

# ELIMATTA



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Autumn 2008

## Ian Raymond – Pittwater Resident



I was born in Darwin on December 16, 1962. My family includes my Dad Nugget (deceased), my Mum Betty and my elder sister Raylene and younger sister Lorraine. Both Raylene and Lorraine and their families live with Mum in Adelaide.

However, in 1997, I found out that I also had another family including my biological father Stanley and my half siblings Brian, Carol, Leanne, Lana and Stanley (Junior). Everyone and their families live in Darwin except for Junior who tragically passed away in 2005. My dad Stanley lives on Melville Island, one of two islands (the other is Bathurst Island) known as the Tiwi Islands that are north of Darwin.

Melville Island is where my *Country* and *Dreaming* is.

With Nugget's and Betty's approval, I came to live in Sydney with Nugget's cousin Neville Raymond and his wife Denise in 1969.

Neville had the foresight to bring me down to Sydney as it offered more opportunities for a better education and establishing a career than would have been possible in Darwin. To keep me company, Neville and Denise brought down my cousin Trevor and we lived and grew up together as brothers in the leafy northern suburb of North Epping where we attended the local public school, played with the local football and cricket clubs and were part of the local cub, scout and venturer troops. Nowadays, Trevor is married to Catherine and they call Canberra home.

In 1974 Trevor and I went to St Andrews Cathedral School in Sydney CBD until we left after completing our Higher School Certificates in 1980 and 1982 respectively. Later in 1974, while holidaying in Darwin during the Christmas holidays, I survived *Cyclone Tracy*. We were fortunate that our house only suffered minimal damage and I was not required to be evacuated.

In 1980, while completing Year 12, I met Sally on a joint excursion that our two schools had organised. Sally attended St Lukes Church of England Girls School in

Dee Why. We are still together and married for twenty two years this year. We live in Elanora Heights and have been blessed with three fantastic and beautiful children – Alanna (16 years old), Keana (12) and Ellis (9). Both Alanna and Keana attended Elanora Heights Primary School but all three now attend Northern Beaches Christian School in Terrey Hills.

I have had a long and enjoyable twenty six year career in the NSW public service – two years with the Department of Sport and Recreation and twenty four years with the NSW health system. In 2000 I attained the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion from the University of Sydney. I consider myself fortunate to have had such a diverse career in health, having worked in adolescent health, drug and alcohol and for the last ten years in Aboriginal health, both within NSW Central Office and the Aboriginal community controlled health sector.

I am eternally grateful for the difficult yet brave decision that Mum, Dad, Neville and Denise made a long time ago as I would not be where I am in life and definitely would not have the wonderful family who give me great happiness.

Ian Raymond

## An Invitation

to join the ASGMWP in commemorating *Sorry Day - Journey of Healing*  
Saturday May 24 at Bilarong Reserve, North Narrabeen. (For further details see page 11.)



# THE APOLOGY AND RECONCILIATION: HOPE RESTORED

The historical and symbolic significance of the national apology delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the Federal Parliament on February 13, 2008, for the laws and policies of successive governments which have mistreated Indigenous Australians, in particular those of the *Stolen Generations*, cannot be underestimated. It has restored hope and confidence in the future to all those who have been involved in the reconciliation process since it was initiated with bipartisan commitment by the Federal Parliament in 1991. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was entrusted with the task of widely consulting with Indigenous and other Australians over ten years. The Council's efforts resulted in the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* which was promulgated at *Corroboree 2000*, held in the Sydney Opera House on May 27, 2000.

Patrick Dodson, who chaired the Council for its first six years, recently wrote: '*The reconciliation process gave Australia a doorway to a political settlement approach on how the modern Australian state could recognise the traditional ownership status of Indigenous people and unravel the historical layers of colonial legacy that continue to determine contemporary relationships between Indigenous communities and Australian governments and other institutions.*' (Patrick Dodson, *whatever happened to Reconciliation?* p.21, J. Altman and M. Hinkson (eds.), *Coercive Reconciliation*, Arena 2007)

However, the change of government in 1996 from Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating to the Liberal Coalition's John Howard fostered a very different political ethos and Howard indicated early in 2000 that the setting of a deadline for reconciliation was a big mistake and '*too much store has been put in the document (of reconciliation) itself.*' (*The Australian*, February 28, 2000)

Howard and his ministers were committed to practical reconciliation which meant the delivery of services rather than the signing of the reconciliation document which became denigrated. Gradually, neo-conservative forces dominated Indigenous policies under the leadership of John Winston Howard who had always been ideologically opposed to a number of aspects of reconciliation and who rejected a national apology after the release in 1997 of the *Bringing them home Report on the Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, established by the Keating government in 1995. Even as Opposition leader, Howard had opposed the concept of a treaty and the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1988, as well as the recognition of native title. Once elected he began to systematically pursue policies which were directed at assimilating or mainstreaming Indigenous Australians, including the systematic dismantling of their representative bodies from 2004 on, starting with the abolition of ATSIC.

