



ROBYNNE QUIGGIN

It's lovely to be asked to write for *Elimatta*. I grew up in this land of the *Guringai* and feel very lucky to be able to live here. I am descended from the Vincent family of the Wiradjuri people in central western New South Wales. So I link both my names in the name of my legal and consultancy practice – *Vincent-Quiggin Consulting*.

I developed my interest in the law after a couple of years working for Link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation.

I began doing volunteer work with young people and part of that work was accompanying them to court. I found that, although it was often really tough for them to go to court, I was fascinated by the legal process. I also felt very inspired by some of the lawyers I saw. Many were working very hard with few resources, including very little time with each client but were sincere in their efforts to do the best by their client.

With lots of family support, I went to law school and the University of New South Wales as a full time student. It was a great time in many ways. We worked really hard, and I was smoking in those days, so burned the midnight oil often, drinking lots of coffee and smoking furiously. My Mum would wander out at 2 or 3 in the morning telling me to go to bed! I would be absorbed in whatever I was working on and wouldn't hear her coming, so I'd jump with fright seeing her in her nightie at the door.

I was always worried about passing exams

and essays. I took it all pretty seriously actually. Anyway, I got through and in the process made some great friends. The Aboriginal Education Program, now known as Nura Gili, provided a good place for the Indigenous students to meet, swap stories and ideas. I found the staff and students a really good source of encouragement during my time there.



I went straight on to the College of Law, but didn't practise as a solicitor immediately. I took a job in policy in the Native Title Unit of the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Dr Bill Jonas had just been appointed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner. He had left his position as the Director of

the National Museum to take the appointment. Dr Jonas is a Worimi man, with a distinguished academic background and a strong background in community work. I was able to participate in much of the work, reporting to the United Nations Committees on Human Rights and Race Discrimination that was undertaken by Dr Jonas in his role as Commissioner at the

time. It was a time of much disillusionment for many people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The federal government's 10 point Plan had been introduced and the Native Title Act had been amended resulting in serious winding back of the rights of Native Title claimants. Mandatory sentencing was still in place in the Northern Territory and was having a disproportionate impact on Indigenous young people. Commissioner Jonas gave me a wonderful opportunity to contribute to that international human rights work as he made submissions to the United Nations on the human rights of Indigenous Australians. I was also able to

contribute to the Native Title Report, which is the Commissioner's annual report to federal government on Native Title issues. In 2002 I was offered another wonderful opportunity by Terri Janke. Terri was born in North Queensland and has family connections to the Torres Strait Islands (Meriam) and Cape York Peninsula (Wuthathi).

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Terri is a solicitor, who specialises in entertainment, cultural heritage and media. I worked with Terri as a solicitor in her firm for nearly two years. I learned a lot about many things and formed a firm friendship. Terri is a great inspiration – she is a talented lawyer, author, singer, advocate, and Mum!

I started my own consultancy firm in 2002. I have worked on different legal issues relating to Indigenous people including intellectual and cultural property, traditional knowledge, heritage, Indigenous protocols, biodiversity, consumer issues, human rights, criminal justice and stolen wages. I spend some time teaching and researching at UTS and Macquarie Uni which I love. But I am most excited about achieving my unrestricted practicing certificate and launching my legal practice. My main areas of expertise are intellectual property and the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage but I am interested in many legal areas. The legal interests of Indigenous people now cross many areas of law from land laws, heritage laws, intellectual property laws, race discrimination laws, criminal and family laws and many areas of commercial law including organisational and business structures. And although our current political and legal environment can be very frustrating and even scary, it is also an exciting time to be one part of the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who honour and protect our culture, and break new ground in the fields of the cultural heritage, the arts, education, law and many others.

Robynne Quiggin

It's a Girl!

Congratulations to Jacinta Koch and Lincoln Crowley on the birth of their beautiful daughter Juliet.

PROTECTING INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY – A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

ASG Information Night held at the Nelson Heather Centre on Monday September 4, 2006

Robynne Quiggin, an Indigenous lawyer and long term Northern Beaches resident, spoke about her work in the areas of Indigenous intellectual and cultural property. She explained that the heritage of Indigenous peoples is comprised of all objects, sites and knowledge, the nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation, and which is regarded as pertaining to a particular people or territory. The heritage of an Indigenous people also includes such things as moveable cultural property, symbols, designs, agricultural and medicinal knowledge, traditional use of flora and fauna, sites of historical significance and burials, and languages. In the past Indigenous knowledge has usually been used without permission, often taken from records of songs, dance and ceremonies stored in research institutions. A lot of Indigenous human genetic material is still stored in research institutions and incorrect conclusions have been drawn, usually to the detriment of Indigenous communities. Despite the admitted erroneous pronouncements of the past, there is still a reluctance by many institutions to return Aboriginal ancestral remains.

Because transmission of knowledge in Indigenous societies has usually been oral, conquering European powers have in the past offered no protection from desecration and misappropriation of knowledge. There has been large-scale theft of cultural objects and unauthorised use of art forms.

The United Nations says that Indigenous people should control copyright to protect areas such as literary, music, dramatic and artistic works.

