

## JESSICA BIRK



Jessica Birk is a young Indigenous artist, painter and printmaker.

A descendant of the Yeagl people from the Clarence Valley, Northern Rivers region of NSW, Jessica has lived all her life at Cromer with her parents Lois and Jeff and her brothers Karl and Michael.

Jessica attended Cromer Public School and Cromer High School. For the 2002 HSC she completed a body of art work entitled *Deadly Dubs*. Part of this was selected to be hung in the prestigious *Artepress 2003* at the Art Gallery of NSW. Three pieces from *Deadly*

*Dubs* were also exhibited at the Manly Art Gallery & Museum in *Express Yourself 2003*. Jessica said this work was "about the contribution of three generations of women: myself, my mother and my grandmother, on my identity."

At present studying for a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of NSW she is also working part-time as an Aboriginal Education Officer at Stewart House, South Curl Curl.

A major event for the 2004 Guringai Festival was *Whale Songlines*, a unique community celebration held on Freshwater Beach. Jessica was commissioned to design the magnificent large puppets for *Whale Songlines*: the 'spirit' people and the whale which was ten metres long. She also created a painting especially for the cover of the *Directory of Aboriginal Services in Northern Sydney*.

Recently Jessica played a creative role in the *Bilarong Cultural Festival - Caring for Country, People and Place* – at Narrabeen Lagoon. One of her designs was the fish which featured on the posters, banners and postcards promoting the event.

Mia Dalby-Ball, Manager, Natural Resources at Pittwater Council, said "Jessica along with her mum Lois were key people in the core team responsible for directing the festival and discussing the most appropriate way to proceed. This included discussions on belonging and empowering people."

As part of the festival lead up Jessica worked with the students at Stewart House creating and painting leaves to make a 'replica tree'. This included discussing what the kids enjoy about the places they call home. The children also came to the festival and enthusiastically performed songs relating to Country and community.

Jessica is currently exploring the notion of belonging and familial lineage. Her body of work looks at two areas of the east coast of NSW to which she has a strong connection: the Northern Beaches and the Northern Rivers. Both of these places present to her a different feeling of belonging to Country.

Born on the Northern Beaches she has grown to know and respect the place over time. In contrast, she feels she belongs to the areas of the Northern Rivers which she knows through her mother's family, a right and gift given to her as a descendant of that land. Through her art Jessica is able to assert herself as a contemporary storyteller of the Yeagl people.

*Story continued Page 2*



Above: *Mighty Clarence* – photo courtesy of Manly Art Gallery & Museum  
Top: Jessica Birk.

## TRIBUTE TO ROBIN

When I heard of the death of Robin Partos on January 16 I was deeply sad but not surprised. My concern was for her husband, Andrew, son Antony and his family. I had known for a while that she was living with cancer of the oesophagus. However, despite her fragility and the decision not to have chemotherapy after a massive operation, Robin's Christmas letter to us was surprisingly upbeat. Her writing was strong, it seemed her spirit was unconquerable.

I had experienced that spirit some years before when she told me of the death of their beloved teenage daughter, Vanessa. Deep grieving but then resilient life spirit . . . and we talked of many things over the times we shared together including our common love of music; the composing-musical career of Antony, their son. Travel experiences were an exciting part of conversations, as were grandkids. She was warmly hospitable at home, and shared joyfully her garden and the rocks she loved with a passion – the richness of living. Years ago both of us joined the ground-breaking Tranby College/University of Sydney Course *Dreaming to Dispossession*; learned a lot, enjoyed much, read heaps and talked endlessly. When I decided to learn Tai Chi, Robin generously lent me her books and videos and often shared movements I could not quite manage. She was an expert and a good teacher.

For many years Robin was a dedicated and enthusiastic member of the ASG. Her honest appraisal of situations and her unqualified support was something I appreciated very much. She was an excellent 'sounding board' for ideas; a trusty confidant.

I appreciated her role alongside me on Manly Council's NAIDOC Week Committee. Cr. Nina Burrige pioneered this committee with great commitment, reflecting some of her own desire to see justice for Aboriginal Australia a reality. The committee comprised Councillors and a range of people from the community.

Remember this was 1992, before Reconciliation was of much

public concern and the Support Group was seen to be a bit of an anachronism on the Northern Beaches. At the ASG public meeting that year in support of the Council's new initiative, Robin and Andrew were invaluable organisers and helpers. Titled *Dare to be No Longer Strangers* the event was a 'best-seller' on a wild and wet night; the Support Group's authenticity was proved in the eyes of local government.

Some years later the Support Group was awarded Manly Council's Community Event of the Year Award for *A Night of Reconciliation*.

We were asked to speak at a big meeting on the Corso which incorporated a Citizenship Ceremony. It was held on Australia Day. Survival Day. Everyone in the Group was going to the big Koori concert. However, the consensus of the Group was that we accept the award and that I make the appropriate speech! I felt very alone that afternoon, especially as I spoke to that large crowd. Then I caught sight of Robin and Andrew, and later received their hugs. Robin empathised with the angst I had gone through.

Her empathy, her compassion and her kindness embraced many people throughout all the years I knew her. I was not surprised then to read in her Christmas letter: "We are blessed with wonderful friends who give ongoing love and support – we are indeed fortunate". I am very grateful to Andrew for thoughtfully sending me a copy of his and Antony's eulogies at Robin's funeral and the wonderful brochure of reflections. The smiling photo of Robin on the front cover epitomises for me the essence of Robin's warmth and spirited character. The portrait of her drawn by her adored grandson Felix, aged 6 – *Robin Dancing on a Stage* – made me laugh as I often had with Robin. She had such a good sense of fun.