The government's political message was that previous governments had over indulged Indigenous Australians over ordinary working class people (one of Pauline Hanson's favourite gripes) and Howard wanted to correct this swinging of the pendulum too far in their favour. After the Wik decision '*he mandated a wave of popular fury against Indigenous people and others in society who sought a resolution to the injustice that peppers the nation's history... The government allowed the reconciliation process to drift and sink in the mire of a contrived and dishonest debate about the advantages of practical outcomes in health, employment, education and housing that the government favoured – that is, compared to what was said to be the meaningless symbolism of a treaty, a national apology and native title.*' (Dodson, 2007, p.26)

However, key indicators of social and economic status for Indigenous Australians have not shown improvement or even worsened since the 1970s whereas, in countries such as New Zealand and Canada, Indigenous standards of living have improved dramatically. I think many of us will endorse Patrick Dodson's conclusion on the future of reconciliation:

*'These are the realities of our post-colonial history. As a nation we must be prepared to recognise these truths and to put into place strategies that aim to bring some equity into the lives of Indigenous people. It will take considerable resources and it will take considerable time, as the gaps are so great. Most importantly, we must be prepared to enter into a genuine dialogue with the Indigenous community to determine the way forward... Unless the engagement and dialogue between us is premised on the concept of 'the listening heart' then our relationship will remain out of balance and our endeavours will be doomed.'* (ibid p.29)

Dodson's words were written after the state of emergency in the Northern Territory was declared in mid June 2007 and before the Federal elections in mid-November ushered in the new government of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. So far there is promise of a bipartisan approach to Indigenous affairs, which should enable longer term strategies to be implemented without Indigenous issues becoming a political football, and there is evidence that the new government is prepared to listen to long suppressed Indigenous voices. These recent developments bring the strongest message of hope for the restoration of reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians. Saying *Sorry* was the first step in symbolic reconciliation but the long task ahead will be to overcome the shocking indicators of Indigenous disadvantage that have continued unabated. Only then can reconciliation become truly meaningful.

Ruth Fink Latukefu



# National Apology

BY PRIME MINISTER KEVIN RUDD

PARLIAMENT HOUSE CANBERRA – FEBRUARY 13, 2008

*Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing culture in human history.*

*We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.*

*The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.*

*We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.*

*We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.*

*For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, WE SAY SORRY.*

*To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, WE SAY SORRY.*

*And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, WE SAY SORRY.*

*We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.*

*For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.*

*We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.*

*A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.*

*A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.*

*A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.*

*A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.*

*A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.*

## As It Was Happening...

FROM CANBERRA

### The Day Australia Stood Tall

It wasn't until Wednesday February 13, 2008, when it finally hit me. This was the reason why Kevin (my husband) and I drove from Sydney to Canberra – we came to see history in the making. It wasn't every day that the Prime Minister of Australia apologised to the *Stolen Generations*, so we had to be there with everyone else, how could we not?

But, to be honest this apology didn't mean a lot to me, not until it was about to happen.

You see, it was only then, that I began to think differently, because we had a *real* Leader this time, one courageous enough to admit that White Australia had/has a Black History.

Besides, this apology wasn't just about me. But also about my Mother, Grandmother and family.

Hadn't they lost me, the same as I'd been lost to them. And what about all the other parents and families whose kids had been taken? And all that intergenerational grief and pain that accompanies us every day.

This is why we needed an apology.

It wasn't and isn't about making non-Indigenous people feel guilty, like John Howard kept going on about.

No, no – the apology was about acknowledging and validating our pain and suffering.

So, thank you, Prime Minister Rudd, for saying what needed to be said.

Lorraine Magee Sippel, Yorta Yorta/Anglo Celtic/Elder  
Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation

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## As It Was Happening...

### FROM CANBERRA

It was such an amazing experience for me, a white woman with Aboriginal grandkids, to be on the spot in Canberra for the official government apology to the *Stolen Generations*. The television screens allowed the whole crowd on the lawns to see as well as hear what was going on inside Parliament. When Kevin Rudd followed the apology with his speech tears continued to flow, but there was a strong sense of elation that he was also identifying current problems and promising to work hard at finding solutions. His challenge that Aboriginal issues be tackled by all parties together brought cheers. Brendan Nelson's speech, beginning promisingly before sinking, was able to put only a temporary damper on the proceedings; after all, it was only the response of the opposition – the government had done the right thing. It is still great to relive the excitement when someone says '*Were you there too?*'

*Jackie O'Hare  
ASGMWP, Dubbo*

My Mum, Grandma, sister, and I were on the hill of Parliament House in Canberra. The Prime Minister said *sorry* to the Aboriginals, and he was really sorry they were taken from their families. We saw our Aunty Lisa and Aunty Diat; they were sad and happy at the same time. I was sad because I am an Aboriginal and I wouldn't want to be taken from my mum.

*Jordan Davis  
Aged 6, Dubbo*

We went to Canberra for the *sorry speech* by the Prime Minister. While we were there, we saw our Aunties. We took lots of photos of the Prime Minister, statues, Reconciliation Way, and lots of other things. I am glad I am an Aboriginal. I loved it there, and I had fun, especially when the Prime Minister said *sorry* and the last one didn't. The Prime Minister said that they will help with the health and education, making all Australians equal.

