ago when Harvey and I were working in Asia, we three met at a huge inter-Asian conference in Thailand. With time off, Harvey and I took a bus into Bangkok to the Sunday Market. There, we found Ron searching out the stalls for family gifts. The three of us then did the rounds together. As day darkened and the tiny stall lights were lit and the braziers lighted, we sat on rickety stools enjoying hot roasted corn, chatting and laughing

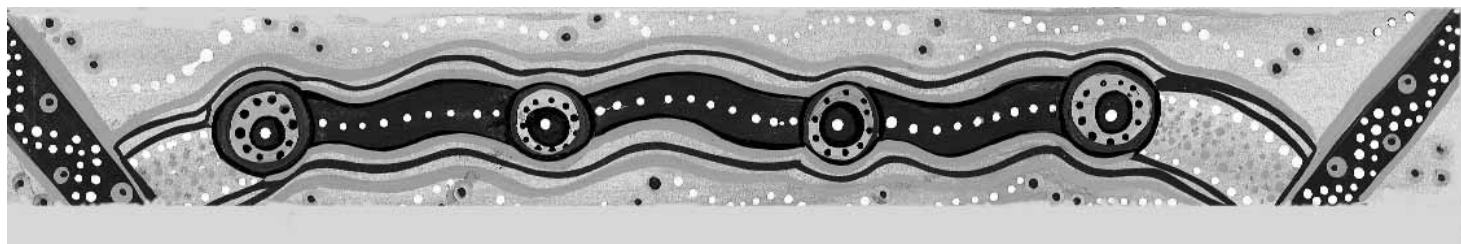
with the Thais around us.

The other memory is of Redfern at the beginning of the NSW Hearings for the Stolen Generations. I was responsible for organising a dawn vigil with Support Group and Acton for World Development members outside the building where the Hearings were to take place. It was a very cold, damp morning. The dawn took a long time to come; our small, candle-lit group attracted attention. Beyond the dawn, Ron joined the circle, apologising for coming late, telling me the plane was late in landing at Sydney and he did not get to bed until the early hours. He remained with us until it was time for him to take his place inside with the other Commissioners.

Ron had followed the life of the Support Group with real interest. He was always very encouraging, gracious with praise, willing to 'do what you think I can' when we sometimes had a special request.

Jill Perkins

Artwork courtesy of Culcha Disc Australian Indigenous Images Vol 1



LONGEST PAINTING IN THE WORLD

Narrabeen Aboriginal artist Nikki McCarthy worked with the students at Terrey Hills Public School to create a five metre painting depicting the spirit of the school. The painting has been sent to Bourke where the Aboriginal Women's Sewing Circle will sew the paintings from city and country schools together to make an Aboriginal version of the 'longest painting in the world.'

It will then be displayed in the *Yaamma* Aboriginal Festival in Bourke this October.

The principal of Terrey Hills Public School, Elizabeth Bennett, said that the project had been an enjoyable way for young students to learn more about Aboriginal culture and for city schools to support country schools at the same time.

A Plan for Social Action

On Tuesday April 19th, in the amphitheatre beside North Sydney Council Chambers, Indigenous people from across Northern Sydney, representatives of 11 local government councils, officers from numerous State government departments and members of local reconciliation groups were welcomed to Cammeragal country. We were there as key stakeholders to contribute to the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan for 2005-8.

But why were we there? Didn't we listen when a well-known NSW Government Minister told us all recently that strategic planning is a waste of time! In one sense I think he's right. Well almost. Planning is the easy part of the task. It is, however, a waste of time if it isn't put into practice. And there is the challenge for us all. Putting a plan into practice usually requires much more time and effort than drawing up the plan ever does.

As a beginning to the planning exercise the 'Stakeholders Forum' was a huge success. Thanks must go to the Project Officer Susan Moylan-Coombs and the facilitator Mary Senj for an extremely well run day and to the staff at North Sydney Council for their presentation of the venue

and the morning tea and lunch.

Workshop groups discussed and reported on four key issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the North Sydney region: Isolation; Culture; Service Knowledge and Service Gaps.

One of the most commonly mentioned needs was for an Aboriginal cultural centre or meeting place. A place where Aboriginal people can feel welcome, can strengthen their cultural ties and where they can access services.

This was easy for us to say at a stakeholders forum but it will take time to achieve. Such a centre would need a central location with good public transport. It would need full time Aboriginal staff. For example, where one agency may be unable to sustain the work of a full time Aboriginal worker, a group of agencies may be able to share the service provided by one or even more full time Aboriginal employees.

