

## PHILIP Mc LAREN

I was born in the family home at Redfern, NSW, one of seven children. I am a Kamilaroi man. Both my parents are Kamilaroi as were their parents and on back for three more generations to when recorded history began in the Warrumbungle Mountain region in NSW. I was raised as an Aboriginal and identify as an Aboriginal and my family and I are well known by the Aboriginal community.

My present home is on Sydney's northern beaches with my wife and two children and we have a house on five secluded acres at Federal near Byron Bay that beckons more seductively each day.

For as far back as I can remember I have always been an artist and a storyteller. After leaving school at the Intermediate Level, I gained a position as a graphic artist/set designer/illustrator with ATN Channel 7 in Sydney while I completed a three year non diploma course at East Sydney Art College at night. My job was to design scenery and graphics for drama, game and variety shows, current affairs and news programs. Amongst others, I was responsible for the ongoing set and graphic style of the Johnny O'Keefe Show and the Mavis Bramston Show. I left ATN 7 to join Channel 10 where I did much the same work.

When I was aged twenty three I decided to go abroad, travelling initially to Canada via the jungles of Central America - a journey that would take six months. I finally settled in Vancouver, Canada, working at film animation with Hanna-Barbera. Later, I

secured a position as the Creative Director at Bell Advertising writing copy and producing artwork for print as well as radio and television campaigns for Canadian and American companies. I also produced and directed corporate videos and television commercials in this position.

Two years later I moved on, travelling for five months across the USA eventually landing in the Bahamas where I stayed for



a year. After working in Australia as a freelance set designer I moved to London where I remained for two years, again working as a Creative Director of massive multi-million pound advertising campaigns which were seen right across the

European Common Market.

Married in London, I travelled with my wife Roslyn to western Europe before moving back to Canada where I again worked in television and film production for major television networks in Canada and USA. I spent twelve years overseas travelling to more than twenty five countries until eventually I was invited to come back to Australia to head up the newly created position of Manager of Design Production Resources for the Nine Network with a staff of one hundred and ten.

I left two years later to start my own business. For more than twenty years I operated McLaren Concept, a creative consultancy employing up to twenty five people, writing, directing and producing television documentaries. In spite of this background I am better known internationally as a writer. My books have been translated into many languages including Japanese, French and German, and distributed widely overseas.

My first novel, *Sweet Water - Stolen Land* (University of Queensland Press), won the David Unaipon Award for Literature. A work of fiction set in 1869 it is based on the true accounts surrounding the brutal settlement of my clan's ancestral lands. It became a national top-ten best seller.

*Scream Black Murder* (Harper Collins), my second novel, is set in the present day on the black streets of Sydney. It takes on important social issues and was short listed for a Ned Kelly Crime Writers' Award.

*Continued Page 2*

Cover Story Continued

A thriller, *Lightning Mine* (Harper Collins), came next. Set in the present day it is concerned with the mining of sacred Aboriginal land and the inspirational fight to stop the desecration by the traditional custodians of the Lightning Spirit's resting place. It is contracted to an independent Los Angeles film production company.

*There'll be New Dreams* (Magabala Books) was released to wide critical acclaim. It is a departure for me in that it is a character driven novel. It's about very different Aboriginal people, each person's story being linked in saga-style sequences. Even though a work of fiction, several situations are taken from Australian history of the 50s and 60s.

*Utopia* is a completed manuscript soon to be released. It's the story of a reformed alcoholic surgeon from New York who is frustrated in providing medical services (with an under-staffed, under-funded medical centre) to a neglected Aboriginal community in the red centre of Australia. I have just completed my sixth book, *West of Eden - Man from Snowy River: the Original*, which sees a return to the historical novel for me, or more correctly into the new genre of docufiction (fully

indexed, documented fiction). This story is based on the true accounts of Toby, the legendary Kurnai horseman from the mountains; as well as Bunjileenee, the Kurnai leader, and Lauren Tucker, his consort for life. She was a white woman who in real life was shipwrecked on the Kurnai tribal beach at the mouth of the Snowy River. It also tells about the little known vigilante mobs led by honoured 'explorer' Angus McMillan who were responsible for hundreds of murders of Indigenous Snowy River people. But the prime aim of this novel is to unveil the true story of an Aboriginal man known only as Toby and of his outstanding horsemanship. It's a story of the classic underdog that became etched into the real history, literature and lore of this country, the original Man From Snowy River upon whom Banjo Paterson based his iconic poem.

*Black Silk*, my work in progress, is set in the chaotic offices of an extremely busy Aboriginal Legal Service. We follow Ian Cain, Australia's first black QC (there is no such thing), as he and his small dedicated staff defiantly tackle an unbelievable volume of cases. Their resources stretched to the limit, they learn the government is trying to close them down. In the middle of

this lunacy an horrific murder case lands on Ian's desk and the focus of the mass media on his doorstep. This storyline is based on the real life landmark payback-murder case of Jack 'Congo' Murrell and will shine a light on the lopsided arrest and conviction rate of Indigenous Australians. I have also written two screenplays funded by the Australian Film Commission – *Sweet Water – Stolen Land* and *Scream Black Murder* – based on my books of the same titles.

My painting and sculpture have also been exhibited internationally. I have spoken at many festivals in Australia and overseas and was invited by the Goethe Institute to speak to its inaugural Writers Festival at the Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt in Berlin. Recently I completed a Doctor of Creative Arts degree at University of Technology Sydney and will graduate in May 2007. My dissertation topic is *The Portrayal of Aboriginal Australians in Fiction*.