*Kalina Davis  
Aged 9, Dubbo*

We were sitting in the gallery of the Great Hall in Parliament House – Anna, David and Helen – when Kevin Rudd said '***Sorry... Sorry... Sorry.***' It was such a magnificent moment! What a speech! What an apology!

***Thankyou... Thankyou... Thankyou.***

To be there was so important. We stayed with Jill and Harvey Perkins and shared this fantastic day with them.

Now for the next step!

*Helen Ford  
ASGMWP*

Front row in the Great Hall gallery – a new kid on the block with two long-time campaigner friends Anna and Helen. After the event I emailed *hurrah* to a friend but the experience on the day was softer.

As we spotted acquaintances and enthusiastic reunions on the gathering below, the warm buzz was of expectancy and relief. Waiting for the huge screens to show proceedings in the Chamber, I sat with almost disbelief that THIS DAY HAD COME AND WE WERE THERE!

The expectancy, I believe, was well justified with the text of the apology, PM Rudd's delivery of it and his supporting speech. As a settler-descendent Australian I had a quiet and warm sense that, on this particular stain, justice was beginning to be done. I doubt we can ever truly understand the effect on our Indigenous friends but I will be ever grateful for the forces that took me to that place, on that day.

*David Harrison  
ASGMWP*



*David Harrison, Anna Bell, Helen Ford and Nancy Hill Wood in Parliament House for the apology. Courtesy Anna Bell*

### FROM WILCANNIA

I decided that I would watch the Government of Australia led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd give his *sorry speech* at Parliament House Canberra on TV at home even though the local CDEP had given an open invitation to watch at their workshop.

My husband Gus Bates is an invalid and I thought that I wouldn't wake him to watch although he had watched the wonderful opening of Parliament the night before.

Later on the night of the apology Gus called me and said '*Today is Sorry Day*' and I said '*Yes*'. He then said '*I was taken away*'. I said '*Yes*'. Then he said '*I was stolen*' and once again I said '*Yes*' and caressed his thin neck. (He has had his lymph nodes removed.) Gus had the most peaceful and joyful smile that I have even seen. He seemed to be one with all the *Stolen Generations* and their families and descendants in Canberra that day and throughout Australia.

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The smile seemed to say that at last someone had taken responsibility for taking him away from Wilcannia when he was 10 years old together with two younger brothers and a sister at the same time. Gus and one brother were placed in Kinchela Boys Home. The smile also seemed to say that at last he was really back in his spiritual home, his beloved Paakantji country, with his large extended family all whom he loves so much. My interpretation of his smile is because only the *Stolen Generations* and their families are the ones who know the true meaning of the government saying *sorry* at last. *Sorry* came down from the sky and into the hearts of all Australians not with sadness but with great happiness and peace for a new beginning.

Germaine Bates  
Reconciliation Committee Wilcannia

Apology day – I was here in Wilcannia at the CDEP building with a great number of Aboriginal community members. Adults and children all very quietly, attentively sitting with eyes and ears glued to the impromptu TV screen set up for the occasion. It is hard to describe my feeling seeing on TV the joy and sorrow of those there in person, more so to feel with those sitting with me who were members of the *Stolen Generations*. I felt the heart wrenching with them.

Florence Kinsela  
Sisters of Mercy, Wilcannia

Did you see *The Daily Telegraph* and the photo of some of our students on the front page the day after the apology? Warlpa Thompson, the chairperson of the Community Working Party, asked the school to be involved in the community viewing and celebration sausage sizzle brunch at the CDEP building. All were asked to gather at 8.50am. We had collected 16 students on the first bus run and had to tell the others who were not ready that someone would come back for them later. The children were seated and the TV was up and running just as the *Our Father* was being said in the Parliament.

For me it was a profound moment in our history to be in that room with a mixture of Aboriginal {some part of the *Stolen Generations*} and non Indigenous Australians. There was some lively chatter with people coming and going and then gradually an extraordinary silence permeated the room. As Prime Minister Kevin Rudd continued my heart was thumping with pride that at last the day had come, here was a man brave enough to begin the journey to right the wrongs of the past. Tears began to form gently in my eyes and a lump landed in my throat as I listened to the stories and the words '*We are sorry*' not once but three times. Back at school throughout the day I had numerous phone calls from past colleagues and volunteers who had spent quality time in Wilcannia and grew to love the people and the town.

Margaret McGrath  
Principal, St Therese's Community School

Gathered in the Wilcannia CDEP office waiting for the Prime Minister's apology were the very youngest people in town: little babies and children from St. Therese's Community School to some of the oldest – respected Elders of the Paakantji people. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sitting side by side to witness an historic event that will stay in hearts and minds forever.

Everyone kept a solemn silence as Prime Minister Rudd's speech was delivered. The little ones unsure of exactly what was occurring but still with a sense that something very, very important was happening. Older people sat still as statues. Eyes, glassy with unshed tears, transfixed on the screen as the stories of pain and separation were recounted. It was a privilege to be in that room, with those people – those who were impacted by the tragic policies of the past and the littlest ones representing the bright, bold new future of possibility for true reconciliation and justice for all.