But that's not going to be easy. We have invested a lot in our separate endeavours and have become comfortable with our different ways.

A number of the workshop groups noted that we need to develop partnerships and to coordinate services provided by local, state, federal and non-government offices. That's a big ask!

The Federal Government also has plans for Aboriginal Australians. If as was suggested at the forum we are to derail those plans and to achieve what Aboriginal people need, rather than what the government wants, we will have to plan carefully. We will have to use the time we have to build cooperative structures and we will have to be committed for the long haul.

After this stakeholders forum I think we have the basis for an excellent social plan. Can we then turn it into social action? Judging by the thoughtfulness, enthusiasm and positive energy that was evident during the forum I believe we can.

Ted Nettle

Bennelong and Surrounds
Reconciliation Group

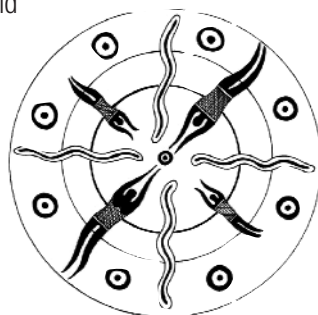


ABORIGINAL CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY STRATEGY PRESENTATION

On May 18 Hornsby Shire Council held a presentation on the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy. The aim of this strategy is to better support Aboriginal children and young people (0-18 years), their families and communities.

This will be achieved by Government and non-government services working together and with communities to plan and develop more responsive and coordinated services. This strategy focuses on:

- Better coordination and targeting of existing resources
- Ensuring key partners are engaged in the process



**Proud communities
Strong families**

- Testing new ways of working with Aboriginal people
- Ensuring that mainstream services are culturally appropriate and are meeting the needs of Aboriginal people.

The principles that underpin the strategy include:

- Key partners work in ways that recognise that Aboriginal people want to take responsibility for their own lives
- Aboriginal people are partners in planning, design and delivery of services
- Planning and service delivery for Aboriginal people aims to strengthen community capacity and economic and social capital as key elements in addressing disadvantage
- Responses are funded and supported in a manner that ensures optimum sustainability and capacity building.

Continued Page 12

CONNEXIONS IN TIME

- a photographic project that links young people in Brewarrina and Warringham

I was moved by a photographic project that I saw in the Year 2000 at the Australian Museum. It was called *Landmarks of a New Generation* and featured photos from 19 young Sydneysiders that explored what they saw as their personal 'landmarks'. The diverse subject included backyards, parks where first kisses were exchanged, religious rituals and much more. All had an accompanying text where the young person explained why the photo and subject was a 'landmark' in their life.

I wondered how to apply this model to a project in Warringham and thought of the established sister city relationships that Warringham Council had.

Warringham has two sister city relationships, Chichibu in Japan since 1995 and Brewarrina since 2000. These relationships are very active on many levels including annual cultural exchange visits from Chichibu school students and 6 monthly youth exchanges between Brewarrina and Warringham.

The *Connexions in Time* Project was developed to extend and explore our sister city relationships on a specifically cultural level by putting cameras in the hands of the younger residents of two areas (Warringham and Brewarrina), so they can visually express how they experience their lives. A Development Grant was applied for through the Federal Government's *Visions of Australia Scheme*. Full funding was received for this project which is outlined below.

The young people (12 to 20 years) are being asked to document a typical day (or week) in their life, in their respective sister 'city'. The resulting photos and exhibition (of friends, family, activities, landscapes, etc) will tell the young people's stories of how they see their life being 'played out' against the backdrop of their city/area.

The collected photos from the two areas could be seen as a celebration of the similarities and the differences of life from a young person's perspective in each 'city'.

The *Connexions in Time* Project will highlight the deeper cultural relationships that exist between our areas. Our young people are our future and by asking them to express their lives in this way means we can more easily share and celebrate our common aspirations.

The project will be in three parts – skills workshops with a professional photojournalist, an intense documentary phase and an exhibition of the combined photographs from both areas.

Several photographers were interviewed and Fiona Morris, a young photojournalist who had worked on the *Landmarks of a New Generation* project and worked with young people in Harlem, New York, was chosen to work with the young people in Warringham and Brewarrina.

A group of nine young people have been selected in Warringham and they commenced their series of photography workshops on Monday 23 May. They were also invited to be a part of the annual cultural exchange to Brewarrina in the first week of the school holidays in July.

A group of ten young people in Brewarrina, all from Aboriginal heritage, commenced their photography workshops on 5th June. These have taken place over several weekends in June and July. Yetta Dhinnakkal Correctional Centre just to the south of Brewarrina also has four young men who are interested in photography workshops and documenting their lives.