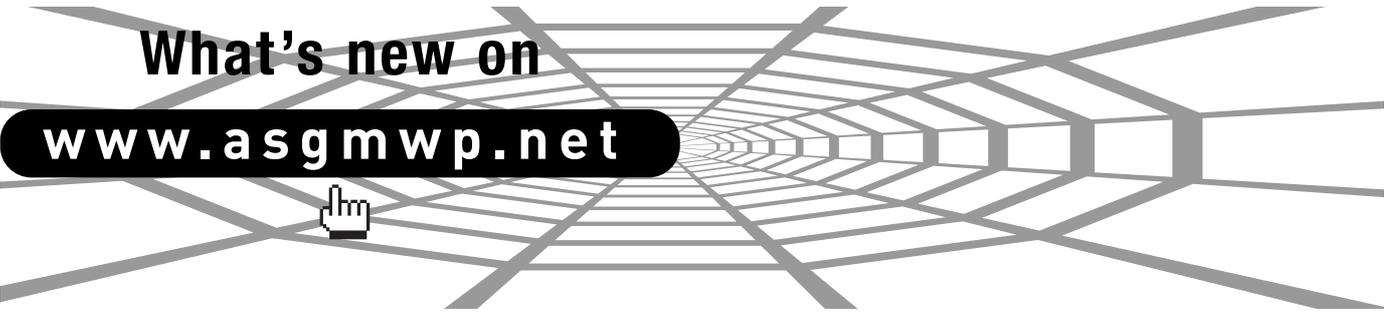
At the moment, copyright only covers things reduced to material form eg. words to a song written down, notes to music written down and steps to a traditional dance described in written form. The Australian Government has produced a draft Copyright Amendment (Indigenous Moral Rights) Bill 2003 which aims to protect the unique cultural interests of Indigenous communities and to give them the means to prevent unauthorised and derogatory treatment of works and films, which draw on their traditions, observances, customs and beliefs.

The Arts Law Centre of Australia, which is the national community legal centre for the arts providing legal assistance to the arts community across all of the arts sectors, has serious concerns about the Government's proposed Bill and made a lengthy submission to the Office of the Attorney General.

As part of Robynne's presentation she showed a video about a major court case between a Northern Territory community and a Western Australian company after the latter had had rugs manufactured in Vietnam using the designs of art works by community members held in the National Gallery of Australia. Not only had the company stolen the designs but it had the gall to attach tags to the rugs stating that royalties were being paid to the artists when they were not. Whilst the Aboriginal community were awarded damages they were never paid because the company went into liquidation.

It was a most informative evening.

Carol Gerrard



What's new on

www.asgmwp.net

New Section

Over the past few months we have highlighted on our homepage a number of documents we think would be interesting and useful to our members and guests. These items have now been moved to a new section called **Archives**, which can be accessed by clicking on the link in the left hand column seen on each page of the website, or by clicking on the link under *What can you find on this website* on the homepage.

The **Archive** items currently include the following:

- **Policy Panic Is No Solution.** Read Gillian Cowlshaw's Australian Financial Review article from Friday, 7 July 2006. Gillian says 'a new cycle of bullying won't heal old wounds in Aboriginal communities.'
- **Reconciliation – Why Should I Care?** Robin Grille kindly gave us permission to publish his excellent article full of answers to some common questions. A 'must read' for all Australians!
- **Peter Garrett MP** delivered a poignant speech at First Fleet Park for **Sorry Day 2006**.
- **Fr Frank Brennan's Seventh Manning Clark Lecture** presented at the National Library of Australia in March 2006. Fr Brennan is a leading advocate of Aboriginal Land Rights and Reconciliation. In his talk, *5 Rs for the Enlargers: Race, Religion, Respect, Rights and the Republic*, he told how he originally became involved in being an advocate for Aboriginal Rights.
- **Indigenous News Summary.** An opportunity to read detailed accounts of the Indigenous news items of 2004 and 2005, kindly prepared by Dr Ruth A. Fink Latukefu.

New FAQs

Five new Frequently Asked Questions have been added to our FAQ section. They are:

- What are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags?
- Who are Indigenous Australians?
- Why is there an Indigenous health crisis in Australia?
- Do Indigenous Australians face discrimination in the legal system?
- What is Acknowledgement of Country?

Special thanks to ANTAR and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for information used in the health and legal topics.

In accordance with our website guidelines, all substantive content written for the website — particularly the FAQ section — is reviewed for cultural appropriateness by a member of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) or an Aboriginal member of the ASG.

To access the full list of FAQs simply click on 'FAQ' in the menu on the left hand side of the page. There is also a *FAQ of the Month* highlighted in the yellow box on the right hand side of the page.

New Resources

A few new resources have been added to the website:

- **Printed Resources** – check out some of the great new books that have come out in the last year and feel free to tell us about books you think should be listed!
- **Web Resources** – Several new entries have been added to our web resources, most notably the new website for the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (www.metrolalc.org.au) and the Mt Theo-Yuendumu Substance Misuse Program (www.mttheo.org).
- **Protocol** – This section of our Web Resources has been expanded considerably and now includes links to several organizations that provide consultation and protocol guidelines on their websites.

Vanessa Walsh and Megan van Frank

RENEWAL OF ASG MEMBERSHIP

Notices that the 2006/07 members' subscriptions are due were mailed in mid-October. Early response has been enthusiastic (thank you!) but it would be appreciated if the exercise could soon be closed with everybody in the fold.

If you:

- are not an Indigenous member
- joined before January 1, 2006
- have not paid since mid-October 2006 (or pre-paid)

please return the recently mailed renewal form or, alternatively, mail your \$20 for full membership (or \$12 newsletter only) and include your name and address.

The postal address is Box 129, P.O. Narrabeen 2101.

Thank you

David Harrison (Hon. Treasurer)



ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

Steps to Connecting to Country – A study programme held on the four Monday nights in August 2006 presented by Oomera Edwards, educator and co-founder of *Link-Up*, and coordinated by the ASG.