Robin Partos joins the growing Roll of revered ASG members we have grieved for over a quarter of a century – her contribution to the Group a part of its strength, commitment and passion for justice for our Koori neighbours, friends.

Jill Perkins

*Continued from Cover Page*

*"The notion of belonging is an abstract one. I aim to develop a visual language that enables my audience to grasp the implicitly rich understanding of a landscape, that is belonging"* Jessica said. *"This understanding of Country allows for a two way communication to evolve, between those belonging and the Country to which they belong. Country is spoken to, sung to, loved and mourned, just as if it were a family member . . . In saying this, I use imagery of or relating to these places, my 'Country'. Its recognition is dependent upon colour, texture and form as well as that of river stones themselves."*

Jessica explained that the use of river stones in her work is a metaphor for the strength and enduring quality of the ancestral presence within the landscape. *"By doing so I want to show that, in order to tap into this collective wisdom and knowledge of the place, you need to be from and part of this living entity which is*

*Country . . . Belonging is knowing Country. Knowing it as a living entity, a place that gives, nourishes and receives life."*

An exhibition of Jessica's work entitled *Born Belonging* will be held at the Manly Art Gallery & Museum from June 23 to July 23, a 2006 *Guringai Festival* event.

She is also participating in *Circle of Understanding* at the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre, Roseville, on Friday June 16. At this forum artists from the Indigenous community will speak about their experiences in the arts in today's contemporary Australian society. Further details of *Born Belonging* and *Circle of Understanding* are given in the *Guringai Festival* program which is available at local libraries and Councils.

These two events provide a great opportunity to gain an appreciation of Jessica's personal interpretation and understanding of the landscape that is her Country.

# ENTANGLED LIVES

– Dr. HEATHER GOODALL

When my friend Pat Mullins mentioned that the *Friends of Eramboo's* speaker in February was to be the distinguished historian Heather Goodall, I made sure that I was in the audience. The title of her talk was *Entangled Lives: Understanding the momentous events of post-war Australians' history through the intersecting life stories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people*. Heather has researched Aboriginal and environmental history and life story writing. Her most recent publication is the collaborative life story of the late Isobel Flick and much of the talk was informed by Isobel's way of opening lines of communication between people. Isobel always looked for shared solutions and for the common ground. Heather mentioned that contested issues with right/wrong divisions made forward action unlikely.

In country towns and regions the stories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are entwined and not easy to separate. She reminded us that there are no easy solutions and that, as you find out more, the stories become more complex. Many in the ASGMWP would agree with this.

She said that the concentration on the history of degradation and alienation – the history of misery – as a result of invasion and colonisation hid other stories of resourcefulness, resistance and resilience. Some people draw their strength from conflict and alienation; others are damaged by the experience.

Two statements resonated strongly:

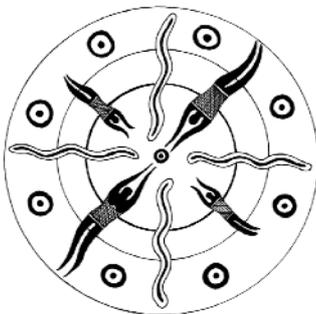
*"The death toll is deeply distressing and continuous"* and *"Mainstreaming obscures the issues that are relevant to Aboriginal people"*

The *Friends of Eramboo* have a luncheon and guest speaker every second month at Terrey Hills. The talks are always topical and of a social justice perspective. The *Friends* can be contacted on **(02) 9450 1714**.

Lizzie Landers

## HERB SMITH, Community Facilitator

### Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy



**Proud communities  
Strong families**

The guest speaker at the Support Group's Information Night in March was Herb Smith, Community Facilitator of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy. Our thanks to Herb who came from his sick bed to tell us about this program.

A 2000 initiative of the NSW government this strategy focuses resources on improving a range of safety, health and well-being outcomes for Indigenous children, young people, their families and communities. The target client group is

families with children aged 0 to 18 years. More than one quarter of Australia's Indigenous population lives in NSW. The community facilitation project in Northern Sydney covers eleven local government areas where 0.25% of the population is Indigenous (2001 Census).

Herb Smith is a Wiradjuri man born in Wellington NSW. Working in the government sector for more than thirty years he specialised in the area of Police-Aboriginal liaison. He was actively involved in the development and delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal communities.

In April 2005 Herb was appointed to his present position and is based at Hornsby Shire Council. He explained that partnerships with Indigenous communities require time, capacity building and development to be effective. He saw his role as consulting, working with and empowering the local community. However, the major thrust of the program has been to locate the 'invisible' community – networking and identifying the Indigenous people in the area and decreasing the isolation that they currently experience.

Herb acknowledged the work undertaken

by Susan Moylan Coombs, the past Project Officer of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan, and the structures that she had put in place. Herb has been developing a database and encouraging membership of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Following the abolition of ATSIC the community needs to be informed of the availability of services that are accessible, responsive and culturally appropriate. Communication and involvement with service providers and increased participation in community activities by Indigenous families are a focus of the project. Herb seeks to insure that key partners are engaged in the process and has spoken with organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army and churches in the area.

This was a very informative night, well attended by an interested and responsive audience.

Herb can be contacted on **(02) 9847 6850** or **9847 6052**.

Helen Ford



# CONGRATULATIONS...

**Dr. Sally Goold** who is *Senior Australian of the Year*. From Bribie Island in Queensland, Dr. Goold is believed to be the first Aboriginal nurse registered in NSW. She is the inaugural Chairperson and Executive Director of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses, an organisation which aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation in nursing. Dr. Goold's award acknowledges a lifetime of achievement in the nursing profession.