The culminating exhibition will open in Warringham Friday 30th September and in Brewarrina on Friday 14 October 2005.

This is an exciting project and I am thrilled that it has funding from the Federal Government and support from both Warringham Council and Brewarrina Shire Council. I believe the project presents the opportunity for young people from both areas to experience and examine each other's culture in an imaginative way. The resulting photographs may challenge our own perceptions of life in each area and I am hoping that any issues that may be raised will be discussed openly and hopefully addressed in some way.

Coralie Hicks

Events and Cultural Services Co-ordinator, Warringham Council.

Details of the *Connexions in Time* exhibitions in Brewarrina and Warringham are given on the enclosed Calendar of Events. If you would like to assist one morning or afternoon at the Warringham Exhibition please telephone Coralie on 9942 2603





Finding and Losing the Aboriginal Voice: A JOURNEY OF CULTURAL SURVIVAL

Reconciliation Service, Canberra City Uniting Church, 29 May 2005.

I want to take you on a time journey but be warned, it is on a roller coaster and we will be travelling fast with only short stops. Our purpose is to follow the cultural survival of Aboriginal Australians.

We begin in the Canberra region about twenty-one thousand years ago when the forefathers and mothers of the Ngunnawal people and the Ngarigo of the Monaro tablelands hunted bogong moths and other seasonal foods, sometimes meeting here in large numbers and at other times dispersing. They believed in an all-seeing father spirit, Daramulan, who lived in the sky and took care of the spirits of the dead. Ceremonial stone sites are still found in places where the moths gather and rock paintings remind us that at one time emus, plains turkeys and many animals were plentiful here.

We fast forward to the 1820s and European settlers have arrived, though there are still hundreds of Aborigines living here, moving around for seasonal hunting and gathering. A legal fiction now exists that all land in Australia is a 'terra nullius', meaning 'no one's land'. The Aborigines are believed to be too primitive to have any notion of rights of prior ownership so there is no need for treaties or compensation. Aborigines are moved off their land and many go to live and work on the white owned pastoral properties. Their numbers are declining through introduced diseases and everyone believes they are a dying race.

By 1895 Aboriginal numbers have indeed declined alarmingly. At the opening of the Tharwa Bridge, Nellie Hamilton, an elderly Aboriginal woman of the Ngunnawal people, speaks out:

"I no tink much of your law. You come here and take my land, kill my possum, my kangaroo; leave me starve. Only gib me rotten blanket. Me take calf or sheep, you

been shoot me, or put me in jail. You bring bad sickness 'mong us!" [i]

Now it is May 9, 1927, the opening of Parliament House. Most Aboriginal people have been sent away from Canberra but, when the crowd gathers to hear the Duke of Kent speak, there is an old Aboriginal man in a raggedy suit carrying a small Australian ensign. It is Jimmy Clements, 'a well known character of the district'. A policeman immediately asks him to leave, but Clements does not want to be moved on. The crowd rallies to his side and a well known clergyman calls out that the Aborigine has a better right than any man present to a place on the steps of Parliament. The old man is allowed to stay and receives a shower of small change amounting to about thirty shillings. [ii]

Ten years pass. The Federal Government is calling a conference of State and Federal officials to adopt assimilation as the official policy. Australians of mixed Aboriginal descent are to be absorbed into the white community, the detribalized are to be educated and the rest are to remain on reserves. No one asks Aboriginal people what they think about this because they are not considered capable of speaking for themselves. Various white people speak on their behalf, protectors, missionaries, police, welfare officers, anthropologists and other so-called experts. The assimilation policy can be imposed without consultation because there are separate state laws which apply only to Aborigines.

Then something unexpected happens. On January 26 1938, the sesqui-centenary of Captain Phillip's landing at Sydney Cove, in a hall in Elizabeth Street Sydney, a group calling themselves Australian Aborigines Conference has called for a *Day of Mourning and Protest* – they have invited Aborigines and persons of Aboriginal blood

only to attend. They are going to discuss the following resolution:

"We representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in conference on the 26th day of January 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the whitemen's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years...we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZENSHIP STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY." [iii]

In November of the same year, my parents and I are fortunate enough to be able to leave Nazi Germany and come as refugees to Australia. As Jews we have been declared stateless. We arrive in Sydney early in 1939. I am seven years old and speak no English, Australia is a foreign place. When War is declared in September, we refugees become "Enemy Aliens". From that time I learn what it is like to be an outsider. Most Australians did not tolerate cultural difference. In those days they were rather xenophobic. Gradually I become assimilated, lose my foreign accent, and only speak in English. At Sydney University I study anthropology and in 1954 I am sent for some research in Brewarrina NSW. This is where I first meet Aboriginal people.