Philip McLaren

Philip has been guest speaker at an ASG Information Night and it is hoped he will come again to speak about his latest novels.

## SORRY DAY COMMEMORATIONS

**Sorry Day 2007 is the 10th anniversary of the tabling in Federal Parliament of the *Bringing Them Home* report.**

The NSW *Sorry Day* Committee is organizing a March followed by a community gathering to commemorate this special occasion.

When: *Sorry Day*, Saturday May 26

Where: March commences Sydney Town Hall and proceeds down George Street to First Fleet Park, Circular Quay  
Didgeridoo performers are needed to join in the March

Time : March starts at 10am  
First Fleet Park event starts 12 noon

Details: telephone 0437 100 121

Nancy Hill Wood is Chairperson of the NSW *Sorry Day* Committee

The Aboriginal Support Group is commemorating *Sorry Day/Journey of Healing*.

When: Sunday May 27

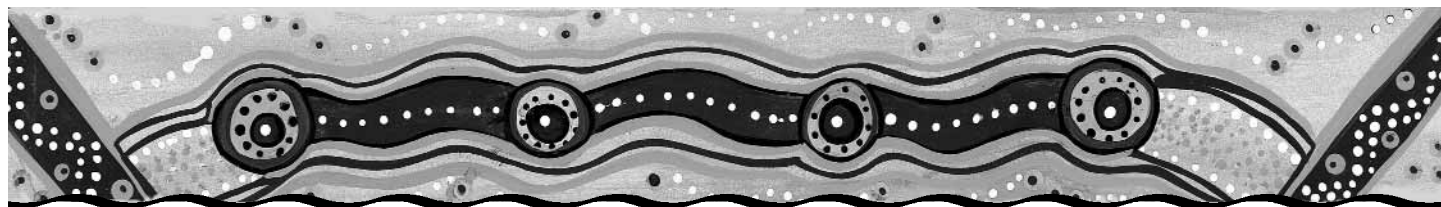
Where: Narrabeen Lagoon

Details: Ingrid Storm 9913 8226



Sunday May 27 is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum which gave Aboriginal people citizenship rights.

***Tell all your family and friends about these two important events!***



# SHAUN DUDLEY McILRAITH OAM 1922 - 2007

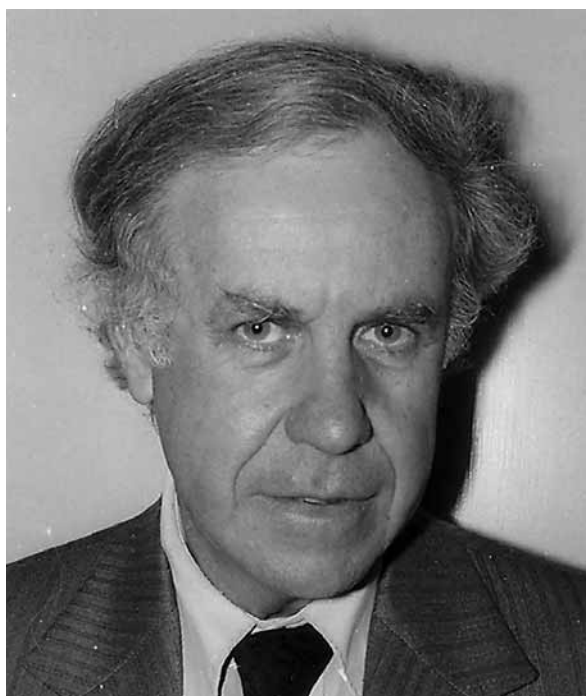
Shaun's life touched many people at many levels and his death on 4 January 2007 brought them together, some for the first time, to share memories of a gentle, talented man of great integrity and human warmth.

At his funeral at Mona Vale, family and friends met to farewell Shaun and join with his wife Enid, family and extended family to share their recollections. A large contingent of the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater was present. Jill Perkins, prominent in the Group's history, travelled from Canberra to pay tribute to Shaun's dedication to the struggle for justice for Aboriginal people. He was a highly valued member of the Support Group.

Shaun was born in New Zealand and in 1925 the family moved to London where he and his brother Warren spent a happy childhood with their parents. Shaun was destined to be a writer. His father Frank and his mother Madge represented *Smith's Weekly* in London. Warren also became a journalist.

Shaun's unfailing good humour, good manners and honesty would impress many. In the tough journalistic world he was widely respected for his intellectual grasp and the quality of his reporting. He had strong political views and his sympathies were always with the underdog. He wrote stories about Aboriginal culture and disadvantage for *People*, then a quality magazine, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Shaun covered Australia's first heart transplant in 1968 at St Vincents Hospital, Sydney, and reported on the danger of lung disease and cancer caused by asbestos, particularly in the workplace. In 1976 his journey with the late great Fred Hollows to cure desert Aboriginal people of blindness, his story *The Trachoma Trial* and his photographs of the epic work of ophthalmologists, Aboriginal



healers and sufferers who came to Professor Hollows' desert clinics, was a breakthrough in medical reporting. The Australian Medical Association commissioned Shaun to research the status of health of Aboriginal Australians. This was published as a monograph by the AMA – the first comprehensive study of its kind. A further commission was to research the material for the first film presentation of breast cancer. This was screened at the Australian Film and Television studios as an educational survey of this vital topic which was, in the early 1970s, at last commanding real attention. Shaun was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1981 for his service in the field of journalism. In 2003 Warringah Council presented him with a Certificate of Service for his contribution to the Aboriginal Support Group.