**Professor Sandra Eades**, one of Australia's foremost Indigenous medical researchers who was named the 2006 *NSW Woman of the Year*. This award is in recognition of her work in identifying links between infant health and social factors, such as housing. The first Aboriginal medical doctor to be awarded a PhD, Professor Eades is conjoint professor in the faculty of public health at the University of Newcastle and is a senior research fellow in Aboriginal Health at the Sax Institute, Sydney.



**Corey Kirk** of Avalon who was guest soloist with *Gondwana Voices* at the Closing Ceremony of the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. Corey will be singing at the launch of the *Guringai Festival* at Dee Why Beach on Sunday May 21 and at the *Sorry Day* Commemoration on Friday May 26 at Circular Quay. With her family and friends she is performing at the ASG *Sorry Day / Journey of Healing* event on Saturday May 27 at Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen, from 3.30pm.



**Samantha Harris**, one of two Youth Ambassadors for the launch of David Jones' Winter 2006 Collections. Samantha grew up in Banora Point on the NSW/Queensland border. 178cm tall and with her multicultural heritage, the fifteen year old beauty first came to notice last year. Since then she has done fashion shoots for *US Glamour* in New York and for *marie claire* in Tahiti. Samantha would like to become a role model for other young Indigenous models.



**Jeff McMullen** who at the Variety Heart Awards was named the 2006 *Humanitarian of the Year* by Variety, the children's charity. A Whale Beach resident, documentary maker and former *60 Minutes* reporter, Jeff was honoured for his work with the Jawoyn communities in the Northern Territory. As Director of the *Ian Thorpe Fountain For Youth Trust*, he is committed to providing Aboriginal families with 'literary backpacks' of reading material ranging from sports magazines, Indigenous newspapers to children's books. Jeff was an inspiring speaker at a Support Group Information Night last year.

Pat Frater

## Beginning Liturgy at St Kevin's School

St Kevin's School at Dee Why held a *Beginning Liturgy* at the school to mark the beginning of the school year.

The liturgy included a Land, Fire and Water Ceremony. Kevin Duncan from the Catholic Schools Office was our special guest. He played the didgeridoo, performed an Aboriginal song and spoke to the children about the importance of respectful relationships in the community.

The children have been learning about the Aboriginal land, people and spirit. The visit was the culmination of different units that have been studied in the religious education classes.

All the classes at St Kevin's have Aboriginal names which reflect the spirit of the class:

Kindergarten	<b>Kindilan</b>	(Happiness)
Year 1	<b>Jumbunna</b>	(Respect)
Year 2	<b>Mullaya</b>	(Friendship)
Year 3	<b>Gurrea</b>	(Rainbow)
Year 5/4	<b>Meelee</b>	(As one)
Year 5/6	<b>Boonari</b>	(Leaders)

We are a community united in love who seek to share that love with everyone we meet so that we can make a difference in the world.

Mary Anne Marles  
Principal

# Sorry Day

2006 marks the 10th anniversary of the *Inquiry of the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*.

An invitation comes from the NSW *Sorry Day* Committee to 'Tali Yirran' – to gather together in large numbers – on *Sorry Day*,

Friday May 26, at First Fleet Park, Circular Quay West, from 12 noon to 4pm. There will be stories by members of the *Stolen Generations*, Koori entertainers and a community BBQ. Keynote speaker is Peter Garrett MP, Shadow Minister for Reconciliation. The commemoration is continued in the evening from 6pm to 10pm in the Foundation Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, The Rocks.

For full details contact Leigh Bowden (02) 9971 2325

# Guringai Festival

Sunday May 21 to July 9, 2006

A celebration of Aboriginal Heritage and Culture, this year's *Guringai Festival* – the sixth – will be a modern day corroboree.

More than 35 events across nine local government areas of Northern Sydney will bring the community together with the theme of **Corroboree, Culture, Community**.

Festival programs are now available from local Councils and libraries or go to [www.guringai festival.com.au](http://www.guringai festival.com.au)

The image of the 2006 *Guringai Festival* is the painting *Northern Beaches* by Newport artist Paul McCarthy. Specially commissioned for the new festival program the painting is a recognition of the Indigenous significance and relevance of the past and present place where Paul grew up and lives today.

The **FESTIVAL LAUNCH** will be at Dee Why Beach Reserve on Sunday May 21 from sunset at approximately 4.30pm. Experience the spirit of the *Guringai Festival* and celebrate with Indigenous music and dance and *Thulli Dreaming* performing a smoking ceremony. Free. Details: Karen Gardner, Warringah Council (02) 9942 2672.

The Aboriginal Support Group is organising the following 3 events:

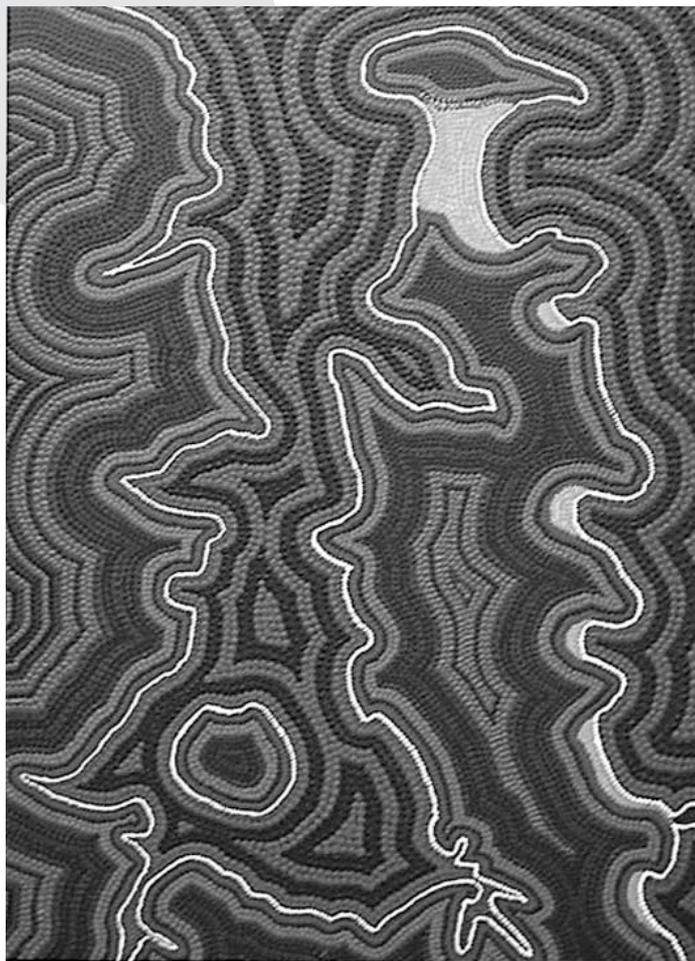
**SORRY DAY/JOURNEY OF HEALING** on Saturday May 27 from 3.30pm to 6.30pm: Aboriginal art with Nikki McCarthy, performances by *Nature Nature*, Corey Kirk with her family and friends, sausage sizzle. Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen. Free. This event is supported by Pittwater Council. Details: Ingrid Storm (02) 9913 8226

**JEDDA** film screening at 10am on Wednesday June 14 at Collaroy Cinema. This 1955 Charles Chauvel classic has been colour regraded and the soundtrack remastered. The screening has been made possible by the support of Warringah Council, the Mustaca Family of United Cinemas and the Chauvel Estate. Free .

**ABORIGINAL HERITAGE** talk by David Watts and Brad Webb, Aboriginal Heritage Officers, about conserving Aboriginal Heritage sites. This NAIDOC Week event will be held at 7.30pm

on Monday July 3 at the Nelson Heather Centre, corner Jacksons and Pittwater Roads, North Narrabeen. Free.

Contact Anna Bell (02) 9913 7940 or Lizzie Landers (02) 9918 2594 if you would like further information about these Support Group events – or visit [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net)



Artwork by Paul McCarthy

# PRINCIPLES OF CO-OPERATION

## North Sydney Council's Signing Ceremony

On Friday March 17 North Sydney Council hosted a Signing Ceremony to formally adopt the *Principles of Co-Operation* between the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro) and North Sydney Council.

The *Principles of Co-Operation* recognise the future relationship between Metro and North Sydney Council. The protocols include:

- Actively working together to foster reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
- Actively working together to promote an increased understanding of Aboriginal culture;
- Establishing and maintaining open and transparent two-way communications and consultation between both organisations;

- Establishing a framework for considering development proposals affecting Metro's interests that is consistent with North Sydney Council's duties and obligations under all relevant laws.

Education Officer from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Allen Madden commenced the proceedings with *Welcome to Country*, followed by speeches from the Mayor of North Sydney Genia McCaffery and Chairperson of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Rob Welsh.

The document was jointly signed by the General Manager of North Sydney Council Penny Holloway, Genia McCaffery, Rob Welsh and CEO of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Clare McHugh.

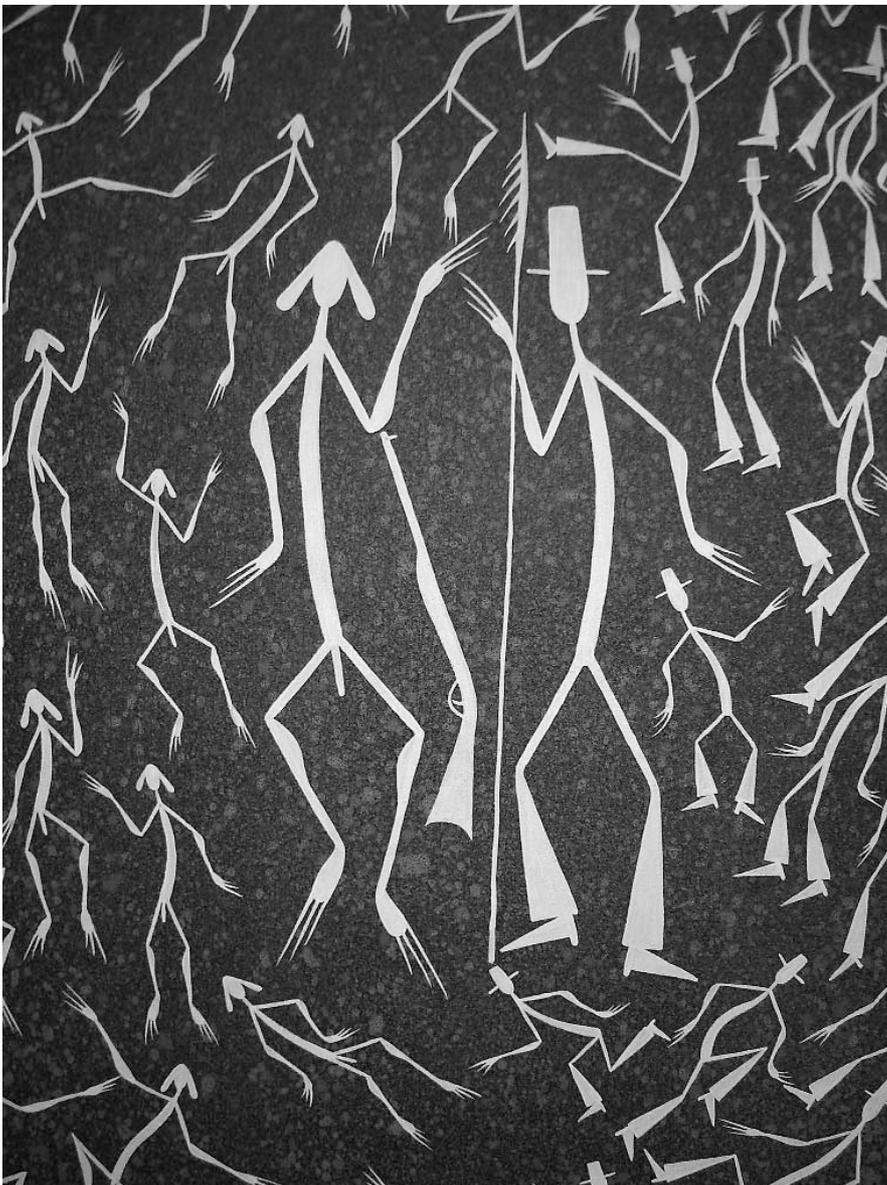
The event took place in Council's Hutley Hall which is inside the Council Chambers. Entertainers *Nature Nature* set the mood for the day by providing some fantastic music to celebrate the event. After the signing ceremony Indigenous cuisine which included roast kangaroo crostini, char-grilled emu with asparagus and pumpkin scones with lemon myrtle butter was enjoyed by all in attendance. The event was attended by about 60 people, including the Mayor of Mosman Denise Wilton; Greg Smith, Gary Highland and Lee Mladenovic from Metro, and members of the New South Wales, Lane Cove, Mosman, Bennelong Reconciliation Groups and the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater.