Brewarrina Mission is controlled by the Aborigines Welfare Board, locally represented by a manager and matron.

They are the bosses and have considerable power. Matron can inspect the houses for cleanliness and the children are sent away in their early teens, girls to Cootamundra for training in domestic service and boys to Kinchela Home to be trained as rural labourers. Some parents have had younger children removed from their care and sent to Bomaderry Home.

Continued Page 7

Continued from Page 6

I find the people shy, ashamed of their culture, fearful of speaking out. As I get to know a few older men and women they are more willing to talk and help me to understand how they feel.

One woman sums it up: "To most white people we are like pigs to a Mohammedan, we are unclean". Her words remind me of my family's position as Jews in Germany, where we were also victims of hatred and ethnic prejudice.

However, in 1954 most Aborigines kept silent. The few who spoke out, such as Pearl Gibbs, William Ferguson and others, were generally ignored.

Now it is February 1965. A group of 30 Sydney University students, including Charles Perkins and one other Aboriginal person, are on a bus tour of northern NSW towns. They are known as the *Freedom Riders*. They want to investigate and protest against discrimination against Aborigines. In Walgett and Moree there are clashes with angry residents which receive a lot of media attention. This awakens many fair minded Australians, especially those living in cities, to the social injustices which they have not known about. Meanwhile FCAATSI (Federal Council For the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) has been campaigning for Indigenous rights since 1958. Their efforts help to sway public opinion at the 1967 referendum when 89.34 per cent vote for constitutional amendments giving powers to the Commonwealth to legislate for Aborigines who are finally to be counted in the Census. [iv]

A land rights movement has been gradually gaining momentum and Aborigines have become much more outspoken, they now have many of their own spokespersons and manifold organisations. They are writing plays, poems, memoirs, developing as dancers, artists, academics, activists. Most of their works deal with the struggle for survival, to maintain an Aboriginal identity, to combat the racism and discrimination which their people have suffered for so long. Australia Day January

1972 is a very different scene from May 1927. Outside the old Parliament House Aboriginal men and women of all ages have set up an 'Aboriginal Tent Embassy'. It began as a land rights demonstration but as Paul Coe later said: "It started off as a joke, but turned out to be perhaps one of the most brilliant symbolic forms of protest that this country had ever seen. The reason why the Embassy became such a powerful thing was because in many ways it typified the history of this country: the invasion, colonization, the arrogance of the white man, imposing his values and his culture on other people".[v]

It also reflected their feeling that they are foreigners in their own land. Later that year, there are violent clashes with police and eventually the Embassy is removed, only to return in 1992, after twenty years.

Fast forward to 1992. The High Court of Australia has just ruled in the Mabo case that native title exists over un-alienated crown lands, national parks and reserves and that Australia was never a 'terra nullius' or 'empty land'. This judgment makes sections of the white community feel disturbed and frightened that their land may be at risk.

Meanwhile by the late 1970s the Aboriginal Protest Movement has been steadily growing. Time does not permit us here to mention the familiar names of the many who carried on the struggle. Their faces were recorded in the wonderful *Proof: Portraits from the Movement* in 2003, when Juno Gemes, a Hungarian photographer exhibited her outstanding Aboriginal portraits at the National Portrait Gallery which I am sure many of you will have seen.

We forward to 1988, the bicentenary of Captain Phillip's landing in Sydney Cove. A long march of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from around Australia converges on Sydney. They want to celebrate 1988 as the *Year of Survival*.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Act is introduced and

eventually passed with amendments, as the first elected national Indigenous organisation.

In March 1990 Lois (later called Lowitja) O'Donoghue is appointed its first chairperson. Later elections are held for 60 ATSIC regional Councils. At last, Indigenous people are to be involved in their own governance and to run a variety of their own organisations throughout Australia.

In 1991 The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is formed. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its report and recommendations.

The future looks very positive. At last we seem to be making progress.

This positive spirit reaches its culmination on Sunday May 28 2000 when so many Australians joined the People's Walk for Reconciliation over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and enjoyed the celebrations of Corroboree 2000 at the Sydney Opera House.

Today, six years later, something seems to be wrong, our roller coaster is stopping. Aboriginal voices are silent. ATSIC has been abolished. Regional Councils are to be disbanded. There is to be no more elected representation. Can someone please explain what is going on? The journey seems to be over. We are no longer moving forward, are we just standing still or are we moving backwards?