His wife Enid matched his ideals of egalitarianism and fairness. Enid, who worked with the trade union movement and with Tranby Aboriginal College Co-operative, was a co-founder of the Aboriginal Support Group in 1979. An activist, she was a strong support for Shaun. They shared a love of music and

the outdoors, going on extensive walking tours during which Shaun took photographs, his much loved hobby since his early youth.

My remembrances of Shaun have many layers. It seems I inherited Shaun from Arthur Murch as their connection began before I met Arthur and he became my husband. Before World War II, maybe coinciding with Shaun's move as a seventeen year old to New York, Arthur Murch visited Shaun's parents in London. It was 1939 and Murch was planning a trip through Europe. For safekeeping he left possessions and a painting *Leda and the Swan* with Shaun's mother Madge. War

broke out and he was unable to return to England leaving Genoa on the last ship before Italy entered the war. Murch did not see his painting for many years.

In the late 1950s, after Frank had died, Madge returned to Australia. Shaun brought his mother to visit us in Avalon. Rolled up in a parcel was Murch's painting *Leda and the Swan*. Madge had guarded it all through the London blitz and was really sad to part with it but Shaun insisted. He knew that Murch had finished it in London when his landlord had cut off the electricity. Penniless he had brought 24 candles, cut them in half and magnified the light with a mirror, in order to finish it in time for the Royal Academy art exhibition in 1936.

This was the first time I had seen the fabled pointillist painting which was acquired by the Art Gallery of NSW in 1975. If it had not been for Shaun's insistence it may never have been returned, restored, reframed and publicly displayed.

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# YAMAJI REVISIT AFTER 50 YEARS

The last time I visited the Murchison (about 450 kms north of Perth) was in 1956. As a twenty-four year old anthropologist, I was doing field research among Aboriginal people who spoke Wajarri but use the term Yamaji, meaning 'man', to refer to themselves.

Many Yamaji now live in towns such as Geraldton, Mullewa, Carnarvon and Meekatharra but in the 50s only a few families lived in towns as most were employed on the sheep stations to the north. Aboriginal men were valued as expert stockmen and excellent horsemen, while women did domestic work in the manager's house or helped with the mustering and other station work. Elderly people were allowed to live with their relatives in the makeshift camps. Fifty years on that way of life has long since vanished.

In 1955 I stayed at the Railway Hotel in Mullewa, daily visiting the camps then situated across the railway line well out of sight of the town. There was no water supply or sanitation; 'native' people as they were then called lived in corrugated iron shacks or tents. A few families had houses in town. Gradually I got to know everyone, the regular town dwellers and the station Yamaji who came on short visits.

I recorded their traditional songs, using a small Miniphon wire recorder and played them back through a portable transistor radio. They had never heard Yamaji songs recorded and older people were keen to sing them fearing the songs would otherwise be lost like so much else of their culture. As word spread, station people living further north, knowledgeable Elders and women, wanted their songs recorded. As a Research Fellow with the Psychology Department of the University of Western Australia I was supplied with a Landrover with camping equipment. This enabled me to travel around the Murchison with Yamaji ladies, such as Mrs Ulli Dingo and Mrs Fanny Comeagain as my guides. Over the months that year we visited stations and towns where I recorded songs and took many photographs. All this information is now held in the archive collections of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra.

In 2005 I gave the Institute my last box of colour slides, which had deteriorated over time. Its audio/visual department had to spend many months restoring and then transferring them to digital format. I had begun corresponding with some Yamaji ladies who had recently visited the Institute in Canberra and heard some of the old recordings, recognising some singers as their own close relatives, long since passed away. They hoped I might one day be able to visit and bring them photos from the past.



*Ruth with friends at her bush camp at Meerberie Station WA 1956 – Photo courtesy Ruth Finke Latufeku*

The opportunity came early last December when the University of Western Australia invited me to *Anthropology in the West: 1956-2006*. After the symposium I flew to Geraldton where the Yamaji Irra Wangga Geraldton Language Programme had organised a function at which I was to hand over the photos. It was well publicised by Coralie Dann who works with Irra Wangga and a bus load of Yamaji people went over from Geraldton to Mullewa, where they had hired the Town Hall for the morning.

Gradually the large hall began filling with men, women and young children, everyone sitting and chatting at little tables and later sharing a meal together. Before the handing over ceremony Yamaji Elder Ross Boddington sang a short Yamaji song. I was told he is

one of the few men who can still sing them. I presented an album of the photos and in return received a photo of Lake Bundiara in flood, taken earlier last year. In my brief talk I mentioned the Aboriginal Support Group and that we have a website and handed out some of our bookmarks, so don't be surprised if you hear from some Yamaji people in the West.

Everyone was very interested in watching the projection of the photos and then handling the album which got passed around the tables, with people recognising close relatives in the pictures and happily laughing and reminiscing about them. They had been asked to approve the photo screening well in advance and no one had objected. At the beginning of the ceremony one lady had questioned whether families had given their permission but everyone there was happy for them to be shown and she stayed on herself to watch the slides.