It is hoped that many more signing ceremonies will follow and that other Councils will be keen to take part in this significant event to assist the reconciliation process.

*Narelle Spooner*

North Sydney Council joins Lane Cove, Warringah and Willoughby Councils within Guringai Country in adopting the *Principles of Co-operation*. On the southern side of the harbour Leichhardt and City of Sydney Councils have also signed this important agreement.

*Painting by Shaun Haurama  
for the Principles of Co-operation signing.  
Courtesy of North Sydney Council*



# BROOKVALE VALLEY PROJECT



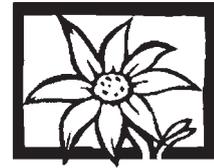
A partnership between Metro and Warringah Council will see each contributing \$25,000 towards the regeneration of the last major stand of natural bush in Brookvale. Peppermint gums, cabbage palms and a small stand of coachwood rainforest remain on the site which lies near the former brickworks between Beacon Hill and Warringah Roads.

There is also a pre-European Aboriginal midden in the area.

The *Principles of Co-operation* signed last year by Warringah Council and Metro led to this project which will return the land to the way it may have looked before European settlers came to Australia.

The Chairman of Metro Rob Welsh said that the Land Council wanted to contribute to Northern Sydney where it owns most of its land.

Volunteers from the Brookvale Valley Community Group will work with Metro trainees over the next year to remove noxious weeds from the site. Christina Kirsch, Chairperson of the Brookvale Valley



**Warringah Council**

Community Group, said that the project was about respect, learning from each other and working together towards a sustainable future.

If you would like to volunteer to bush regenerate this site contact Christina Kirsch (02) 9981 6672.

*Pat Frater*

## WHAT CAN I DO? WHAT CAN I SAY WHEN ...

On April 3 the ASG hosted a workshop about using effective language and arguments to deal with racism and reconciliation issues in everyday life. The workshop was organised by Lizzie Landers, Vanessa Walsh and Robin Grille, who kindly performed the role of the workshop facilitator. Robin's compelling introduction to the topic resulted in a contagious enthusiasm for most of the workshop participants and after a couple of hours I would think that most people found the experience very worthwhile. I'd like to point out a couple of areas of discussion that resonated with me, in particular:

- 1 Robin spoke eloquently of the process of writing an article a few years ago for *Sydney's Child*. The article directly addressed questions that we always hear such as "Why should I be sorry?" The process he undertook of constructing a list of questions and then researching and articulating a set of answers is a process that I would recommend that everybody undertake. Not only is it an interesting and rewarding exercise, you will also find that it is easier to remember and use words that you have phrased yourself when you most need them. Maybe your research could start with Robin's article.

I would encourage everybody to read it, as it is particularly well written (it is available on the ASG website [www.aspmwp.net](http://www.aspmwp.net)).

- 2 Some battles you will not win. Robin, as a practising psychologist, described research that found that some people are incapable of empathising no matter how well an argument is presented and regardless of the facts laid before them. You may also find that people talk over the top of you, and for that reason your argument is not heard. Or you feel anxiety, for a myriad of reasons, in trying to correct other people's attitudes towards racism. In such situations you may feel despondent, embarrassed or humiliated, but remember:
  - What you are trying to do is right!
  - Changing people's opinions and gaining their empathy is hard to do and takes practice.
  - There are thousands, probably millions of people who are on your side, they want you to succeed and they admire your courage. Don't give up trying!

*Mark Walsh*

## Remembering W.E.H. STANNER: Anthropologist and Public Intellectual

A memorable two-day symposium was held in Canberra on November 24-25, 2005, to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of William Edward Hanley (Bill) Stanner (1905-1981). The symposium was hosted by the Australian National University and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The speakers included fellow anthropologists who dealt with Stanner's intellectual contributions to the understanding of Aboriginal cultures and religion, [i] among them Professor Mick Dodson, Professor Marcia Langton and many other distinguished scholars.

The founding of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) which had been suggested by the parliamentarian W.C.Wentworth in 1960, owed much to Stanner, who convened and chaired the Conference on Aboriginal Studies in May 1961. This led directly to the establishment of AIAS in June 1964 which in 1989 became AIATSIS to include Torres Strait Islander studies.