I am hopeful that we are just in a temporary lull and that the reconciliation process will continue despite all these disappointments.

One thing I am certain of is that Aboriginal survival is assured, and that they will never become just darker skinned "whites". We are much more appreciative now of how much the Aboriginal people have contributed and continue to contribute to our unique Australian cultural heritage.

Ruth Fink Latukefu

Continued page 12

HIGHLIGHTS 2005 GURINGAI FESTIVAL

Belonging: People and Place – a celebration of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage in Northern Sydney



Photo courtesy of ATSIC

GURINGAI FESTIVAL LAUNCH - MAY 24

A beautiful sunny day welcomed us to the opening ceremony of the Guringai Festival at Mona Vale Plaza. The balloons were swaying in a light breeze showing the black, yellow and red colours of the Aboriginal flag. From the top bank looking down was a small *Sea of Hands*, a puddle, each colour forming a letter of Guringai, red, black, yellow and green, blue, white. It was very effective.

The festival was opened by the Chair of the Guringai Festival Committee, Lee Mladenovic, listing what was to follow. Allan Madden of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council welcomed us to Guringai country and then the various Mayors of the Councils present gave an outline of other events in their areas.

This was followed by school children carrying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to the flagpole where the Australian flag was flying. A short flag raising ceremony was held. It was great to see the three flags together.

Everyone was then invited to come up to the smoking ceremony area to walk through the smoke so that bad spirits would be sent away. This ceremony and following dances and Dreamtime stories were presented by Girrawaa

Yarrudanginya *Goanna Dreaming* group from the Wiradjuri nation of NSW. They involved many of the children in the actions as we learnt the origins of the thorny devil and other animals. We all thoroughly enjoyed it. In the story it was explained why the bad things happened – from bad behaviour, not following tribal law etc – but it was gently told as part of the story.

There were stalls with information pamphlets, badges, stickers and helpful assistants and a school art show of Aboriginal type paintings. We were invited to sample emu egg quiche and various native jams on fresh scones for morning tea.

There was truly something for everyone, a great opening to this year's Guringai Festival which is becoming bigger each year.

Congratulations Pittwater Council.

Pat Fisher



Pittwater Council

NATIONAL DAY OF HEALING/SORRY DAY

AT BILLARONG RESERVE, NORTH NARRABEEN - MAY 26

Approaching the Scout Hall the soft lights along the path gave a sense of the warm welcoming atmosphere I found inside. It was remarkable the feeling of complete ease and companionship there, not often felt in groups I find. Of course giving out friendship and support and having a combined interest is why everyone was there.

The music of *Nature Nature* drifting over us as we settled down for the evening's entertainment was just lovely. The talk from Nikki McCarthy reinforced our views and confirmed the reasons we had come together. *Nature Nature* invited the audience to be frogs and crocodiles etc with enthusiastic response from the younger fraternity. I in my usual manner of being out there on stage leapt into the fray but being a frog is not one of my talents. I found crocodiles more my style. It was great fun and the didgeridoo very hard to resist.

More music with *Waltzing Matilda* finishing off that section of the concert, we then listened to the lovely voices of Corey Kirk, her family and friends, so very talented and easy to listen to as one

could understand every word.

There was great activity and giggles as the children with Nikki's help decorated boomerangs and had their faces painted and showed them off proudly. Adults had the choice of watching a video *Sorry Proof Country* while this was happening.

The feeling of peace and harmony, combined with the wonderful moonlight at the Lake's edge, with the water gently carrying our flowers away into the night, will stay with me as a spiritual experience as I thought of the Guringai People. My respect and love goes out to all our Indigenous friends.

The evening finished off with a lovely supper and time to chat so thanks to all the efficient people who joined in setting up this event and making it such a success plus putting everything back in order again so smoothly.

My appreciation goes out to the Aboriginal Support Group-Manly Warringah Pittwater and Friends.

Pat Russell

CHILDREN OF THE SETTING SUN



A Play by PATRICIA O'JONES
What a venue – Stony Range at Dee Why! It was beautiful!

We sat together “in the bush” surrounded by trees and plants. It was a play reading. Two ladies – one

Indigenous (Pam) and one non Indigenous (Patricia, the author) – meet by chance waiting at a bus stop and share their past.

When we arrived I was excited to see a friend, Pam Young, an actor. I met her when she was studying with Pauline McLeod and Kim Redman at the Eora Centre in the 80's. She has been on TV, in film and in the theatre. Her portrayal of the mother was very special. The spirits of her children who appeared out of the darkness were played by two young Indigenous actors – Allan Clark who is now training at Eora and Angelina Maree who has worked with Leah Purcell.