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## YAMAJI VISIT AFTER 50 YEARS

One photo showed some young boys, sitting on a gate watching a football match. A man in his sixties introduced himself saying "that's me, I was thirteen then, and that's my brother and I know all those other boys' names". He presented me with a necklace of coloured seeds his wife had made and I felt very touched.

The whole morning was a great success and people were reluctant to leave, they just wanted to look longer at the photos.

The good news is that AIATSIS has recently started ROMTIC (Community Access & Return of Materials to Indigenous Communities) which entitles individuals to get up to 20 items free from the collections in the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives ([audiovisual@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:audiovisual@aiatsis.gov.au)). Under this new arrangement all the archival materials become more accessible to Aboriginal communities like the Yamaji.

At Christmas I received a card which said: "That was so historical you coming over here and us meeting you in Mullewa 11/12/2006! We were on the bus and actually talked and laughed there and back."

I was pleased too to have helped to bring back something of their past!

Ruth Fink Latukefu

### RUTH FINK PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

Ruth Fink commenced fieldwork in the Murchison/Gascoyne region of Western Australia in 1955, while employed with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. Following the advice of Adrian Day, an administrator/welfare officer with the Western Australian Department of Native Affairs, she started research among the camp people at Mullewa where customary practices and widespread use of the Wajarri language were still extant.

Her initial research focused on recording the songs and traditions before they were lost but later shifted to interviewing people about contemporary concerns (Gray 2001). The rapport that Ruth Fink developed with community members is evident in the recordings held in the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives, and the photographic portraits that are the subject of her latest donation to the Institute.

The 135 photographs provide a valuable insight into the camp life, housing conditions, and recreational activities of the Wajarri people at different locations in the area, including Wooleen, Mullewa, Tarden and Yaloo. Scenes of Aboriginal men working in the pastoral industry are also featured, despite Ruth having to contend with reluctant station owners suspicious of her motives. It is, however, the personal portraits that are the most striking and it is evident that Ruth Fink's down-to-earth, informal approach to her work was most successful. There is a level of trust, and indeed intimacy apparent in many of these images. Arguably it is this aspect that makes the collection so valuable not only as a visual record of Australian anthropological research in the 1950s but also as a family record for the Wajarri. The Audiovisual Archives has already received enquiries from community members interested in obtaining digital copies from this collection. These will be provided upon completion of the extensive conservation work and subsequent digitization.

David Jeffery  
Collections Manager  
AIATSIS, CANBERRA

Reference: Gray, G(ed.) 2001, *Before it's too late: Anthropological reflections, 1950-1970*, Oceania Publications, University of Sydney (Monograph 51)

#### Page 3 Continued

In the 1960s I worked at the Sydney Red Cross headquarters. I was fortunate to have Shaun's support and medical knowledge in preparing articles and appeals for the Blood Transfusion Service. His advice on RH factor, genetics and other topics was invaluable. Around this time Arthur Murch went to Hermannsburg Aboriginal Mission near Alice Springs. He had been asked to develop arts and crafts and trade practices that would provide an income for the Aboriginal community. In 1965 Shaun wrote *Art For The Aborigines*,

an article about the trip, for *People* magazine. It is one of our family's treasured archives.

When Shaun retired from the *Herald* in 1981 he continued as a freelance journalist. He worked for the Cancer Council and in keeping with his fitness regime he walked from the bus in Carrington Street to the Council's offices in Darlinghurst.

Photography had always been a lifelong interest for Shaun. Armed with his Minolta camera and with his umbrella tucked into his belt, Shaun roamed throughout Sydney

taking photographs of the streets and buildings that would soon be lost in the inevitable rush to modernise the city. The National Trust now holds many of these photographs.

We are grateful to Shaun for this archive and for the many contributions he made in public life in the cause of tolerance, understanding, justice and freedom for the oppressed especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for his lasting and undemanding friendship.

Ria Murch

# NEW ASG COORDINATOR ROLES

Whilst the Aboriginal Support Group-Manly Warringah Pittwater is a relatively small community group it has a broad reach. Consequently, there are a large number of coordinating and administrative functions involved to keep information flowing between members, project teams, associated organisations and the broader community. Since the departure (in body if not in spirit) of Jill Perkins in 2001, Anna Bell has assumed the majority of these responsibilities. It had never been Anna's desire to take on this leadership role, but she has 'stepped up' to coordinate the group simply because it needed doing.

Anna signalled some time ago that she would be unable to sustain this level of commitment. At the same time, it has been difficult to find someone else willing to take on the significant role that had evolved over the years.

At the 2007 Planning Meeting last December, the group addressed this issue. The Coordination role was split into three. Volunteers came forward to take on two of the newly created roles whilst Anna retained Community Liaison duties. Below is a summary of the new roles and responsibilities:

## **Coordinator: Business meetings – Carol Ritchie**

- ☞ Review format of Business meetings (with input from other members)
- ☞ Set agenda for each meeting
- ☞ Take minutes (or nominate minute taker)
- ☞ Chair meeting (or nominate Chair)

## **Communications Coordinator – Suzen Meagher**

- ☞ Collect and distribute correspondence
- ☞ Respond to correspondence (or nominate)
- ☞ Manage contact updates (with Jackie O'Hare)
- ☞ Prepare monthly summary of correspondence for Business meeting
- ☞ Email communication to members

## **Community Liaison – Anna Bell**

- ☞ Ensure ASG-MWP is represented at appropriate community meetings eg. ANTA, Guringai Festival, Tranby (from volunteer lists)
- ☞ Coordinate helpers for community events (from volunteer lists)
- ☞ Source speakers for community functions

Most people at the planning meeting volunteered for some aspect of support – thanks to all. But special thanks to Anna for her efforts over recent years. Anna was acknowledged at the Christmas picnic with ASG-MWP Life Membership. In typical self-effacing style, Anna noted that others have been members for far longer and contributed so much. It is such people who keep our group viable.