Oomera Edwards guided us with her Aboriginal wisdom through four paintings ascending, representing the four stages of *Connecting To Country*.

1. Physical Connection to Country
2. Self Connection to Country
3. Spiritual Connection to Country
4. Beyond Country

On reflection, I can't help but think of my own journey towards *Connection to Country*. During the course bells rang for me – also valuable and timely reminders and of course new knowledge, new understanding. I, like some others, have been privileged to have experienced Oomera's insight and knowledge before, so I feel I'm already on the road, taking those *steps to connecting to country*.

As an artist, its uncanny how my own new work relates to the four steps. A recurring symbol has been the question mark – ?. And the words – *WHO – WHY – WHERE*.

I had just finished a painting on the spotted gum when Oomera pointed out the 'spotted gum' in her Step 3 painting. I did feel a spiritual connection! Hey! Back to why *the bells rang* – Yes, it is about IDENTITY. Until I truly understand the Aboriginal (first Australian) connection to country I can't be truly Australian, know who I am, where I belong.

This course would be marvelous for **all** Australians to earn their identity through the land.

*Denise Barry
(non- Aboriginal Australian Woman from Pittwater)*



I had queued for my bus from Dee Why to the city. It was mid-week, peak hour. The queue was not long but long enough. When the bus arrived, not just those standing in the queue moved towards the door but maybe another 20 people who had chosen not to queue. In critical frame of mind I classified them as 'young people'. It was then that I heard the driver say – '*no more, the bus is full*'. I caught my mood moving from calm to annoyed as the bus drove off to the city without me. As I stood there wondering if I would further indulge my annoyance, I realised that the sun was shining from the north, even though I normally think of it rising in the east. And as I looked at the trees planted in the median strip and felt the breeze on my face I realised that the wind was from the south.

In that moment of self-reflection I laughed at myself for being unconsciously obedient.

This was what Oomera had told me to do last night – '*just be aware, be aware of country, be aware of what is around you*'. Oomera told me that on the first of four Monday evenings when a group of fifty or more people gathered to learn about Aboriginal Spirituality.

Spirituality in general is having a bit of a resurgence and I don't think it is just a passing fad. It is a resurgence born out of necessity. The deprived and depraved state of the world, the insecurity and depression that mark our society in our generation, have prompted many people to ask serious questions about life's purpose and how that purpose is accessed. That isn't a bad definition of spirituality. And now, we on Monday nights had a chance to learn how Aboriginal people think about purpose and how they access it.

Of course, there is more to Aboriginal Spirituality than just feeling the sun and the wind on your face. There is an intricate educational programme in which it may not be possible to qualify as an adult until one is forty-seven years of age. We learned about layers of knowledge and levels of meaning that cannot be rushed but rather evolve in an orderly and ancient pattern. And the appreciation of that evolving requires hard work. I felt that Oomera was saying to us that if you are not prepared for hard work don't pretend that you are interested in Aboriginal Spirituality. Her message was that if we are going to seek healing/health that is part of Aboriginal Spirituality then the work involved will require honesty and courage. Oomera acknowledged the ability that we humans have for avoiding the truth about self and refusing to clear out our emotional gumph. Her words still ring in my ear – '*we have to deal with reality in life and not emotional fantasies*'.

I know that comparisons are not always helpful but I cannot stop myself contrasting these meetings with the normal, average, monthly meetings of the Support Group. When I leave the regular meetings, I often feel that I, as a white person, European, beneficiary of injustice, am part of the current Aboriginal problem or that I am supposed to be part of the answer to that problem. I listened to Oomera with neither of these responses. Of course the principles she was enunciating have implications for Reconciliation in Australia and the development of the Australian nation. But in these lectures Oomera was concerned about a bigger issue. She introduced us to a spirituality that was relevant for beneficiaries of injustice as well as victims and those who happily don't fall into either categories.

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ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

I wondered if she might move towards saying that if we don't deal with this bigger, all-encompassing issue of spirituality and our development as human beings, then the other problems will never be dealt with. I believe that the strength of Oomera's teaching comes from the fact that she has experienced what she is talking about. At no point was there a hint of defensiveness in her response to questions that regularly interrupted the flow of the lectures. Always a confidence, born of experience or an acknowledgement of the lack of it, revealed a woman who was not only in charge of her subject but who had happily allowed the subject to be in charge of her. I found myself thinking about another great teacher of whom it was said – *'he taught with authority'*.

Oomera's authority was clearly related to the fact that she had authenticated for herself the truths she proclaimed or rather offered to us. It was natural that I approached these lectures on Aboriginal Spirituality from the perspective of Christianity. I have been influenced by my Methodism and the inclusive principles of the Uniting Church. In addition, the Benedictine tradition has been a significant influence for me. Not for a moment did I feel it necessary to forsake the insights of these great traditions. Rather, under the influence of Oomera, I found myself appreciating more fully what Christianity has to offer me and am encouraged to make greater demands on the religion of my birth and choice as I continue developing my understanding of what it means to be human.

Grahame Ellis

ONE MOB, MANY VIEWS: An Exhibition of Indigenous Art

Hornsby Art Gallery and Community Arts Centre
October 25 to November 19, 2006

This exhibition brought together eleven Indigenous artists resident on the north side of Sydney – from North Sydney to Hornsby, to the Northern Beaches. Some are established painters and sculptors, some bravely exhibiting for the first time. But all works shown were of top quality – this is what impressed me when I saw the exhibition set up and hung. And all have something to say, uniquely.

