



Elimatta

spring/summer 2009

www.asgmwp.net

Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

Rob Cohen – Gamarada Unit TAFE

Yamma all... my name is Rob Cohen, and I work for the Gamarada Aboriginal Education & Training Unit (AETU) of the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE. My role is to primarily support our students that enrol into courses, as well as supporting Institute staff on cultural awareness issues.

I'm *Wiradjuri*, and my family links back to Bulgandramine mission near the Central West NSW town of Peak Hill.

Peak Hill is only a small town with limited opportunities so after I completed my schooling I headed for Sydney to seek my fortune. Luckily I had family living on The Block in Redfern and they supported me when I first moved down. They also introduced me to a lady named Elsa Dixon who worked in the Newtown CES. Elsa found me my first job as a NESAs (National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals) trainee working for a State Government agency called Community Programs... since then I've worked in several government agencies, both state and federal in areas such as employment, education, health and social services.

My experience and training has been mainly in education. Prior to becoming the manager of the Gamarada AETU, I spent 13 years working as an Education Officer for the Commonwealth Government, dealing with schools and local Aboriginal communities on initiatives to keep our kids in classes and to ultimately better their outcomes.

I've worked across several locations and across several Aboriginal communities, but working in the Northern Sydney region has provided some very distinct challenges. The community is widespread and there is a lack of dedicated Aboriginal service centres such as land councils, medical and legal services not being located in the region. To help raise our profile within both the Aboriginal community and within our own Institute, we decided to give our unit a distinct title. Gamarada is a Guringai word meaning 'friends' and by naming our unit Gamarada we established an identity.

The *Gawura* (meaning whale) Aboriginal Learning Centre located at Northern Beaches College, Brookvale, has also gone a long way in raising not only our profile but also that of Aboriginal education in general. Designed and constructed in total consultation with the local Aboriginal community it serves as a symbol of partnerships and respect for culture.

To further support understanding of Aboriginal culture and communities, Gamarada AETU delivers the Aboriginal Cultural Education Program. This program provides a look at traditional lifestyles and connections to culture moving through to the impacts of colonisation.

The Gamarada AETU wouldn't work effectively if not for the other two dedicated officers who make



up our unit... Eddie Goodall, the Aboriginal Student Support Officer, and our newly appointed Aboriginal Coordinator, Sharni Adamietz.

The Gamarada Aboriginal Education and Training unit is located at Meadowbank College.

*Rob Cohen
Manager Aboriginal Education
and Training*



You can contact Rob on **9942 3575** or mobile **0411 551146**
rob.cohen@tafensw.edu.au

The Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater acknowledges the Guringai People, the traditional owners of the lands and the waters of this area.



Linda Burney
Photo courtesy of Ingrid Storm

The gathering to celebrate the 30th Anniversary on July 6 at the Nelson Heather Centre, North Narrabeen, was a happy event for the hundred people who attended.

Lizzie Landers, MC for the evening, welcomed everyone and invited Uncle Bob Waterer to perform the *Welcome to Country*, which he did with great dignity. He went on to welcome the Guest of Honour, the Hon. Linda Burney, NSW Minister for Community Services and President of the Australian Labor Party.

Lizzie spoke of the genesis of the Group when Tom Gavranic, Enid McIlraith and Pam Beasley, who all shared a concern for Aboriginal people, met on the upper deck of a double decker bus in 1979. This led to the formation of a local Treaty Group, the predecessor of the ASG. The Group has always sought advice, guidance and information from Aboriginal people, including Linda Burney, and continues to seek justice and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Addressing the Group, Linda Burney said she had accepted the invitation to speak at the celebration because of the longevity of the Group and she paid tribute to its persistence in support of Aboriginal people. She prefers the words Aboriginal or First Nation to Indigenous and hopes the Group will retain the name Aboriginal

Support Group. Her message was 'we have come a long way' citing that NAIDOC Week had been going for 52 years and was now very much accepted in the schools, councils and the community. The gathering of 50,000 people at Redfern Park on January 26 1988, including Aboriginal people from all over Australia, was a turning point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – for all Australians.