*Kevin McCreton*

# Bicentennial Reserve and Flat Rock Gully Mural Project



*Artist Shane Haurama with Willoughby City Council Mayor Pat Reilly and Alison Clark at the unveiling on February 18  
– Image courtesy Willoughby City Council.*

Shane Haurama is a local Indigenous artist and during the month of January 2007 undertook a major mural project for Willoughby City Council. The mural is located in Bicentennial Reserve, Willoughby, and comprises three distinct sections

which refer to the past, present and future relationship with the Indigenous people and the landscape of Flat Rock Gully. While Shane's work responds to the physical landscape of Flat Rock Gully, it is also a visual and historical narrative through time. His palette of four colours serves to highlight the significance of this journey and the rich cultural heritage, flora and fauna in the region.

Dominating the work are spirit-like figures called Kwinkins. Through the journey of the Kwinkins we are told a story about the history of the area.

In addition there is other historical information about the site. For example, on the front panel in the top left hand corner Shane has placed Henry Lawson and his cave. There are even Chinese market gardeners who once farmed the hills in

this area. Shane has also made reference to the importance of water and aquatic life along the bottom of the mural.

Shane has worked on several important projects with both North Sydney Council and Willoughby City Council and has received acknowledgements for his contribution to the visual arts in the Northern Sydney region.

In 2004 Shane won North Sydney Council's *Australia Day New Wave Surf Board Art Competition* and in 2005 was commissioned by North Sydney Council to construct two sculptures for Kesterton Park in Neutral Bay. These finely detailed sculptures reference Shane's Indigenous heritage and depict a fisherman, Manubada Haurama, and fisherwoman, Abia Haurama.

*Alison Clark  
Cultural Project Officer  
Willoughby City Council*

# AT THE MOVIES

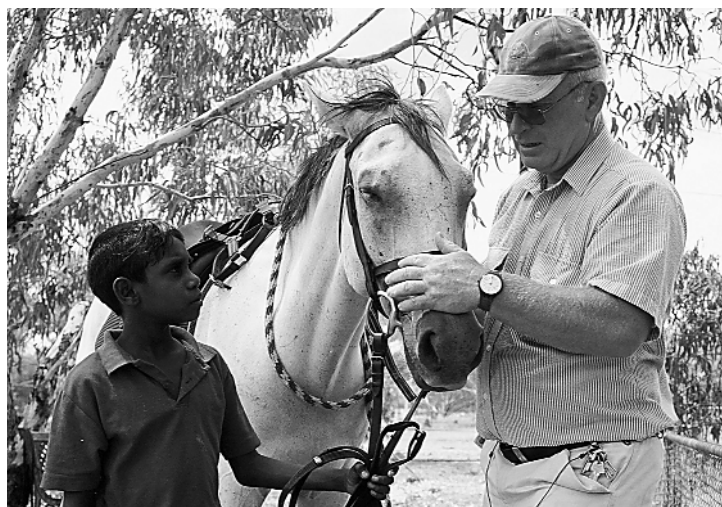
## BUSH SCHOOL - SENIORS WEEK EVENT

Released in 2006 this heartwarming film is about a small school for Aboriginal children who live on the edge of the Tanami Desert in Central Australia. Soon after teacher, Colin Baker, and his wife Sandra arrived at Warrego, it became a ghost town when the gold mine closed. To keep the primary school open the Bakers, with Elders from the community, developed an innovative curriculum based on the children learning to ride horses. This wasn't the lifestyle change that Colin and Sandra were expecting when they moved to the outback.

*Bush School* is written, directed, filmed (in beautiful colour) and produced by Bryan Duffy. The screening will be followed by discussion. **FREE**

**Date:** Monday March 26

**Time:** 10am for Morning Tea to be followed by the film



*Eziekiel with Colin Baker – Photo Courtesy Bryan Duffy*

**Venue:** Warringah Civic Centre, Dee Why

**Bookings:** Pat Frater 9971 0735

## KANYINI - THREE GURINGAI FESTIVAL EVENTS

This film, premiered at the 2006 Sydney Film Festival, is a story told by Uncle Bob Randall, Aboriginal Elder from Uluru. It is based on his own personal journey and the wisdom he learned from the old people living in the bush. Uncle Bob explains how Indigenous people have been dispossessed of the four central aspects of life – *Kanyini* – essential for people to thrive. These four things – belief system, spirituality, land and family – are central to his explanation.

*Kanyini* is also filmed in magnificent colour. The director is Melanie Hogan. Melanie and Uncle Bob Randall will be present at each screening and will participate in discussions after the film. The screenings will be in late June at Manly (evening session), Collaroy (morning) and Avalon (evening).

**ALL TICKET SALES FROM THESE EVENTS WILL BE DONATED TO THE KANYINI FOUNDATION FOR THE MUTIJULU COMMUNITY**

For further information please contact Pat Frater 9971 0735

## RECONCILIATION WEEK

**SUNDAY MAY 27 to JUNE 3**

**ONE PEOPLE – ONE PLACE – ONE FUTURE**

Sunday May 27 is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum which gave Aboriginal people citizenship rights.