In summary, this seems to be that we're here, in the suburbs and city, we're here with our own take on what it's like to be a people of dual culture and proud to be so. We're city folk and suburban folk and family folk and artists. And we'd like to share this with you.

Artists exhibiting were Shantay Belich, Leah Brown, Gwen Fazo, Michael Huddleston, Clair Jackson, Nikki McCarthy, Philip McLaren, Kevin Pierpoint, Gail Suttor, Mariong Watson, Mulgo Watson.

On the entrance divider, some fun and interesting youth and children's paintings were also on show.

The Opening Celebration was held on Friday night, 3rd November, at the gallery, with food and drink and great performances by the didj and flute duo *Nature Nature*, the Freeman Family traditional dancers (Wiradjeri) and songs by Corey Kirk, solo and harmonising with her mum and grandmother.

Dharug elder Edna Mariong Watson welcomed us to country with some comments on land, country and art. Clair Jackson opened the exhibition on behalf of the artists.

The exhibition was the brainchild of Kieli Shillington (Director, Hornsby Art Society Community Gallery) and Herb Smith (Community Facilitator of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy) and special thanks to them for the hard work of getting it all together.

We hope this may become an annual event!

Clair Jackson

NEWS FROM DUBBO

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9 2006 was celebrated in Dubbo by a march and meeting. About 50 people took part, though very few were non-Indigenous. As well as recognizing the issue of racism as a world-wide disgrace there was a very immediate local focus. The march began at the community centre in the heart of the Gordon Estate and soon passed by a site where a bulldozer was in the process of demolishing a house. This is rapidly becoming a common sight on the Gordon Estate. Despite the number of people here seeking Department of Housing accommodation many such houses on the Gordon Estate have remained empty for some time, attracting arsonists and vandals.

The government's solution to the problems on the Estate is essentially 'ship 'em out'. Apparently most (if not all) Department of Housing tenants on the Estate are to be relocated, mostly in other parts of Dubbo. Many quite good houses are to be demolished, rebuilt and sold on the open market.

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BIALA ABORIGINAL HOSTEL FOR GIRLS

Apologies for not having the time to get a *Biala* report into your winter newsletter. Time just seems to fly so fast here at the hostel. We were determined to do a report this issue and so here is a snapshot of what has been happening at *Biala* this year. I know a lot of *Elimatta* readers are interested and also that many of you kindly support *Biala* both financially and in other ways.

The numbers of students have been quite up and down this year. We started with 21 and after the usual ups and downs we currently have 9 girls with 2 new enrolments in Term 4.

We have had a couple of relief managers over the year and have spent a lot of time without relief which is all the norm. We now have Denise as the relief manager and of course Zita our cook is still here and Di is still our night attendant.

This year we have one Year 12 graduate. Lesley Webster has been attending Freshwater Campus where her courses included Child Care, in which she is planning her career when she returns home very soon. We are very proud of what Lesley has achieved since her arrival at *Biala* three years ago.

Emma Franks and Emma Marne are almost finished Year 11 and will do the

HSC next year, so 2007 will be very exciting as both these girls are long term *Biala* students. We also have a new Year 10 student and the other girls are in Years 7,8 and 9.

Several helpers are coming to the Homework Centre each week and we are grateful to these kind ladies who give up time to assist the girls.

Some of the activities undertaken by the girls this year are:

- 🌀 a film being made with funding from the Northern Sydney Area Health Service (still underway)
- 🌀 hospitality course at TAFE
- 🌀 footie games at Brookvale (we go and see Manly, of course), some picnics and swimming.

Some girls have been taken to events such as the *Sorry Day* Commemoration Service in the city, the ASG *Sorry Day* at Narrabeen Lagoon, Bilarong Festival workshops, bush-walks and a concert at Barrenjoey High.

Lesley Webster played netball this season in the Open B2 division and her team made the final. Although they did not win, they played really well all year. Emma Franks played soccer for Manly Vale in the

Open Division. Her team did not make the finals but she enjoyed the season. Felicia, Kaitlyn and Briana have started weekly tennis lessons. Emma Marne, our champion discus thrower, again won the Mackellar Girls High School discus event, the Zone discus championship and made it all the way to the regional competition at Homebush Sports Centre. Well done to all the girls.

The Year 12 Graduation for the secondary school hostels in NSW – *Biala*, Dubbo, Newcastle and Sylvania – is being hosted by *Biala* this year. We are all very excited with this and there has been and still is much work to be done in preparation for the graduation. It is being held at Ryde TAFE Hospitality Unit in November and of course the girls are shopping for their outfits.

We hope this gives you all a bit of an idea of what has been happening at *Biala* during the year. Again, we thank the members of the Support Group for their continued support to the Hostel. It is very much appreciated by all the girls and also of course by Alan and me as Houseparents.

Lara Ruttley

Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group



The Guringai Local AECG held its last meeting at Stony Range Flora Reserve on September 25. We are happy to announce new office bearers as the following:

Jessica Birk - President
Raye Newell - Secretary
Courtney Lyons - Treasurer

It is the vision of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) to empower Aboriginal parents and communities to be involved in education and training. Aboriginal education is the appropriate education of Aboriginal people.

It must also involve educating all Australians about Aboriginal Australia. Equity, cultural integrity and the community base are fundamental to the beliefs and practices of the NSW AECG. I speak on behalf of all of the new officers when I say that we are honoured to represent our local community. In addition, we truly value the support we receive from our local community and thank you for your continued commitment to the future.

Raye Newell
PH: 9918-9371



Willoughby City Council and Harbour to Hawkesbury Reconciliation Group held a Reconciliation Writing Competition as part of the 2006 Guringai Festival.