Back at school we talked about what we had just witnessed. '*That fulla on the TV was saying sorry*' said one little girl and suddenly I thought about what may have been if this child was born only a couple of generations ago, could she have been one of those forcibly removed? Sent to a home many hundreds of kilometres away from the love of her parents, away from her own Country, away from everything that identified her as herself?

The next day in our prayer time Nicola read to the muurrrpa '*Down the Hole*'. A true story of the 'State People' stealing children, '*just kidnapping them*' as part of the policy of '*Protection*' and the extraordinary lengths that parents took to prevent their children from being taken. She then beautifully explained what the apology meant to her and prayed a prayer of thanksgiving to the Creator Spirit for this time for the true healing of the past to begin.

Clare Compton  
Teacher Yr 1-2, St. Therese's Community School

## FROM SYDNEY

### AT MARTIN PLACE: TV Watching as Never Before!

The place was packed with people: the mood serious, the crowd rock solid, the rain a unifying dampness that enveloped us all. The event? Overwhelming!

Time is needed to reflect.

I felt relief and joy that a national apology born of consultation with Aboriginal people was now reality – was the rain symbolic of soul cleansing? – but also sorrow and shame at the apology's necessity and its long, corrosive delay.

Above all there shone a new sense of opportunity for change and transformation. A healing. For the very act of apology and its acceptance is a new interaction – not chained to the past but open to the future. Way back in 1996, Sir William Deane had said: '*Where there is no room for national pride or national shame about the past, there can be no national soul*'.

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## As It Was Happening...

It was just so good to witness us now making room. Room to grow together.

New national impetus for the reconciliation journey.

Symbols allow a point of transformation of society but then a world of transforming work remains – that wisdom from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was never more relevant than now!

Elaine Mayer  
Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation

### AT RYDE

I invited all the staff and consultants from the Aboriginal Heritage Office to watch the apology at Vicki's and my home.

Just the silence from all during the apology was magic.

For me it meant the start of heading in the right direction and maybe after all this time people will start to understand what went on and why Aboriginal people are feeling better now.

David Watts  
Manager, AHO Northbridge

### AT LANE COVE

I was at the Civic Centre when the national apology was screened. There had been very little time for publicity about the event, however between 30 and 40 people, including Lane Cove Council staff, gathered in the Cove Room that wonderful morning. I acknowledged that we were on Cameraygal land and paid our respects to the ancestors on behalf of those present.

As the Prime Minister stood up to speak, I felt the tears flow at this historic moment that at times we thought would never come. When he finished his speech, we all broke into applause, as millions throughout the country would have been doing.

Sandy Coe and I asked the people how they had heard about the public screening. Several had read about it in that morning's North Shore Times.

It was wonderful to share the moment with others, particularly the Lane Cove Council staff who have been so supportive of reconciliation.

Jill Chambers  
Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation

## FROM THE NORTHERN BEACHES

### AT MANLY

February 13, 2008, will be a day long remembered by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

As heavy rain clouds loomed over the Harbour about 200 people gathered in the Manly Council forecourt to witness Prime Minister Rudd's national apology.

Despite the approaching rain there was a strong feeling among those present that an outdoor event was in keeping with the occasion. However the rain could not wait, necessitating a hasty relocation of the large TV screens to Council's entrance porch.

Those present listened attentively as the long-awaited and carefully considered apology was delivered from Parliament House. The closeness necessitated in sharing the sheltered space seemed to match an emotional closeness as tears were shed, occasional applause broke out and whispered thoughts were shared with those nearby.

While some moved off during the speech in reply by Opposition Leader Dr. Brendan Nelson, most remained to hear the moving words of *Stolen Generations'* member Cleonie Quayle.

I feel hugely privileged that Manly Mayor Dr Peter Macdonald, who was in PNG's Western Province on pressing business for Australian Doctors International, had asked me to be the MC for Manly's part in this historic day.

Judy Lambert  
Councillor, Manly Council

### AT DEE WHY: Standing Room Only

I was fortunate to be present at Warringah Council Chambers for the screening of Kevin Rudd's apology to the *Stolen Generations* in parliament. Those who arrived late had to stand or sit on steps despite the many extra chairs brought in by staff attending. I estimate more than 100 people were present.

Ahead of the broadcast the Administrator Dick Persson gave a moving and heartfelt introduction before handing over to Bob Waterer who followed with a captivating account of his Guringai ancestry all the way back to Bungaree and an official *Welcome to Country*.

I bought a pocket full of tissues but it wasn't enough for me or for those near me as we sniffled in unison listening to Mr Rudd's words of apology. There was vigorous applause when he finished in stark contrast to the stunned silence after the Leader of the Opposition's response referring to current problems and justification of the former government's Northern Territory intervention.

Afterwards, as we gathered to enjoy the refreshments provided there was a shared sentiment that it was truly a proud day to be Australian.

Suzen Meagher  
ASGMWP

### AT MONA VALE

I was invited to go to Pittwater Council on *Apology Day* to Acknowledge Country before the televising of Kevin Rudd's apology speech. I was, of course, delighted to do this.

At 8.45am a few people had arrived and were greeted by David James, Mayor of Pittwater.