There was much sadness, pain and anger. It was a moving and powerful play.

Helen Ford



Warringah Council

This Guringai Festival event on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 May was sponsored by Warringah Council.

B4Sun Artwork by Lionel Phillips

Courtesy of Culcha Disc Australian Indigenous Images Vol. 1

THE TRACKER

The Tracker directed by Rolf de Heer was a free film shown at Collaroy Cinema on June 8th. Grant Page, one of the actors, presented an amusing and very interesting talk prior to the film to an almost full cinema.

I found the film to be very moving personally and almost overwhelming in the honest portrayal of the actors. David Gulpilil was, as usual, awe inspiring in his interpretation of a black tracker used by the police at the turn of the century. It was a very personal portrayal, clearly signifying his dilemma at being caught between two worlds, which was handled despite the tense and dangerous situation with his usual dry humour.

The cinematography was amazing, picturing the contrast and vivid colours of the harsh landscape and depicting the absolute dependence on the tracker for survival by the cruel police sergeant. This role was played by Gary Sweet.

The film builds to an almost unbelievable climax. Gulpilil's character finally wins over the sergeant's arrogant cruelty, in such a manner that destroys completely his dignity and creates a wonderful sense of justice from the black perspective. The audience is left shocked, dumbfounded, awe inspired and probably not a dry eye in the theatre. An interesting portrayal of black and white justice in a very harsh land.

Jan Kirk

The Aboriginal Support Group thanks the Mustaca family of Collaroy Cinema and Warringah Council for their support which made this film screening possible.



EVENTS IN MANLY

The Manly Art Gallery and Museum hosted the launch on June 16 of the Short Film Festival *Belonging: People and Place* showcasing films from all over Australia which dealt with Indigenous themes or were made by Indigenous film makers. Six were previewed at the launch – a varied and entertaining program. All the films, totalling 4 hours in length, were then screened at cafes throughout Manly in the following weeks.

Friday June 17 was the opening night of two exhibitions at the Manly Art Gallery. Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, opened *Luminous: Contemporary Art from the Australian Desert*. This beautiful exhibition selected from the Helen Read Collection featured the work of seventeen artists from the northern and central desert regions of Australia. It is now touring nationally.

The second exhibition opened was *Dreamcatcher* by Narrabeen artist Nikki McCarthy, a descendant of the Dabbee Tribal group from the Wiradjuri Nation. In her work Nikki combines new technology with more traditional medium and presents an insight into the complex nature of *Indigeness*. Nikki shared this exhibition with her three sons, Paul, Stephen and Matthew.

Nikki also created the *Dot Box*. This can be described as a 'suitcase' exhibition. It is a valuable and innovative learning



Photo courtesy of Manly Council

Her Excellency Prof. Marie Bashir with Lois Birk (left) and Nikki McCarthy (right) at the Manly Art Gallery & Museum.

resource and will raise awareness of the protocols in managing Indigenous art and culture. The *Dot Box* is on tour with the *Luminous* exhibition.

These events were sponsored by Manly Council. During the Guringai Festival Manly Council also organized a series of Aboriginal Cultural walks. Led by Rick Shapter, Council's Aboriginal Heritage Officer, they included a visit to a site that served as a factory for the Guringai people. These walks proved extremely popular and even though an additional one was arranged many people were still disappointed. Let's hope that similar walks will be part of next year's festival program.

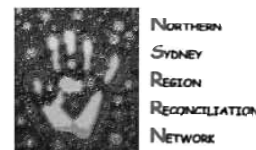
Pat Frater

BLACK LAW

WHITE LAW



The Law Forum was presented jointly by the Northern Sydney Region Reconciliation Network and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council at the Dougherty Centre Auditorium, Chatswood on 15 June as part of the 2005 Guringai Festival.



If I were to summarise the collective views of the Law Forum speakers, it would be that the Australian legal system has failed the Aboriginal People because it was designed exclusively to serve the interests of the British invaders who created it. Discriminatory laws continue to protect and benefit those who have inherited their 'rights' at the expense of Aboriginal people who suffer ongoing injustices, particularly in relation to land rights.

Although this brief summary may not do justice to the comprehensive speeches presented so articulately at the Law Forum by non-Indigenous lawyers, Danny Gilbert and barrister Susan Phillips and Indigenous lawyers, Robynne Quiggin and barrister Norman Laing, it does reflect the powerful nature of their material, which is too extensive to reproduce in this short review.