Another speaker was Mr Barrie Dexter, former Director of Office of Aboriginal Affairs (1967-72) and Secretary of Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1972-76). He reminisced on how he had worked

closely with Bill Stanner in his more activist role in the three-person Council for Aboriginal Affairs (1967-1972). They assisted Dr 'Nugget' Coombs to introduce innovative Aboriginal policies, helping to liberate Aboriginal people from the oppressive legislation which had controlled their lives until this crucial period of policy changes, following the 1967 Referendum.

Professor Stanner's *After the Dreaming*, presented in 1968, was one of the most influential in the Boyer lecture series on ABC radio. Stanner's lectures had considerable impact and were reprinted over seven times. The ABC's Chairman Donald McDonald said of them: "They are watershed lectures, amazing for their relevance, prescience and balance."

Stanner's second lecture which should be read in full is called *The Great Australian Silence*. In it he makes the point that for 150 years Australian written history and literature were silent in respect of Aboriginal people save for some marginal references. (*Highlights of the Boyer Collection*, Program six, Big Ideas, 6 April, 2003).

Here is a small extract from *The Great Australian Silence* presented by W.H. Stanner in 1968:

*One consequence of having given the Aborigines no place in our past, except that of 'a melancholy footnote', is both comical and serious. Comical because one of the larger facts of the day is the Aboriginal emergence into contemporary affairs, but about all we can say on the received version of our history, would be the rising twin of that immortal observation, 'from this time on, the native question sank into unimportance'. Serious because the surfacing of problems which are in places six or seven generations deep, confront us with problems of decision, but we are badly under-equipped to judge whether policies towards the problems are slogans, panaceas or sovereign remedies or none of them.* Stanner's words spoken almost forty years ago still resonate fully in 2006 when we can again repeat "from this time on, the Aboriginal question sank into unimportance". What would Stanner have thought of the regressive events that have occurred over the past ten years?

Ruth A Fink Latukefu

[1] Stanner, W.E.H., 1979 *White Man Got no Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973*, A.N.U. Press Canberra; 1989, *On Aboriginal Religion*, Oceania Monograph 36, Oceania Publications University of Sydney.

## REVIEWS FROM ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 2006

### MILKARRI: WOMEN'S TEARS AND HEALING AT SUNSET.

A morning performance by Yolgnu women which was a privilege to witness. The first public performance of women's crying songs from Yirrkala in Arnhem Land was to grieve the loss of a senior woman Nancy Gaymala Yunlipingu. At dawn or sunset Yolgnu women gather to cry, sing and heal. Using film footage of Nancy, clouds, water, sky and fire, the lament was accompanied by the sound of yidaki and clap stick.

The songs of land – animals, soil, plants, rain – all sung with tears of grief and joy help to heal. The cycle of mourning should not be interrupted. Grief needs time to complete. As I write and remember my hair stands on end.

### TEN CANOES – ADELAIDE FRINGE

The world premiere of Rolf de Heer's *Ten Canoes* brought to the screen Jamie Gulpilil as the star of the film. His father David Gulpilil provided the narration of the film in his own inimitable way. It is the first feature film made entirely in an Australian Indigenous language. After the applause died down David Gulpilil proudly introduced his son Jamie to the audience. A lovely moment.

*Ten Canoes* will be released nationally soon.

### COLLIDING WORLDS – FIRST CONTACT IN THE WESTERN DESERT 1932-1984

*Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute*

My last stop in Adelaide on the way to the airport was Tandanya. I could not leave without spending time there and what a rewarding time it was.

This extensive exhibition examines the recent first encounters between Western Desert People *Lost Tribes* and Europeans. Covering the period 1932 to 1984, the impact and experiences of these encounters is recorded by photographs, artifacts, oral memories and art of Aboriginal artists. It is a homage to the resilience of Western Desert people and a record of loss and some gains. It left me with plenty to ponder.

If it comes to Sydney try to see it!

Lizzie Landers

# LOUSY LITTLE SIXPENCE

This year as part of NSW Seniors' Week Warringah Council and the Aboriginal Support Group facilitated a screening of the influential documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence* at the Warringah Civic Centre. The film was produced about 25 years ago by Alex Morgan and Aboriginal activist Gerald Bostock as co-director.

*Lousy Little Sixpence* begins in 1900 after the NSW Aborigines Protection Board policy forced Aboriginal communities on to government reserves, and then proceeded to take away their children, virtually for incarceration, in "homes" far remote from their own homes, to be trained as farm labourers and domestic servants on white-owned farms and principally rural households.

The *Lousy Little Sixpence* refers to the wages that were supposed to be paid to the young Aboriginal workers who were hardly out of their childhood when first sent out to work as servants.

In the documentary film, the principal storytellers were Margaret Tucker, Flo Caldwell, Violet Shea and Chicka Dixon. They told their own stories and that of their young peers, from their childhood being stolen away to the days of their lives at the strange regimented institutions and on to their farming-out as virtually slave labour to non-Indigenous people.

Although I was seeing this film for the second time, I found that I caught my breath at the extraordinary insensitivity and even cultural madness of the scenes of military type drilling of young boys at *Kinchela* Home and the prissy Edwardian starched pin-tucked shirt-waists and skirts in which young Aboriginal women were dressed. This was no doubt for propaganda presentation to the white Empire-oriented rulers of the fate of the Aboriginal people.

In the dramatic black and white film there is an extraordinary scene of children, perhaps 10-12 years old, in a line, clearing a 'drill ground', 'garden space' ... whatever ... their lithe young bodies bent to the earth, in unison sweeping the ground with their bare hands. With incredible irony, it could well have been choreographed into a ballet – a western ballet, symbolically creative, not as it really was, ridiculously a dreadful picture of near-slavery of children.