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# Opening of Aboriginal Heritage Office



Sweet eucalypt smoke and the deep, soulful sounds of the yirdaki filled the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) in Northbridge on Wednesday March 12 as Uncle Max Eulo and Les Saxby welcomed Ancestral spirits and valued attendees in traditional, sacred fashion to the AHO Grand Opening.

The celebration attracted dignitaries from all levels of government, Northern Sydney Aboriginal Community members, long-time friends and members of local reconciliation groups, as well as many members of the AHO Community Site Monitoring team.

Guests were treated to service and tucker unlike any this side of the Harbour. Aunty Beryl Van-Oploo, Chef Mathew Cribb and an all-Aboriginal staff from *Yaama Dhiyaan* Hospitality Training College delighted the senses with delicacies such as paper bark smoked kangaroo, emu prosciutto and crocodile chilli salad, just to name a few. The food and service were exquisite. This was a special night, indeed.

Food and fun aside, this was an evening of marked significance.

A celebration of something truly unique, and for one man, Aboriginal Heritage Manager David Watts, many years in the making: a cross council partnership of seven local government areas with the single objective of preserving and protecting Aboriginal Sites and Heritage. The seven participating Councils are Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, North Sydney, Pittwater, Warringah and Willoughby. The AHO is the only office like it in all of Australia and is committed to raising the level of awareness through school presentations and community activities. With its timber and glass display cases housing an exceptional collection of Aboriginal artifacts, original art and woodwork, as well as educational models and aids, no one in attendance could disregard the impressive achievements this office represents.

A quick glance around the AHO and one begins to understand the story that is here to be told, the many years of sound vision and unfailing determination, a *Keeping Place*, a place to gather. The AHO doesn't just tell the story of David Watts and his tireless efforts. Instead, it tells many stories of many people, Aboriginal people, and the AHO continues to ensure these stories will not be forgotten.

Raye Newell  
Aboriginal Heritage Officer

The Aboriginal Heritage Office and Education Centre is at Unit 39, 137-145 Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge. Telephone **02 9949 9882** or visit the website [www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org)

*Yaama Dhiyaan* Hospitality Training College is at 255 Wilson Street, Darlington (see *Elimatta* Winter 2007 page 6). Telephone **02 8399 0924** or email [beryl@yaama.com.au](mailto:beryl@yaama.com.au)

The full menu of culinary delights served at the AHO opening were:

- Paper bark smoked salmon and warrigal green tartlets
- Aniseed myrtle rice paper rolls with Illawarra plum and chilli dipping sauce
- Honeydew melon wrapped in emu prosciutto
- Chilli crocodile salad in banana leaf cup
- Drunken roo pies with bush tomato sauce
- Native Yam puffs with chilli and bush tomato jam
- Twice cooked pork belly served on a Chinese spoon with bush plum sauce



To find out more about *Yaama Dhiyaan* visit the website [www.yaama.com.au](http://www.yaama.com.au)

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## AT MONA VALE (contd.)

However, more slowly drifted in and after the *Acknowledgement of Country* and, with only a couple of minutes to go, suddenly a great number of people arrived. By the time the speech was finished and I turned to see how many people were there, I saw that all the fifty or more seats were filled and there were many people standing at the back.

There were people of all ages, young women with little children, older people, all who had come to hear this historic speech by the Prime Minister.

The apology was greeted by generous applause and acceptance by all there. We wanted to hear Mr. Nelson's response too and some people were pretty disappointed with this.

Many stayed for a cuppa and a chat. I spoke to quite a few very interested people who were really happy that the apology had finally come in such a sincere way. Many also asked about the Aboriginal Support Group.

It was a privilege to be asked to be there and I welcomed the gesture by Pittwater Council to have a public showing of the event. I am sure they would have been as heartened by the large attendance as I was by the apology itself and the response it received.

Carol Ritchie  
ASGMWP



# MINMIA

## - UNDER THE QUANDONG TREE

'It is so important to get back where we belong' says Aboriginal grandmother and storyteller Minmia who spoke at the March information meeting of the Support Group. Extra chairs were needed to accommodate the many members and visitors who came to hear her original and passionate testimony to the importance of handing on traditional Aboriginal beliefs about the Dreaming and about recognising and celebrating our connection to the land.

'If you are born of this land, you belong to this land and you have a responsibility to others' Minmia explained. She teaches women the lore handed down to her, stressing in her forthright way that the aim is to take responsibility for yourself. 'You're born boss of self, you walk your journey as boss of self and you end your life boss of self'. Explaining the creation story of her people, that Biami started the Dreamtime and is linked in oneness with other deities, she says 'You can't go out and honour the creator and then go out and rubbish his creation'.

She believes some of the traditional teaching of the Wiradjuri people gathered in her book *under the quandong tree* will really make readers stop and think about redirecting our resources.



Minmia and her grand-daughter Makenzie Smith. Photo by Irene Lorbergs

of the many times her grandmother told her the traditional beliefs, literally under a quandong tree near her birthplace, The Three Ways, near Griffith.