Like the State of Origin game that clashed with the Law Forum, there were no holds barred, and despite the clash of events the auditorium was packed with a receptive audience who enjoyed the collective knowledge and professionalism of their legal panel guests.

The panel spoke on matters from Aboriginal land rights to discrimination, racism and inequality under the law, DNA mapping, acknowledgement of black history and the need for law reform, to name but a few, all of which deserve more than a two sentence summary.

Danny Gilbert referred to the need to address the injustices of the past and our failure as a nation to honestly own up to and acknowledge the violence and destruction, genocidal in tendency, which white Australia visited upon Indigenous

Australians for the first 150 years of European settlement. He said that while he agreed with Noel Pearson that casting Indigenous people as victims is disempowering, it is also crucial to look squarely at the facts, ie. the most disadvantaged, lowest standards of education, worst health, highest levels of unemployment etc.

Robynne Quiggin gave us an insightful story as to why 'White Australia has a Black History' and the importance of acknowledging this. Robynne also pointed out that the current legal system still discriminates against Aboriginal Peoples and they are sometimes forced to take issues of racism to the 'United Nations Committee – for the elimination of all forms of discrimination' when their claims are rejected by Australian courts. And although the courts may ignore the findings of the United Nations Committee, Robynne said it is very important to have a decision of a United Nations body that measures Australia's compliance with human rights standards.

Susan Phillips took a more personal approach by sharing her childhood experiences with Aboriginal people and the values she holds dear and led the audience on a thought provoking, ethical journey to a destination that should be compulsory for law students, lawyers and politicians alike. In a nutshell Susan said that when disrespect, cruelty, disregard, inhumanity occurs, it does so in our name by the system that protects us and our children from those same injustices and that we need a system that is fair and responsive. It is not fair and responsive to others it is not fair and responsive to us and our children.

Norman Laing delivered a powerful talk that dealt with the issue of legal and scientific racism, which compared the identical DNA and chromosomes that make-up the human specie with the inequality of human beings who, out of ignorance, measured 'human intelligence' against an assumed advanced evolutionary state.

Norman then focused on Aboriginal land rights within a dominant white legal system that requires Aboriginal people to prove why they have an unbroken traditional association with the land they were dispossessed of and why their pre-European rights should be recognised under our law. This 'proof' must be given in a court environment, full of British tradition of wigs, gowns and officialdom, presented in an English legal tongue within its legal framework, with men and women in black suits who represent the government and large law firms. But, as Norman pointed out, we must not give up hope; after all, we all have the same genetic make-up.

The Mabo case informed us that the British invaders of 1788 measured 'intelligence' by the ability of its inhabitants to conquer them. English law treated territories where its inhabitants were not considered sufficiently organised to defeat them or make a formal cession, as uninhabited. The Law Forum informed us that the battle for justice isn't over yet and there are some very intelligent, inspirational and dedicated lawyers out there, black and white, maintaining the fight.

Ian de Vulder

LINKING UP IN WORDS AND FILM

An Aboriginal Support Group Information Night for the Guringai Festival on July 4

How does a member of Australia's Stolen Generations ever get in touch, often decades later, with members of their original family?

It's never easy, either locating the family or establishing contact. For George Ellis, a case-worker at Link-Up (NSW), the organization devoted to re-establishing such links, it's a laborious process with no guarantees of success. For filmmaker Rachel Landers who documented the process, some scenes were too raw to be shown and her camera would leave the scene.

Both George and Rachel were guests at the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater during NAIDOC Week. A feature of the evening was the screening of the documentary on Link-Up made by Rachel who spoke about the making of the documentary. It is part of the *Missing* series made by Rachel and shown recently on SBS TV. The series deals with the location and reunion of missing persons with their families and shows the work of the police and the Red Cross as well as of Link-Up. Rachel and George were joined by two members of the *Stolen Generation*, Nancy Wood and Susan Moylan-Coombs, for discussion after the screening.

George, himself the third generation of his family to be separated from parents, said he was very passionate about the job. His grandfather who was a sole parent had lost George's father and uncles to Kinchela Boys' Home and his aunts to Cootamundra Girls' Home. His mother was also sent to Cootamundra.

Now, as so many of these former stolen children seek to reunite with their families, a number of Link-Up groups operate throughout Australia, with five in Western Australia, two each in the Northern Territory and Queensland and one each in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales.

As a result of Link-Up's detective work, reunions are arranged, some with people taken overseas after adoption by parents of European migrant origin. The investigations may begin by access to adoption records that frequently record only the mother's name – a starting point at least.