Breath-stopping also was the propaganda government film of little Aboriginal children, incongruously dressed for a ballet as little Christmas bells and fairies.

For all the child-like ability of the young Aboriginal people to find some happiness in these 'white' cultural diversions, the heartache was there. Margaret Tucker spoke of taking rat poison to end her sorrow. She said "*there was nothing there, we were like strangers*" and dissolved into quiet tears.

After the scenes of which I have written briefly there was a continuing account of the movement, inspired by the universal idea of the right to attain justice, strongly specific to the Aboriginal people of Australia in this context of stolen children trained for cheap labour. I really think that warrants an enlarged article because it reveals the strength and integrity of the Aboriginal leaders who fought peacefully for acknowledgement of their rights for justice and acknowledgement of the rights of the Indigenous people.

*Enid McIlraith*

## \$TOLLEN WAGES\$

talkin' justice



### NSW ABORIGINAL TRUST FUND REPAYMENT SCHEME

Between 1900 and 1969 money due to many Aboriginal people was put into Trust Funds operated by the Aborigines Protection Board and later the Aborigines Welfare Board. Successive NSW Governments failed to repay this money which may have been family endowment payments, apprentice wages, inheritances and lump sum compensation payments.

In 2004 the NSW Government announced the establishment of an Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme (ATFRS) for the sole purpose of repaying these monies held in trust and never repaid. A Panel was appointed to give advice on the scheme and to review all *Stolen Wages* claims that are made and dealt with by the scheme. Members of the Panel which meets monthly are Aden Ridgeway (Chair), Robynne Quiggin and Sam Jeffries.

ATFRS is evidence-based, not a compensation scheme.

Payments are made based on evidence that money put into a person's Trust Fund was never repaid. Government records and independent written record can be used or oral evidence which can be taken from claimants and others. If money is found to be owed it will be paid to the rightful claimants or, if they have died, to their descendants. It will be paid in full and indexed automatically to the current dollar value.

The free call number for more information is **1800 765 889**.

### PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY CENTRE

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is a legal and policy centre established to protect and promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Its role is in the areas of *Stolen Wages*, Discrimination and Police Complaints.

The PIAC office in Sydney undertakes legal work for Indigenous people from different communities in NSW. It is a free and confidential service with an Aboriginal lawyer who can explain how the legal system works, give legal advice and/or refer to another service if necessary. Telephone **(02) 8898 6500**.

*Information in this article supplied by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the NSW Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme.*

# PEOPLE OF THE CEDAR

In March the National Museum of Australia (NMA) opened a remarkable and beautiful exhibition *People of the Cedar*, First Nations art from the Northwest coast of Canada. The exhibition was developed by the NMA and the High Commission of Canada. It will be on show until May 28 – well worth seeing! The museum is a wonderful ‘keeping place’ and this exhibition of masks, weaving, artifacts, is unique.

One highlight during a five-day program was a forum *The Ancestors’ Voices: Speaking through the Object*. This was the first dialogue of its kind to be held in the Museum. Speakers included First Nation Peoples of Canada Dempsey Bob (northwest coast artist/carver and Tahltan/Tlingit spokesperson); William White (Tsimshian weaver); Rocque Berthiaume (art historian and curator) and Inge Rumble (High Commission of Canada representative and co-curator).

The Australian panel included Banduk Marika (artist/printmaker from Yirrkala); Vic McGrath (Torres Strait Island – artist/carver and Director of Gab Titui Cultural Centre); Margo Neale (Principal Advisor on Indigenous Affairs to the Director, NMA) and Adam Shoemaker (Dean, Faculty of Arts, ANU).

In describing the exhibition and the forum, the Museum stated: *“The invisible world becomes visible in the stunning masks and sculptural forms of the northwest coast of Canada. The artist/carver is guided by the ancestors and becomes a medium*

*through which the ancestors speak to generations of First Nation Peoples. The forum will show the profound role of objects in the maintenance of culture, the spiritual power invested in them and their political function. Like the use of art and artifacts in the Native title claims today in Australia, these objects prove cultural connection to time and place, in a world where other cultural, economic and political realities often collide.”*

The rapport between the Indigenous peoples of both countries, and their desire to share cultures, experiences, histories, artistic expertise, was an invaluable experience for all of us who were participants of the forum. Through the exhibition itself, papers presented by the speakers, as well as the sharing of their own stories, slides and other teaching aids, we all learned a very great deal. It was a fantastic experience.

Over the following weekend Willie White, the Tsimshian weaver, shared his art and culture of traditional weaving during a public session at the Museum. His pieces were very beautiful. Part of his story is that as a younger man he realised that his Auntie was the last traditional weaver in her clan. Willie set about learning from her, endlessly perfecting his skill to her requirements until now he is an artist in his own right and the teacher of more than a hundred others of his clan. This unique cultural tradition has been saved!

Jill Perkins

## ‘CONNECTING’ EXHIBITIONS

One of the young photographers from Brewarrina who participated in last year’s *Connexions in Time* project has acquired a four year photography traineeship with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra.



*Connexions in Time* brought together young people from the ‘Sister Cities’ of Brewarrina and Warringah for a series of photographic workshops culminating in an inspiring exhibition of their work.

The project was awarded the 2005 *Warringah Community Event of the Year*. Further recognition has come with *Connexions in Time* being exhibited at NSW Parliament House from Monday July 3 to Thursday July 27, 2006. Hours are 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Another project bringing communities together is *Art Connections*. The Warringah Printmakers and *Connections* Aboriginal Women’s Art Therapy Group from Redfern have collaborated over a six week period to make new printmaking works. These works which will be for sale are being exhibited at *Sea La Vie Cafe*, 3-6 The Strand, Dee Why Beach, from June 9 to 28.