This is the winning entry in the senior primary school section.

WHAT DOES ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION MEAN TO ME?

It's a freezing cold day. I'm in a Year 5 classroom in a NSW public school about to do a practice for the basic skills literacy test. I open up the booklet and what's on the page in front of me? "What does Aboriginal Reconciliation mean to me?"

At school we only learn a little bit about Aboriginal people, their way of life and their beliefs. It's mostly about the European view of history. Actually, it's a whole lot less than a little bit about Aboriginal people, because what we learn comes mainly from books, television or the Internet. We don't get to learn from the people themselves, we don't get to hear their story.

Reconciliation. Hmm. It's an English word, in an English dictionary. It's a long word. It's hard to spell, and the truth is that Aboriginal Reconciliation doesn't mean a whole lot to me. I mean, do Aboriginal people even have a word for reconciliation??? Probably not, because they most likely haven't ever had to reconcile before Europeans invaded their land.

I've only been on this planet a decade, so what can I write about reconciliation of 200 years of invasion??? Not a lot. What I can write about though, is my experience of reconciliation.

My group of friends is a great group. We play well together and help each other out. We play harmoniously with other groups of kids. But not everyone is like us.

There is one girl and her friends who just come into the playground and try to dominate our games. They never even give us a chance to invite them to join in. They just invade.

They make fun of what we look like, what we eat for lunch and our names. They pick fights and try to take over the ground where we play. They just invade.

They don't respect the way we use the space to play in and want to make us like them, just like the Europeans did to Aboriginal people.

We defended our games, our space and ourselves. We tried different ways of getting them to stop bullying us. We asked them nicely to stop. We got some back up from other friends and classmates. We tried to ignore them. We reported them to teachers.

When they were confronted with their actions and how it was affecting us, they denied everything and tried to pretend it hadn't happened. They couldn't even be bothered to say *sorry*. I was very angry. It doesn't take much to say *sorry*. All you have to do is look the person in the eye and say the word.

The whole experience made me feel really stressed and upset. Much as I'd like them to go away they can't just disappear. It's school you know. They have to be there every day. For my survival, I had to find a way to live with them, whether I wanted to or not. With the help and kindness of my family, my friends and my teachers I've found some tricks to handle the situation and I'm trying to teach my friends from what I've learned. It isn't always easy. Some days they get up to their old ways again.

I know I won't ever really trust them until they say *sorry* and mean it. Hey ! Isn't that what happened to Aboriginal people ??? They were bullied and invaded. For their survival, they've also had to find a way to live with people who aren't like them, whether they want to or not. And they're waiting to hear the word *sorry* too.

Maybe that's what reconciliation means to me. Looking for a way to live together and waiting for the day when the invaders will say *sorry*, and mean it.

I think we've made a start on the long road to friendship and equality with Aboriginal people. I think people just don't realise that it takes time for these things to happen. The major message is to keep trying, isn't it???

I've got a lifetime ahead of me and my understanding of what reconciliation means will change as I get older. The things that won't change for me are the importance of respect, sharing and kindness.

Ilana Chaffey

10 years old and in Year 5



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NEWS FROM DUBBO

Following the march at the meeting in our beautiful Victoria Park, one woman in her late twenties told of her feelings as a child when her mother had told her that they were being moved off the mission where they lived (I think at Brewarrina). She is now horrified that she is having to tell her own children that the government was moving them out of their community. The Gordon Estate residents have a very strong sense of community. Many of them have no private transport and their day-to-day lives take place among extended family and friends on the Estate. Some people own their homes, but others of their family in rented accommodation will be scattered over a wide area.

The Department of Housing has apparently said that they even have the right to 'forcibly buy privately-owned houses' (Weekend Liberal, August 26, 2006). So it is a very worrying time for the Koori community in Dubbo.

Jackie O'Hare

NSW RECONCILIATION COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

November 5 - 6, 2006



Day One

Nancy Hill Wood, Carol Ritchie and I were present as representatives for the ASG MWP. The Conference took place at Darlington Public School which provided an ideal venue with the many Aboriginal and multicultural artworks produced by the children adorning the walls.

Sally Fitzpatrick acted as Chairperson for the day and following the *Welcome to Country* gave an overview of the Reconciliation Council over the past year. Presently there are 58 local Reconciliation Groups in New South Wales. One highlight for the year was the successful NSW Parliament House Forums, which were well supported by the public and by parliamentarians. Advocacy for *Stolen Wages* continues, one of many issues mentioned by Sally.

Next to the podium was the former NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Milton Orkopolous. He assured those present that the state government is committed to keeping Indigenous rights alive both politically and financially. It has increased the Small Grants budget to \$35,000 for 2007. Next May 27 is the 40th anniversary of the National Referendum when 90 percent of voters said *yes* to giving Aboriginal people the vote and being counted in the census. He then answered multiple questions on a variety of issues from the Indigenous community.

Professor John Maynard, lecturer at the University of Newcastle spoke about his grandfather Fred Maynard, who, having no faith in the Aboriginal Protection Board, became the founding president of the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association in 1925. Soon there were 11 branches and 500 members. Many of the issues that resurfaced in the 1960s were being fought for by this Association 40 years earlier. He quoted the late Charlie Perkins '*we can't live in the past, but the past lives in us*' and urged us to '*stay strong and struggle on*'.