Sunday June 3 is the 15th anniversary of the Mabo land rights judgement.



*Olive Fawkner, young friend of Ria Murch  
– Photo Courtesy Penny Fawkner*

# ORIGIN OF THE NAME MANLY

In keeping with his instructions, Governor Arthur Phillip and his officers made an effort to establish good relations with the local people. There were occasions when relations were cordial and the two sides even danced on the beach together.

On 28 January 1788, at the present Manly Cove, Captain Hunter gave gifts to men of the Kyemaigal Clan of the Kuringai Tribe. He offered gifts to the women who were terrified and refused to come forward until an Elder urged them to do so. In view of this, Hunter called it Eves Cove.

In Governor Phillip's first dispatch to Lord Sydney on 15 May 1788 he said that he had been impressed by the manly behaviour of a group of Aboriginal men who had waded out to see the boats and receive presents at what is now named North Harbour. He had decided to give the name Manly Cove to the place where they first met. It is not clear where this was exactly or when the name Manly Cove was bestowed. Phillip referred to his spearing (which was at the present Manly Cove) as happening at Manly Bay.

Captain Hunter, the official map maker, marked Manly Cove at the head of North Harbour, at the same time bringing Collins Cove into the present Manly Cove. The name Eves Cove was forgotten. While the name Manly Cove caught the popular imagination, and was used by some people, Collins Cove seems to have been the official name used in the early days, particularly by the naval officers.

Relations deteriorated with the abduction of Arabanoo, Bennelong and Colby and the spearing of Phillip. By 1789 small pox, against which the Aboriginal population had no resistance, had wiped out at least half the population around Port Jackson. The survivors were unable to fish and forage as they had before and they became increasingly dependent on handouts from the settlers. It is paradoxical that those called *manly* should meet such a miserable fate

*Andrew Macintosh*

Source: Shelagh and George Champion, *Manly Warringah and Pittwater 1788-1850*, Fast Books, Glebe, 1997



## BOOK REVIEW

### THE COMMONWEALTH OF THIEVES: THE SYDNEY EXPERIMENT

by **Thomas Keneally**, published by **Random House**

Northern Beaches author Tom Keneally wrote this book a few years ago but for anyone who hasn't caught up with it yet, it is well worth reading. It gives the reader a good foundation for understanding the Sydney of today. It illuminates the background to the British settlement of what we now call Australia.

For example, I was amazed that the British Courts were still sentencing convicted criminals to transportation even after the American War of Independence was concluded and apparently the State of Georgia actually did accept some convicts in this time period and their labour was auctioned off in a similar manner to slaves. The British Government briefly considered building major prisons in the British Isles prior to 1787 but did not proceed on this course until the 1860s when convict transportation to Australia ceased.

When Arthur Phillip was commissioned by the British Government to first transport convicted felons to New South Wales, King George III's instructions to him regarding the Indigenous people living there were "You are to endeavour by every possible means

*to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them."*

However, once the First Fleet took possession of the land around Sydney Cove, these instructions were not worth the paper they were written on. All the land was appropriated without ever any reference to or consultation with the Eora Nation.

Even the more enlightened officers such as Watkin Tench always spoke about how the "Indians", as Aboriginal people were then called, had to learn that the country now had new masters. The meanest convict felt superior to the Aboriginal people and in most cases behaved badly toward them. Even Phillip took to kidnapping Aboriginal men as a means of opening dialogue with them. Such an act is a criminal offence in Australia to this day but the rule of law was not considered to apply to "savages".

Whilst Phillip's administration of the Colony was egalitarian and gave British white Australia a wonderful foundation of equality and fraternity, this did not extend to other races. Speaking of Arthur Phillip, Keneally concludes the book by saying "...it is in *New South Wales and the ultimate Australia that his spirit is most visible, pragmatic yet thorough, caught between sparks of both authority and compassion, a bleak white icon who conducted the Sydney experiment and made it a success for the likes of Henry Kable (a transported convict) and a catastrophe for Bennelong and his kind.*" And this is the situation we still live with in 2007. This book engrosses the reader completely even though you know the ending.

*Carol Gerrard*



# BIALA GRADUATION

On Saturday November 18 Nancy Hill Wood, Anna Bell, Pat Frater and I attended the Aboriginal Hostels Graduation Dinner. This was held at Ryde TAFE Hospitality Department and was wonderfully organised by Lara and Alan Ruttley. Year 10 and Year 12 students from all the secondary hostels in NSW were honoured at this graduation. Lesley Webster from Biala graduated from Year 12 together with 5 other students, both girls and boys. It was wonderful to see these young men and women achieving such a level of education and to hear of their ambitions for the future.

Lesley had been at Biala for three years, first attending Mackellar Girls High and then completing her education at Freshwater Campus. Lesley plans a career in child care for which she had studied through Brookvale TAFE.

Lesley had a whole table of her family at the graduation. They had all come to show their pride in Lesley's achievements and the group included her grandmother and

sister. We wish Lesley all the very best for her future life and career and we congratulate her on her wonderful achievements.

There was also one Year 10 student who graduated from Biala – Nicole Shepherd. Hopefully Nicole will return in 2007 so that she too can graduate from Year 12 in 2008. Nicole has shown much promise in her short time at Biala.