Pauline Byrne

*under the quandong tree* is available from

Lizzie Landers **9918 2594**

and The Next Chapter Books, Centro Warriewood

or from [www.kuracca.com](http://www.kuracca.com)

## SIGHTS UNSEEN: an exhibition of the work of Michael Riley

An out-flung bird's flight wing, silhouetted against a sky of deepest blue, beneath filmy cloud, took my breath away, then led me to the Art Gallery of NSW to see the exhibition of photographs, video and documentary film by Aboriginal photomedia artist the late Michael Riley.

The breathtakingly beautiful but enigmatic photo series *Clouds* has an existential feeling. A single crow's feather, the outstretched flight wing – maybe of a bird of prey – a quirky floating cow against a glorious blue sky with filmy clouds are complemented by photographs taken at Waverley cemetery of fragments of statuary of an angel's wing. The symbolism is deeply perceptive and poetic.

I lingered and was compelled to return later, to linger again in front of these amazing intuitive works of a talented artist.

Facing the *Clouds* series is another, one more enigmatically titled *Fly Blown* – brilliant photography over which I could only stand and ponder, but impressed by Michael Riley's artistry and challenge to the viewer.

Many simple, direct black and white portraits of family, friends and community filled the adjacent salon, where one could also see a video of Michael, speaking for himself.

Experimental videos and documentaries made from 1988 to 1999 by Michael Riley were screened each day adding another dimension to the exhibition.

Enid McIlraith



## Aboriginal Community FUN DAY NORTHERN BEACHES

The first community gathering on the Northern Beaches, similar to the *Christmas in the Bush* gatherings, was held on Sunday February 24 at Flying Fox Park, Winnererremy Bay, Mona Vale.

Invitations went out to all Aboriginal people, their friends and Support Groups on the north side and a very happy crowd of about eighty, perhaps more, from babies to grandparents, came along.

Nature was kind to us, with a clear, sunny day – plenty of space for the Koori Games and shady tables for yarning and networking and, of course, eating. Two portable gazebos provided by AHO added shady spots for cooling down during and after the Games.

Dean Kelly is an accredited organiser of Koori Games and did a wonderful job with his many helpers! Children and adults participated, learning through fun and games.



Murri magician Anthony Dillon courtesy Ann Ford

fruits for the bbq lunch.

A big thank you to all who came.

*The Manly Daily* wrote us up in its *Scene Around* page, with a half-page spread of photos from the day so, for our next Fun Day, more local Kooris who are not as yet in our networking may come along. We'll keep you informed.

Clair Jackson

Anthony Dillon, our Murri Magician, entertained us all and Wadi Winiyanjara organised an impromptu group to learn and perform some *Top End* dancing, much enjoyed and appreciated by all. Organising and funding the day was a real community effort and many thanks are due to Herb Smith, Sue Pinckham, Raye Newell, Clair Jackson, Gwen Fazio and to Helen and Alan Ford for their beautiful salads and

## ANTaR AGM - March 1, 2008

A fine smorgasbord was provided prior to the meeting and this enabled us to chat informally with other members.

The President of ANTaR Anne Byrne acknowledged the former Aboriginal guardians of the land and introduced Sean Brennan, who in turn introduced the guest speakers, Nicole Watson and Mark McMillan. In doing so, Sean pointed out that a lot had happened in the last year. It had been the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. The previous Government had proposed an amendment to the Constitution acknowledging the special place of the Indigenous peoples and they had introduced radical measures to reduce the problems of alcoholism and child abuse. Then the election of the Rudd Labour Government had seen the historic *Welcome to Country* preceding the opening of Parliament and the apology to the *Stolen Generations*. This left us with a greater sense of possibilities and cautious optimism for the future.

Nicole Watson, a young Koori solicitor who had worked for land tribunals, said that

Indigenous people had been disempowered in the Howard years. ATSIC, for all its faults, had represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Government had withdrawn funding, sent in the auditors and worn down the organisation to the point where it could be abolished without fuss. Whilst the ALP had made a good start, it remained to be seen whether they would follow through on their promises. Only Aboriginal self determination would lead to real progress.

Mark McMillan pointed to the disappointing progress since the 1967 Referendum. The Constitution did not recognise Indigenous culture or religion. Neither did the Victorian and ACT statutory Declarations of Rights. Gary Highland warned against unrealistic expectations. Bob Hawke had promised a treaty but had not delivered. ATSIC was a failed first step towards self determination. ANTaR would be putting a submission to the 2020 Consultation. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the PM and the ALP had endorsed, was a road map for the future. He said the emphasis in the future would be on supporting local

groups, re-engaging bridge walkers (those who are sympathetic but aren't active), lobbying on modifying the Northern Territory Intervention and lobbying bureaucrats. National ANTaR would be providing funding to rejuvenate links with local groups and conduct two rural forums on Indigenous health.

Anne Byrne paid tribute to staff and volunteers in a comprehensive and impressive report. The *Sea of Hands* is now on line but also continues to be a vital publicity means through the physical display of the hands. Campaigns were conducted on health rights and closing the gap in life expectancy, child abuse in Aboriginal communities and *Stolen Wages*.

Other reports were on fund raising, finances, membership and education. On the last mentioned, there had been a pleasing increase in interest in the schools following the apology.