Carol attended a workshop on *Coordinating Effective Events & Projects*, Aunty Nancy and I chose *Cultural Appreciation: Awareness of Indigenous Cultural Protocols* with Ray Kelly. From Armidale, Ray remembers growing up on the settlement called *the dump*. The bottom line for everything is paying respect. He identified a need for oral information to be attached to written records and applauded the number of Aboriginal people who have written their stories in recent years. Elders carry the stories and if these are not passed on they are lost forever. Disagreements will occur but by finding common threads survival will happen. He respects the efforts of Pat Lock to form an Elders Group and in

preserving culture. In conclusion he sang in dialect a Bellingen River song, which was about coming together: the more we share the easier the load. He acknowledged the great help that ASG Newcastle and other non-Indigenous community members have been to him.

After a delicious light lunch, a panel of five speakers presented *Milestones of Reconciliation*. Each speaker took an event that they thought as important in the Reconciliation journey and spoke for 10 minutes each.

Professor Chris Cuneen felt that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1987-91 was a positive milestone as it changed the political terrain. Paul Keating's famous Redfern speech 1992 and the enquiry into *The Stolen Generations* were by-products of this and out of the *Bringing Them Home Report* came the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. The change from the lack of acknowledgment of Aboriginal Australians at the Melbourne Olympics to high profile at the Sydney Olympics was also a positive.

Sharon Galleguillos chose *The Freedom Ride (1965)*. This started awareness at university level and encouraged protesting for social action. The Aboriginal Medical Service, programs instigated by Fred Hollows and the Wave Hill Walkout all occurred after this time. Support was rising in a cross section of people.

Yatu Widders (the youngest panel member) had attended the launch of the Aboriginal Education Policy at the National Youth Reconciliation Meeting; this greatly influenced her and others who attended. Recognition was beginning that skin colour was not linked to Aboriginality. The 2000 Walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge was an absolute milestone for Reconciliation.

Professor Ken Wyatt acknowledged Gough Whitlam and his Government. During this time the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was formed, ways to introduce self-determination as Aboriginal policy was commenced as well as the establishing of peak bodies for advice. Universal access to universities made it possible for all to further education.

A speaker from the multicultural community spoke of the importance of access through Human Rights and Equal Opportunity and the ability for Indigenous people to gain prominence on the world stage.

A lively question time followed and went well over the allotted time space.

How can we look at making gains in this time when there is no leadership?

The gap in access to education is forever widening with the present Government's policies and yet we see education as pivotal to fixing underlying problems in communities. We need to make sure that information about how to access grants is easily available, continue the fight against the injustices and give everyone a *Fair Go*.

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How can our Prime Minister give away \$90,000,000 for a chaplain's program for schools when Indigenous education and health are still so under-resourced?

The day was very stimulating. We decided that the weather was not inviting for the planned barbecue for the evening, so came home instead. Thank you ASG for the opportunity to attend.

Anna Bell

Day Two

Nancy Hill Wood, Lizzie Landers and I attended representing the ASGMWP.

Workshops on National Strategies for 2007.

A combined workshop with Gary Highland (National Director, ANTaR) giving an overview of the *Healing Hands: Indigenous Health Campaign for 2006-2007*. In this, he gave excellent facts, figures and quotes on the present Indigenous health situation and outlined the actions ANTaR is taking on the local through to national level. His speech is worth reading; go to www.antar.org.au or email ljackson@vtown.com.au and I'll forward it to you.

This led into a discussion of Reconciliation Action Plans: Partnering in your Community (RAPs) with Deborah Keeley (Relationship Manager, Reconciliation Australia). I've summarised this discussion here because of its immediate relevance to local groups – a hopeful call to continued action. The emphasis by Reconciliation Australia in 2006-7 is on setting up long-term projects in all areas, particularly through partnerships with government, mainstream businesses and organisations. RAPs are aimed at bringing into partnership Indigenous people and organisations with established business organisations and government on the national, regional and local levels. Their booklet *Reconciliation Action Plans: Turning good intentions into actions* gives an overview summary and contains the guidelines, checklists and forms of application for proposals to be put to Reconciliation Australia to set a RAP in motion.

RAPs have been working on 3 areas of Self Determination: Education, Governance and Leadership. A few successes so far are: the Dare to Lead program in schools: Macquarinet.com.au Indigenous Resources being developed for free access to all schools; BP Australia's Indigenous Governance Awards Program which is developing a series of Indigenous-run seminars to teach these skills; and Reconciliation Australia's Leadership Block-Release Courses by Indigenous leaders in all areas. From this program a perpetual group of 30 Indigenous and 30 non-Indigenous leaders (who train up those to continue) to develop 5-10 year Action Plans is in development.

The Partnering Program between Indigenous organisations and businesses goes ahead (with banks, corporates, the arts and music industries and media), with much success (eg News Limited Indigenous Journalism Walkeley Awards and mentoring; Indigenous issues as part of university media studies, Mushroom Records sponsoring 1-week Indigenous Music Festival in Melbourne during Reconciliation Week, etc).

In discussion, a criticism was made of Reconciliation Australia dealing too much on the larger end of town and the reply was that lobbying government and large corporations was one part of the agenda, but RAPs are also aimed at assisting local grassroots lobbying and partnerships. Suggested for 2007 that each local Reconciliation group work to get 5 local businesses, councils and organisations on board for jobs, training and partnerships.

Lunchtime Meeting : Aboriginal Caucus

A discussion took place on how to keep communities safe now that ATSIC has gone and Native Title is under attack again. The two main aspects are: Cultural Law and Native Title; and Service Delivery for all people in communities, city and country.