It was a very enjoyable night and it was really nice to see all the Biala girls dressed so beautifully. When we left the young people were having a great time with the music and dancing in full swing.

I also had the pleasure in attending Lesley's graduation from Freshwater Campus a couple of weeks earlier. Her grandmother and uncle were able to attend this day. It was a very moving graduation and Lesley gave a special presentation on her life at the school. She really did herself proud in front of a very large audience.



*Lesley Webster at the Freshwater Campus Graduation – Photo courtesy Carol Ritchie*

We were very fortunate to be able to attend these graduations and to see the progress these students are making as they enter into adulthood.

Our thanks to Lara and Alan for inviting us.

*Carol Ritchie*



## Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Dear Elimatta Readers,

Even in these early days the year 2007 is showing the marks of change.

I have three messages to deliver:

Firstly, I would like to extend a deeply heart-felt thank you to the Aboriginal Support Group for its generous contribution to the Guringai LAECG. Your donation will assist in the purchasing and maintenance of a desperately needed Internet connection and supplies.

Secondly, the Northern Sydney Aboriginal community stands at attention with the resignations of Herb Smith (Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy) and Colleen Potter (NSW Department of Education and Training). While we proudly send them off into their new endeavours our eyes now look to the horizon for the new day. While ACYFS and NSWDET have the responsibility of replacing these fine individuals, the Guringai community looks forward to welcoming their much needed successors.

Lastly, many Guringai LAECG members recently attended a meeting for the proposed Northern Beaches Aboriginal Community Centre. The centre is meant to model the already successful Hornsby Aboriginal Community Centre and the Cromer Community Centre had been selected for our group to use. I am happy to share the details of this project with you as they unfold.

With the enthusiasm and dedication of Guringai community members such as Clair Jackson, Cliff Lyons and Julie Hendicott the coals of the Northern Beaches bushfire are beginning to stir. May the flames grow strong and burn bright. Thank you again ASG for your unfailing support.

Raye Newell, Secretary

# FIRST INDIGENOUS RESEARCH FELLOW AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Joe Gumbula, a Yolngu Elder, scholar and musician, has won Australian Research Council funding to identify and contextualise a history where none was thought to exist. ARC funding of \$245,000 over two years will enable the University's first Indigenous research fellow, Joe Gumbula, to start work on a historic project in 2007.

Gumbula is a Gupapuyngu Yolngu Elder from North East Arnhem Land and is recognised as a leading authority on Yolngu law, knowledge and material culture.

His research will involve examining the earliest known collection of photographs, audio recordings and personal records from North East Arnhem Land which have been hidden away for decades in boxes in the University of Sydney Archives.

*"I am very happy that the work I am doing will be for future generations, both in Arnhem Land and for Australia in general"* Gumbula said.

At the north eastern tip of the Northern Territory, Arnhem Land is one of the most remote regions in Australia and had no English-speaking presence until the 1920s.

*"The area was considered to have no history, just natives in the bush, so this project is significant because it reveals the common ground on which we can talk about the history of pre-Commonwealth Australia in a way that honours and respects the Yolngu and other Indigenous peoples of Australia"* said Gumbula's mentor on the project, Aaron Corn, an ARC Australian post-doctoral fellow in the Conservatorium of Music.

Gumbula will work to identify and contextualise the collection of photographs and sound recordings taken by early missionaries and anthropologists. They

include records of his own immediate family.

In his previous work with Museum Victoria and the National Museum of Australia, Gumbula not only examined and studied records from Arnhem Land but also returned digital copies of them to the Yolngu community. *"Technology has made it possible for me to bring back these photos and audio records back to my community; it was the first time many people had seen these pictures of their families from 60 to 70 years ago"* he said.



Joe Gumbula (left) with Dhamanydji Gaykamangu...sifting the University archives. – Photo Courtesy Aaron Corn

Dr Corn said that, until recently, early records from Arnhem Land were rarely shown or returned to their source communities and the partnership with the University Archives had important ramifications for the Yolngu. *"These people are now seeing how they lived at the time of first contact with Anglo-Australia. They feel better grounded in their community and history, and are able to see their families long gone in a way that validates their struggle for cultural survival and language maintenance"* said Dr Corn. *"In essence, these records help to keep this struggle alive."*

The records are from the personal archives of A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University from 1934 to 1956 and an expert in Aboriginal history and culture.

*"These archives have never been shown to the public before"* said Dr Corn. *"This project will produce findings of world heritage significance."*

As a Yolngu Elder, Gumbula has decades of experience in Yolngu law, ceremonial leadership, and traditional song, dance and design, but holds no university qualifications. Dr Corn said his research

fellowship represented a major leap forward in academic recognition of the unique and invaluable knowledge held by Indigenous Australians.

*"This is essentially an accord between our community of scholars and the great intellectual traditions of Indigenous Australia. It shows we are mature enough to learn from rather than fear alternative ways of thinking about the world around us"* said Dr Corn.

Gumbula has also been selected by the University Senate to receive an honorary Doctor of Music.

The award recognises his work as a musician, scholar

and community Elder whose work in teaching and preserving Yolngu culture has had a lasting impact.

*"My people really look forward to me continuing my work to bring back more knowledge to the community because it affects how we think about ourselves as Yolngu and our place in the world"* he said.