Finally, a procedural resolution increasing the size of the Management Committee was passed ending a well run and encouraging AGM.

Andrew Macintosh

# GURINGAI FESTIVAL 2008

The annual Guringai Festival, now in its 8th successive year, is a celebration of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage across Northern Sydney.

This year the theme is 2008: Year of the Apology.

Aboriginal artists were invited to submit designs for the cover image for this year's and next year's Guringai Festival programs and also for use in promotional material. A stunning painting in vibrant colours, titled *Whale Stories*, by Cromer artist Jessica Birk was the image chosen.

According to Jessica '*this image celebrates Northern Sydney's abundance of outdoor art galleries and the part they play within the Whale dreaming song-line along the East Coast of Australia.*

*Whale imagery is found in many of the rock engraving sites around the Northern Sydney region. This reinforces a long living relationship with and responsibility to nurture the giants of the sea and care for 'country'.*

*The layers surrounding the whale are symbolic of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups within our region and the richness of cultural knowledge which a diverse community brings to an area.'*

More of Jessica's work can be seen on [www.jessicabirk.com](http://www.jessicabirk.com)



**MANLY COUNCIL** will launch the 2008 Guringai Festival on Sunday May 11 on the John Speight Stage, The Corso, Manly, from 11am to 1pm. There will be a traditional smoking ceremony and a performance by didgeridoo player Les Saxby. Young Northern Beaches singers and musicians Cory Kirk and Michael Birk will be performing as well as a specially formed community choir presenting Indigenous songs.

Activities include boomerang painting and Manly Environment Centre's *Art For Kids*.



*Whale Stories by Jessica Birk*

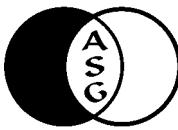
The Zoomobile from Taronga Zoo will be there with a variety of wonderful native animals such as Mulga the Galah, Spike the Echidna and Sebastian the Carpet Python. Bush tucker will be on sale.

For further information contact:  
Marday Collett **9976 1752** or  
[records@manly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:records@manly.nsw.gov.au)

Another Manly event for the Guringai Festival is an exhibition of outstanding Indigenous printmaking from Basil Hall Editions, Darwin. They can be seen at the Manly Art Gallery & Museum from June 20 until July 27.

Enquiries: Sarah Johnson **9976 1420**

*Continued on Page 11*



**THE ABORIGINAL SUPPORT GROUP**  
is holding three events during the  
2008 Guringai Festival:

**SORRY DAY - JOURNEY OF HEALING**  
at the scout hall, Bilarong Reserve,  
Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen on  
Saturday May 24 from 3pm to 5.30pm.  
This FREE event, now in its 11th year, will  
be a celebration of the historic national  
apology and a new beginning in our  
journey toward healing and reconciliation.  
It will be a reminder of the fact that  
generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander children were forcibly removed  
from their families, a reminder of the grief  
and suffering of those children and their  
families.

It is also a reminder that many thousands  
of non-Indigenous people wanted to say  
*sorry* and did so in the *Sorry Books* that  
travelled around the country.

The event will honour Indigenous culture  
and will provide an opportunity where  
Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians  
come together to learn and have fun.  
Refreshments provided.

Enquiries: Ingrid Storm **9913 8226**

**LIYARN NGARN** screening at Collaroy  
Cinema on Wednesday June 18 at 10am.  
*Liyarn Ngarn*, in the Yawuru language of  
the West Kimberley region around Broome  
in Australia's far north-west, means  
'coming together of the spirit'. It  
epitomises a thirty year long mission of  
Indigenous leader and Yawuru man, Patrick  
Dodson, to bring about a lasting and true  
reconciliation and to change peoples'  
perception and attitude to Indigenous  
people. Personal stories of injustice are  
recounted by English actor Pete  
Postlethwaite as told to him by Patrick  
Dodson. Celebrated song man Archie  
Roach adds powerful lyrics and voice to  
this inspiring documentary.  
Rated M.

At the end of the movie Gary Highland  
from ANTaR will lead a discussion on  
the issues raised.

Donation \$5  
Proceeds to the Lingiari Foundation.  
Enquiries: Anna Bell **9913 7940**  
or [annadbel@bigpond.net.au](mailto:annadbel@bigpond.net.au)

#### **NAIDOC WEEK PUBLIC FORUM : WATER MANAGEMENT and INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

Indigenous Australians have successfully  
managed water resources for millennia.  
What can we learn from traditional  
knowledge?

Monday July 7 at 7.30pm at Nelson  
Heather Centre, Jacksons Road, North  
Narrabeen. FREE

Enquiries: Lizzie Landers **9918 2594** or  
Vanessa Walsh **9970 5456**

For further information about ASG events  
visit the website [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net)



**PITTWATER COUNCIL** is also screening  
**LIYARN NGARN** at Avalon RSL on  
Wednesday June 11 at 7.15pm. Gary  
Highland from ANTaR will lead a discussion  
after the movie. Rated M

Donation \$5  
Proceeds to the Lingiari Foundation.