For many children taken away at birth there is still suffering many years later. There is often a great cultural distance between them and their birth families. Some need emotional support. "Link-Up clients are clients for life" George said. He explained the whole Link-Up organisation had sprung from the work of Coral Edwards while at university in Canberra in the 1980s, tracing three sisters who had been placed in Cootamundra Girls' Home. Others heard of her work and the organisation spread. A total of about 6000 clients are being helped in NSW; each placement may affect groups of twenty or more relatives.

One of the most distressing examples he gave was of a father's letters to the authorities, showing he was desperate to get in touch with his child. These letters were never delivered.

George believes that placements of Aboriginal children are now made with greater sensitivity, often with members of their kinship group.

Nancy Wood spoke of her own experiences, and of her reunion with some of those she had known in the Cootamundra Girls' Home. She read some of her poems about being a stolen child. Susan Moylan Coombs, now Project Officer for the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan, spoke of having been removed from her family at birth and the pain and hurt that she carries as a result of this.

Pauline Byrne

Nobody's Child

*The shadow within a little girl
A nothing, a misery.
Within me to stay
Not knowing the feeling
That's in my heart.*

*Her soul so sad
That she knows no love.
No care, no cuddles,
No comforting words.*

*Surrounded around me
My brothers and sisters
And yet I can't see
A smile on their faces.*

*No joy in their voices
Nor sound of their laughter
The look on their faces
So sad and forlorn*

*The stolen generation.
Kidnapped from happiness
A mum and dad we never knew
Still Lingers in my heart.*

*The place where we were born
One day we will return
It may be sad and sorrow
When we hear the real truth
Of what had really happened
When we were just a babe.*

– Nancy Hill Wood



ARE YOU AN INDIGENOUS ARTIST OR PERFORMER?

The Guringai Festival Committee is seeking to commission new artwork for the 2006 Guringai Festival. The artwork will become the design for the festival program, poster, flyer, banner and website.

The Committee is also looking for visual artists, storytellers, dancers, singers, performers, writers and actors with ideas that could be incorporated into the 2006 Guringai Festival program.

For further information please contact Karen Gardner on (02) 9942 2672 or email karen.gardner@warringah.nsw.gov.au

GIFT OF LARGE FRAMED ARTWORK

On *Sorry Day* Manly artist Garry Parkinson donated to the Support Group one of his original paintings entitled *Hands of Time*. He has used pastel coloured inks to depict hands as a symbol of Reconciliation.

This painting is being raffled to raise funds for the Support Group and will be drawn at next year's *Sorry Day* event.

Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5.

Your support will be appreciated.

Our thanks to Garry for his generosity in giving this beautiful painting to the Group

Continued from Page 4

ACYF Strategy Presentation

Around fifty people turned up to Hornsby Council Chambers to partake in a smoking ceremony, watch the Pondi Dancers perform, listen to presentations on the strategy as well as the introduction of the newly appointed Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy Community Facilitator, Herb Smith.

Herb will be based at Hornsby Council and will be the contact person for the strategy for the 11 Local Government Areas who are involved in the Northern Sydney Region. His main role is to network with the community and other Councils, locate the Aboriginal population, and co-ordinate activities outlined in the strategy.

Herb Smith can be contacted on 9847 6052 for more information.

Simone Shore

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 September 5 and November 7 at 7.30 pm

Details are given on the enclosed calendar of events

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

☎ For further information ☎

(02) **9913 7940** (02) **9982 1685**
P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

www.asgmwp.net

Continued from Page 7

A Journey of Cultural Survival

[i] "Canberra: Australia's capital city",
cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/
canberra p1

[ii] Mark McKenna, 'The need for a
Reconciled Republic'. P1-2 Manning
House inc.

www.manningclark.org.au/papers/reco
nciled_republic.htm

[iii] Lorna Lippmann, Generations of
Resistance: the Aboriginal Struggle for
Justice, p48, Longman Cheshire 1981

[iv] Sue Taff, Black and White Together:
FCAATS: The Federal Council for the
Advancement of Aborigines and Torres
Strait Islanders 1958-1973. UQP
2005; Jack Horner, Seeking Racial

Justice: An Insider's Memoir of the
Movement for Aboriginal Advancement,
Aboriginal Studies Press 2005

[v] Kevin J. Gilbert, Because a White
man'll never do it, p. 29 Angus and
Robertson 1973

[vi] Kevin Gilbert(ed.) Inside Black
Australia: an anthology of Aboriginal
Poetry, p32, Penguin 1988

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,
Jan Kirk, Carol Gerrard, Don and Pat Frater.