Both exhibitions are *Guringai Festival* events and are free. For further information telephone Coralie Hicks, Events and Cultural Services Co-ordinator, Warringah Council, on (02) 9942 2603 or go to [www.warringah.nsw.gov.au](http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au)

*The Summer 2005 issue of Elimatta featured an article by Ria Murch entitled Black Art White Business. Ria wrote of the Dja Dja Wurrung people of Victoria seeking acknowledgement of their ownership of artifacts taken to Britain in the 19th century.*

## Attempt to Prevent Return of Indigenous Artifacts to British Museum Fails



The attempt by Dja Dja Wurrung Elders to prevent the return of artifacts, on loan to Museum Victoria, to the British Museum and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew ended with the handing down of a judgement in the Federal Court of Australia on 20 May 2005.

The artifacts were two bark etchings, dating from around 1854 and originating from Dja Dja Wurrung Country in the area around Boort and a ceremonial emu figure made from river redgum and decorated with red and white ochres. The items had been displayed in an exhibition entitled *Etched On Bark – 1854 Kulin Barks from Northern Victoria* between March and June 2004.

Action to prevent return of the items began with an emergency declaration under provisions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 by Rodney Carter, a Dja Dja Wurrung Elder and Inspector under the Act, acting on behalf of Dja Dja Wurrung and Jupagalk representatives. The declaration was intended to protect and preserve the three cultural heritage objects from further threats of injury and desecration by their removal to the British Museum without the written consent of the owners. The declaration directed the Victorian government and Museum Victoria to negotiate with the traditional owners about the future location of the objects.

### Government Response

The Victorian government's initial response by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gavin Jennings, was to urge the Dja Dja Wurrung

Elders to negotiate with Museum Victoria to reach an "amicable solution" and agree on access to the material. However Carter's emergency declaration sought to enliven larger repatriation issues by directing the Australian and British governments to negotiate the "final repatriation of all Indigenous Australian Ancestral Human Remains and Grave Goods held without consent by various British institutions and privately for recovery, return and reburial by Australian Traditional Owners".

The dispute was the subject of two Federal Court actions. One was taken by the Museums Board of Victoria to seek dissolution of a series of subsequent emergency declarations made by Carter. The second was launched by the Dja Dja Wurrung Elders to force the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to issue an order for preservation and compulsory acquisition of the artifacts. The Dja Dja Wurrung applicants argued in court that return of the artifacts to the British Museum constituted a threat of injury and desecration to them. The applicants also argued that the British Museum's advice that the artifacts had not or would not be on display suggested they would not be available for educational purposes: "If the objects are locked away and inaccessible to our community, they cannot be used to educate or perpetuate Aboriginal culture and tradition, and in the case of the ceremonial piece, it could never be used in ceremonies".

### Who Can Speak?

The dispute raised a question about who could "speak" for the objects under this significant piece of Commonwealth legislation. While the Dja Dja Wurrung people claimed the artifacts as part of their

cultural heritage, the Act appeared to provide that, as the artifacts were located in Melbourne, the Wurundjeri Council was the appropriate cultural group to advise the Minister on the significance of the artifacts. The Wurundjeri Council subsequently made an application under the Act in support of the Dja Dja Wurrung Elders. Ultimately, this had no bearing on the final court judgements, but it calls into question the capacity of the Act to deal appropriately with [museum] loans or other situations involving expatriated cultural material.

Time will tell whether the dispute will have ongoing consequences for inward loan requests [by Australian museums] of Indigenous material held by overseas museums. The court judgements (2005 FCA 645 and 2005 FCA 667) can be viewed at the online legal database [www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au)

*Ian McShane*  
Chair, Editorial Standing Committee  
Museums Australia

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**THANK YOU**

to Dee Why RSL for the grant towards the four 2006 issues of *Elimatta*.

This continuing support is greatly appreciated.



**RSL CLUB**

# ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY: Steps to Connecting to Country

A four week study program co-ordinated by the Support Group presented by **Oomera Edwards**, educator and co-founder of *Link-Up*. Oomera currently operates *Murrawan - Connecting to Country*.

**DATES** Mondays August 7, 14, 21 and 28  
**TIME** 7.30pm to 9pm  
**VENUE** Angophora Room  
Nelson Heather Centre  
corner Jacksons and Pittwater Roads  
North Narrabeen  
*Carpark entrance from Boondah Road off Jacksons Road*

**BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL**  
Total registration to cover four sessions: \$50  
(for indigenous participants \$10)  
Registration to be paid in advance to:  
ASGMWP, PO Box 129 Narrabeen 2101  
Enquiries: David Harrison (02) 9971 4160

## AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

### The Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

meets on the third Monday of each month, from February to November, at 7.30 pm

Information Nights are held throughout the year on the first Monday of most months at 7.30pm.

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

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

**Meetings and events are listed on the enclosed Calendar**

☎ For further information ☎

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

**www.asgmwp.net**

## THE SUNNYFIELD ASSOCIATION

Sunnyfield is a disability organisation based at Allambie Heights providing a number of different services to families who care for someone with a disability at home who may be a child, young person or adult.

Within the Northern Sydney area we provide support to families in a number of different ways so that they can continue caring for their loved one at home.

Sunnyfield prides itself in responding to individual needs of families. Presently we know very little about Aboriginal affairs and would be very keen to learn more.

If you are caring for a family member or relative who has a disability please contact Debbie White on **(02) 8977 8812** at Sunnyfield. We are very interested in getting together with you so that you can tell us how to help and support you.

*Cathy Commins*  
General Manager Community Services

*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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## Please Note

There will be **NO**  
**Support Group Information Nights**  
**in June and August**  
**2006.**