BOOKINGS: Pittwater Council **9970 111** or  
[louise\\_jeffs@pittwater.nsw.gov.au](mailto:louise_jeffs@pittwater.nsw.gov.au)

Pittwater Council is donating DVDs of  
*LIYARN NGARN* to the high schools in the  
Pittwater area.



**WARRINGAH COUNCIL** is presenting the  
following events for the Guringai Festival:  
**Indigenous art workshop** for selected  
Year 6 students with Jessica Birk at the  
Gawura Centre, Brookvale TAFE, on Friday  
June 6. FREE.

**Walking tour** at Manly Dam on Saturday  
June 7 led by Eddie Goodall who will  
discuss the significance of the local area  
to the Guringai People. FREE.

**Author talk** on Indigenous writing and  
storytelling on Thursday June 12.

For full details and bookings contact Tracy  
Pinot **9942 2603** or visit  
[www.warringah.nsw.gov.au](http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au)

Guringai Festival programs  
are available at Councils, local libraries  
and community centres across  
Northern Sydney.

## **WORKSHOPS AND TALKS**

### **AFTER THE APOLOGY**

#### **Saturday May 10**

Presented by Omera Edwards,  
educator and co-founder of *LINK UP*, at  
The Reality Centre Ourimbah. Sessions  
are held on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays  
of each month. Cost \$70 per person.

Enquiries:

[omera.edwards@bigpond.com](mailto:omera.edwards@bigpond.com)  
or visit [www.therealitycentre.com](http://www.therealitycentre.com)

#### **YARN UP**

6-8pm at the Aboriginal Heritage Office,  
39/137-145 Sailors Bay Rd, Northbridge.

Enquiries:

Sue Pinckham, Project Officer, Northern  
Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan

**9949 9882** or

[sue.pinckham@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sue.pinckham@northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

#### **Wednesday May 14**

With guest speaker Carla Grant,  
presenter of SBS *Living Blak* program

#### **Wednesday May 28**

With guest speaker Aboriginal lawyer  
Robynne Quiggin.

#### **Wednesday June 25**

With guest speaker Aboriginal educator  
Clair Jackson.

## **YINALUNG YENU**

Yinalung yenu: women's journey is a  
current exhibition at the Powerhouse  
Museum Sydney which tells the stories  
of six prominent Koori women and  
reveals how Indigenous traditions are  
finding new forms of expression today.  
The exhibition focuses on areas in  
which Indigenous women are more  
influential than men.

For more information visit

[www.powerhousemuseum.com](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com)





## INFORMATION NIGHTS

are held from 7.30pm to 9.30pm at the Nelson Heather Centre, corner Pittwater and Jacksons Roads, North Narrabeen.

Enquiries: Lizzie Landers **9918 2594** or Vanessa Walsh **9970 5456**

Moday May 5 **HARD RAIN** is the most recent film by David Bradbury, one of Australia's best known and most successful documentary makers, telling the real issues and grim truth about nuclear power – the 'other side of the debate'. It traverses five countries including Australia.  
*Irat i wanti – the poison leave it*  
A discussion will follow the screening.

**There will be NO Information Night in June**

Moday July 7 NAIDOC WEEK PUBLIC FORUM – *See page 11 for details*

Moday Aug 4 ATSI Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma will speak about compensation/reparation for the *Stolen Generations*.

## 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 and Jacksons Roads  
North Narrabeen.**

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

☎ For further information ☎

**(02) 9913 7940 (02) 9982 1685**

P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

**www.asgmwp.net**

*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, Pat Fisher, Carol Gerrard, Clair Jackson, Suzen Meagher, Marcia Rutter, Don and Pat Frater.



## RECONCILIATION WEEK

The NSW theme for Reconciliation Week (May 27-June 3) is *Sorry – A New Beginning*. The theme given in the previous issue of *Elimatta* was unfortunately incorrect.

## NAIDOC WEEK

The theme for NAIDOC Week (July 6-13) is *Advance Australia Fair?* The aim of this theme is to encourage people to reflect on the Australian principle of a 'fair go' and consider the inequalities still being experienced by Indigenous people today.

## WILCANNIA SCHOOL BUS

Our Treasurer reported that we had passed on \$1000 to help replace a bus for St. Therese's Community School, Wilcannia.

The Principal, Margaret McGrath, has written *'We are still waiting for our new school bus. Last year the company told me it would be March. I had a ring a couple of weeks ago to say the earliest now is the end of March and the latest the end of June.*

*Will send you some photos when it arrives with our gorgeous kids.*

*We have 17 new Kinders this year which is wonderful and we are averaging 14-16 a day with them.*

*Much better than last year's group of 5 and we were flat out getting one out of the 5 at school each day. As a result 3 of them had to repeat. One of the repeats has not missed a day this year along with 4 other children'.*

Perhaps we will have a photo of the bus and some students for the next issue of *Elimatta*.

## THANKYOU

**Warringah Council** for hosting the *Seniors for Reconciliation* screening of *Bush Mechanics* on April 28.

This annual Seniors Week event is a partnership between Warringah Council and the Support Group.

**Doyle Spillane Real Estate** for promoting *Bush Mechanics* on the electronic noticeboard prominently featured in their office window at 761 Pittwater Road, Dee Why.