Resolutions :

- that Reconciliation Australia deal with accepted representatives, by protocols, from each nation and community
- that Reconciliation Australia present information and documents to communities in common language, 'plain English', with as little as possible 'bureaucrat speak'.

The Annual General Meeting was chaired by Greg Davison. The following office bearers were elected:

Chair - Greg Davison

Deputy Chair - Renee Williamson

Secretary - Alison Aggarwal

Treasurer - Anthony Ashby with John Telford, bookkeeper
Sydney Regional Reps - Robert Webb and Sally Fitzpatrick

A Special General Meeting was held to discuss and vote on the proposed modifications to the Reconciliation Council's Constitution. These are mainly to bring 'well-established practice into the Constitution' and 'refine it so that it reflects our current practices and provides direction for our future development'.

Solicitor Norman Laing explained the legal aspects and offered his continuing services. The resolution was carried.

Clair Jackson

The Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater was founded in 1979 and is committed to supporting Indigenous people in their struggle for justice.

The Group's website was launched in 2003:
www.asgmwp.net

The first newsletter *Elimatta* was produced in March 1982 and the 1987 Winter edition was named *Elimatta* for the first time. *Elimatta* is now archived by the National Library of Australia on PANDORA, Australia's web archive, and it is also included in the AIATSIS online catalogue.

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.

DREAMING IN PARIS

The Musee du quai Branley opened in Paris in June 2006. It is one of the largest ethnographic museums in the world, the pet project of President Jacques Chirac and a world triumph of architecture and engineering.

It was the inspiration of Jean Nouvel, the prize-winning architect, to incorporate Australian Indigenous art into fabric of the buildings. The works of eight contemporary Aboriginal artists were commissioned. The enormous scale of the works incorporating whole ceilings of vibrant Aboriginal art and symbolism is stunning. Unlike Michelangelo's Sistine chapel ceiling in the Vatican these works carry over to the streetscape and can be seen by the passer-by below. More Aboriginal works appear on the façade of the Australian wing which is one of the many buildings on the museum site.

The entire complex of buildings which is on the left bank of the Seine occupies a commanding position on the rue l'universite. The Eiffel Tower just a block away forms a back-drop to the Museum. Although the Museum is so large it will permanently exhibit just a fraction of the French Government's huge collection of

the arts of Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas. This collection includes 1423 objects: tools, weapons, ceremonial pieces, bark paintings some of which will be on permanent display.

The commissioning of the eight contemporary Australian Indigenous artists was a joint project of the French and Australian governments. Brenda Croft and Hetti Perkins were invited by the Musee's Director to curate the works of the artists. The architectural firm of Cracknell and Lonergon was engaged to display the works to best advantage. The Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian National Gallery and the Australian Embassy in Paris collaborated. The results are stunning.

- *Lena Nyadbi's work rendered into the outside wall represents body scarification marks with stone spearheads. From the street it links the work of her colleagues on the first and second floors (1)*
- *On the ceilings Ningura Napurrala's immense overhead wheel-like forms rotate through space (2)*
- *Gulumbu Yunupingu's Stars representing ancestors are a radiant metaphor for the unity of all people (3)*

The opening ceremony on June 20 was attended by many dignitaries including the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. In his opening address the French President Jacques Chirac told Aboriginal artist Mawindjil who painted one of the ceilings *'This is one of the great masterpieces of the Museum.'*

The work of the eight artists will expand knowledge of contemporary Indigenous art and will be seen by millions of people in the coming decades. Chirac's address concluded with a homage to the *'world's most humiliated, despised, and sometimes destroyed indigenous people and showed that all cultures like all peoples were of equal value.'*

The lavish opening ceremonies concluded with an Aboriginal dance and a smoking ceremony.

Ria Murch

1. Hetti Perkins - Look magazine Art Gallery Soc. NSW June 2006
2. Mirium Cosic - Inquirer, Weekend Australian June 17 2006
3. James Button and Cynthia Banham - Sydney Morning Herald June 25 2006

BUSH SCHOOL



Hailey Hogan and friend. – Photo courtesy Bryan Duffy

Can you learn maths from riding a horse? I now know that the answer to this question is yes after watching the documentary *Bush School* on SBS TV. It was screened in September in the *Storyline Australia* series and was chosen as the *Show of the Week* in the Sydney Morning Herald's *The Guide*.

Bush School is a positive and heart-warming story, full of humour, about a school and two dedicated middle-aged people, Colin and Sandra Baker. Despite great odds they succeed in running a school in the former Northern Territory mining community of Warrego, once home to 3,000 people and now a ghost town. The Bakers are the sole residents. With Colin Feddie, who is a traditional owner and Elder at Mungalawurru and a former stockman, they have developed a practical education program in this remote community for the Aboriginal children. For this to happen the students, for whom school had never seemed relevant, must make a round trip of 80 kms daily.

Continued Page 11

COLLIDING WORLDS: FIRST CONTACT IN THE WESTERN DESERT 1932-1984

The first contact between the people of the Western Desert and non-Aboriginal people in 1932 was a time of anticipation, excitement and tension.

The exhibition *COLLIDING WORLDS*, a collaboration with the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute Tandanya and the Museum of Victoria, relates to a historical junction in time of culture and events which was to have far reaching consequences for white and black relationships.

The premiere of the exhibition was in Adelaide at the 2006 Festival. After its season in Victoria the exhibition will tour nationally.

The beautifully illustrated catalogue which accompanies the exhibition records among other interesting events that Dr Donald Thomson, the anthropologist whose 1930s photographs inspired the recent brilliant film *Ten Canoes*, was also in the Western Desert region.