Julie Ji

Reprinted with permission from *Sydney Alumni Magazine*, The University of Sydney (Nov. 2006 issue)

# HERITAGE LISTED SITES IN WIRADJURI COUNTRY

In the Winter 2004 issue of *Elimatta* ASG members June and Kevin Mason wrote about an excursion they made in the central west district of NSW. Led by James Williams, Coordinator of the Orange Land Councils, the excursion was to the burial site of Wiradjuri man Yuranigh. This site has since been listed on the Heritage Register of New South Wales.

Yuranigh was a guide with Thomas Mitchell's expedition to Queensland in 1845/6. In his journal Mitchell referred to Yuranigh as '*my guide, companion, counselor and friend.....Nothing escaped his penetrating eye and quick ear*'.

Yuranigh died in April 1850 and was buried according to the Wiradjuri custom. Mitchell requested that a headstone be cut and a fence then placed around the grave. James Williams has expressed concern that, even though the respect in which Yuranigh was held by both the Aboriginal people and settlers was recognized by the meeting of the two cultures, it also reflected a cultural misunderstanding. James said that the gravestone takes no

account of traditional burial rites and the sacred nature of burial places.

The second heritage listed site is the grave of young Wiradjuri warrior Windradyne who negotiated peace with Governor Brisbane after a brutal period of martial law in the Bathurst district.

Windradyne died in 1835 after being wounded in a fight. He was given a traditional Wiradjuri burial on the Suttor property *Brucedale* near Bathurst. The grave was marked with carved trees but unfortunately these have not survived.

The two Wiradjuri sites were nominated by the communities of Evans Shire, Molong, Bathurst and Orange. They were accepted in recognition of their significant historical and cultural importance to the local communities and, in the case of Yuranigh's burial site, its rarity. They are the first Aboriginal burial sites to be listed for protection on the State Heritage Register. Full details about the two burial sites are given on the website of the Heritage Office at [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au)

Pat Frater

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT between the Wiradjuri People and Orange City Council

*Orange City Council recognizes the Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners and custodians of this local government area. Orange City Council and the Aboriginal community are committed to working together in the process of reconciliation.*

*We support and advocate the advancement of the Aboriginal peoples of Orange and will cooperate to ensure the preservation of cultural practices, traditional sites and significant places. Council supports expressions of cultural identity.*

*Orange City Council and the Aboriginal peoples of Orange believe in a future characterised by social justice and community. Together, we seek to build a society free of racism and prejudice where Aboriginal peoples feel a strong sense of belonging and are able to participate fully in the life of the community.*

## \$TOLLEN WAGES – how the states compare

The Senate inquiry into *Stolen Wages* has recommended that each State and Territory consult with Aboriginal people in relation to *Stolen Wages*, and establish a *Stolen Wages* repayment scheme based upon the NSW Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme. The Senate committee was heavily critical of the Queensland Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations scheme. The table below demonstrates some of the key differences between the NSW and QLD Schemes.

### New South Wales

- No cap on the amount that can be claimed
- Claimants not prevented from making a further claim if more evidence becomes available
- Scheme can receive both written and oral evidence about amount (though still requires documented evidence of trust fund account)
- Claim forms become available in September and will only be accepted until December 2008

### Queensland

- Claims capped at \$2000 and \$4000
- Claimants must sign an indemnity clause releasing government from any further liability
- The scheme will not receive written or oral evidence about amount owed
- Claims commenced in May 2002 and closed on 31 January 2006

Reprinted from *Talkin' justice* newsletter, December 2006

talkin' justice



# ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

## Steps to Connecting to Country

A four week program coordinated by Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation.

Presented by Oomera Edwards, an Ainwan/Gamilaroi/Darginjung woman. Oomera is an educator and co-founder of Link-up.

Oomera currently operates Murrawan – Connecting to Country

**Dates:** Tuesdays, June 5,12,19,26

**Time:** 7.30 - 9.30pm

**Venue:** Senior Citizens Centre – 180 Longueville Rd, Lane Cove

**Cost:** \$50 for four sessions

**Enquiries:** Kerrie McKenzie phone 9428 1197  
email [kerriemckenzie@bigpond.com](mailto:kerriemckenzie@bigpond.com)

*This is a Guringai Festival Event*

## 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) 9939 0123 (02) 9982 1685**

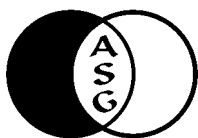
P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

**[www.asgmwp.net](http://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](mailto: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.

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## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The ASG greatly appreciates the following financial support it has received from:



Pittwater Council

Pittwater Council to assist with the 2007 *Sorry Day* Commemoration at Bilarong Reserve, Narrabeen on Sunday May 27



Manly Council for the updating and reprinting of the information and membership leaflets.



Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. This small equipment grant for volunteer programs will be used to purchase an amplifier.

## MT THEO PROGRAM

Mt Theo Program was begun by Warlpiri Aboriginal people as a last ditch effort to save their kids from dying from petrol sniffing. It works by sending young people suffering from the abuse of substances to live a more traditional life under the guidance of Elders at the remote Mt. Theo Outstation. The program's other activities include education and outreach, the Jaru Pirrjirdi (strong voices) Project and Yuendumu Youth Program. These work together to give young people more meaningful lives beyond substance abuse.

**DONATIONS ARE MOST WELCOME.**

Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible  
**PLEASE SEND TO:**

Mt Theo Program, Yuendum Community  
via Alice Springs NT 0872

website: **[www.mttheo.org](http://www.mttheo.org)**