In August 1932 *The Times* reported that one of the most important and best equipped expeditions which had ever gone to the heart of Australia would 'help science complete the knowledge of what is regarded as the only pre-historic race left on the face of the earth.'

The expedition consisted of twelve scientists including T. Harvey Johnston, veteran of Antarctic expeditions, and E.O. Stocker, director of a calcimine company, whose hobby of photography included taking 10,000 feet of film to make travelogue films. Another notable was E.U. Holden, Director of General Motors Holden, whose interest in meteorology led him to take along a complete weather-recording plant.

By today's standards the enthusiasm of such a group seems patronising and inappropriate but gives some idea of the intense

interest and romantic idea at the time of discovering the *other* – the mysterious unknown people living in hostile desert conditions at what was then called Australia's *dead heart*.

Among the portraits and photographs in this richly illustrated catalogue is a small drawing of a Luritji boy by Arthur Murch. The artist made many paintings of the desert landscape and the people when he made his journey to Hermannsburg in 1934. In 1964 on another trip he painted Rubina Namatjira, wife of Albert, the famous Hermannsburg artist.

At the moment there is no date for the Sydney showing of *Colliding Worlds: First Contact in the Western Desert 1932-1984*. Keep your eye open for the Sydney season.

Ria Murch

OSCAR NOMINATION FOR TEN CANOES

Australia's official entry for best foreign language film in the 2007 Academy Awards is Rolf de Heer's Indigenous-language film *Ten Canoes*. To be eligible for the Oscar's foreign language category a film has to consist of predominantly non-English dialogue and have been released for at least seven days in its country of origin.

Ten Canoes won three major awards at the *Hisense Inside Film (IF) Awards* held on the Gold Coast on November 17:

- Best Director - Rolf de Heer
- Best Actor - Crusoe Kurddal
- Best Cinematographer - Ian Jones

Distributed by Palace Films, the DVD of *Ten Canoes* will be released Australia-wide on January 24.

Continued from Page 10

The primary school program devised means that the children follow the entire curriculum learning to ride horses. A vital link with the community's traditional ways was established with two Elders, Marie Rennie and Eva Kelly, coming to school each day, soon becoming a fundamental part of school life.

Warrego is the only Aboriginal school in the Territory with a 100 per cent attendance record.

To manage health and nutrition issues, midday meals are provided and a first aid program was introduced. Colin Baker undertook to teach the children to swim, driving to Tennant Creek, a return journey of 100 kms, three times a week. A delightful moment in the film is seeing the pleasure of these children – from the edge of the Tanami Desert – when they win a swag of medals in swimming competitions.

Bush School also focuses on one of the program's first students Latenzia Grant. Her parents make the decision that Latenzia will continue her education at New England Girls' High School,

Armidale NSW, and we see her starting as a boarder in this dramatically different environment.

The writer, director and producer of *Bush School* is Bryan Duffy. Sandra Baker is Bryan's sister and it was following a visit to Warrego that Bryan decided to make this film. He wanted people to be more aware of the challenges of education in remote Australia. Bryan certainly succeeded in this, bringing the school and all those involved in this program to life.

A captivating and inspiring story.

Bryan can be contacted on 02 6655 2409 or email bduffy@midcoast.com.au

To purchase a DVD of *Bush School* contact Marcom Projects on 07 3340 8900, or email www.marcom.com.au

Pat Frater



Coming Activities

December SUNDAY Dec 17: CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER from 4pm by the shore of Narrabeen Lagoon at the end of Robertson Street. Please bring picnic food to share and a blanket or chair to sit on. Telephone 9913 7940 or 9971 0735 if the weather is not fine.

February MONDAY Feb 19: ASG BUSINESS MEETING at Nelson Heather Centre, corner Pittwater and Jacksons Roads, North Narrabeen. Entrance to the centre's car park is from Boondah Road. **7.30pm**

March MONDAY Mar 5: INFORMATION NIGHT at Nelson Heather Centre, Jacksons Road, North Narrabeen. **7.30pm**

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

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 annadbel@bigpond.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

Proof Reader: Carol Gerrard

Graphic Design: Mark Ansiewicz: (02) 9979-9112

Distribution: Jackie O'Hare, Anna Bell, Rob Osborn, Pat Fisher, Jan Kirk, Carol Gerrard, Don and Pat Frater.

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Pittwater Council

Pittwater Council to assist with the 2006 *Sorry Day* Commemoration at Bilarong Reserve, Narrabeen



RSL CLUB

Dee Why RSL for assistance with the printing and mailing of *Elimatta* for this financial year.



Pittwater RSL towards the cost of guest speakers and videos at Information Nights and public meetings.



Forestville RSL for assistance with expenses for special activities at *Biala* Hostel



Manly Fishing & Sporting Club

Manly Fishing and Sporting Association for promotion expenses enabling the reprinting of the ASG bookmarks.

These have a suggested wording for *Acknowledgment of Country*.

SISTER CITIES AWARD

The *Sister Cities Cultural Exchange Award* for Australia was won jointly by Brewarrina Shire and Warringah Councils. The two communities established their 'sister city' relationship in 2000 and have since developed close links.

In 2005 a photographic project *Connexions in Time* brought together young people in Brewarrina and Warringah for a series of photographic workshops which culminated in a stunning exhibition of their work.

Connexions in Time was later displayed at NSW Parliament House as part of the 2006 *Guringai Festival*.

On November 14 Warringah Council's Events and Cultural Services Co-ordinator Coralie Hicks was presented with the award at a ceremony in Devonport Tasmania.