The Deaths in Custody Royal Commission and the *Bringing Them Home* reports and the Mabo and Wik High Court decisions gave hope that injustices suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be redressed but the former Government rejected reconciliation. Mr Howard's performance at the National Reconciliation Convention and the winding back of Native Title were backward steps along the way, despite the historic *Bridge Walk* in 2000. With the rise of One Nation and the History Wars, the public mood soured further, despite goodwill in many quarters.



Nancy Hill Wood
Photo courtesy of Ingrid Storm

This made the apology given by Kevin Rudd on behalf of the Parliament and people on February 13, 2008, all the more satisfying. It had been profoundly moving for Aboriginal people. Yet there is so much to be done to close the gap, which is intractable, objectionable and obnoxious. There are 16,000 children in care in NSW of whom 31% are Aboriginal and 52% of juvenile

justice cases are related to Aboriginal problems. For all this, those who have suffered can still stand up and face the world.

Linda acknowledged that she stood on the shoulders of many people and has had her share of personal adversity, which she said can be a source of strength. Linda concluded by saying that governments can't deliver reconciliation – this requires a popular movement. Despite all the obstacles, reconciliation is deeply embedded in Australian society.



Founding member Enid McIlraith
Photo courtesy of Ingrid Storm

Jill Perkins thanked Linda for being with us and said that the ASG had always been a support and social justice organization. She recalled some of the highlights: Nancy Wood and Jean Begg joining the group; the beginning of Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR); the *Stolen Generations* hearings; and our involvement with Tranby College. Jill said that more than 40,000 years of Aboriginal history cannot be expunged by a little bit of colonial history.

A truly memorable meeting concluded with two of the founding members Enid McIlraith and Tom Gavranic speaking briefly before they cut the delicious birthday cake made by Helen and Alan Ford. This was followed by chats over supper.

Andrew Macintosh



Dear Members, Happy 30th Anniversary

I am writing to wish you all the very best for your 30th Anniversary. I was only able to call in briefly last night to say a quick hello at your official celebration, but it looked like a great turn out and lots of fun.

I wanted to write and express my heartfelt congratulations to all your members for your achievements over the years – the ones we hear about, and the many that we don't hear about but which are undertaken by your group.

I hope that you all enjoyed last night, and wish you all the best for many more years of happy and successful work.

Yours sincerely,

Robynne Quiggin

REMEMBERING... REFLECTING

Recently we received an invitation to Kevin Cook's 70th birthday celebration. A flood of memories! Harvey and I moved to work in Sydney late in 1956. We soon heard of the *dream* for the gracious old building *Tranby* in Glebe... a centre of education for Indigenous students, young and mature. Kevin Cook was appointed the first Indigenous Director. He served College and community invaluable for many years. In later times *Tranby* enrolled students of all races. Many of us learned that '*White Australia has a Black History*'. The reality of the dream was celebrated last year... the 50th Anniversary!

A joke – '*if you remember the '60s, you weren't there*'. I was there; and I remember clearly two particular events: (a) the prelude to the war in Vietnam, the escalating hostilities; and (b) the work and commitment that went into the National Referendum. Ninety percent of Australians voted for Aboriginal people to be counted in the census. Work involved us in both spheres nationally and internationally. We supported Charlie Perkins' *Freedom Ride* in NSW, also the amazing Land Rights struggle by the Gurindji people led by Vincent Lingiari. A continuation of the struggle for freedom from the early days of Pemulwuy, of Fred Maynard, of Bill Ferguson and the *Movement of '38* and many others.

The '70s began with panache – the United Nations Decade for Development! Locally, the people's movement, Action for World Development, was created at a national conference in Melbourne. Small action groups formed to look at issues of justice and development, working around the States. Some were involved in helping set up of the Aboriginal Medical

Services, Legal Services, the Tent Embassy, the Black Theatre in Redfern, supporting local Aboriginal communities. The new, distinctive black/yellow/red Aboriginal flag flew with pride.

Late in 1979 in Narrabeen, Enid McIlraith, Pam Beasley and Tom Gavranic met to consider the newly formed national Treaty Organisation. We were living in Singapore, working in community organization and development in Asian countries. I heard of the Treaty Organisation sponsored by people like Nuggett Coombs and Judith Wright. Our friend Joy Smith told me about the handful of people meeting on the Northern Beaches. On a visit, I attended the second or third of these meetings. It was this meeting, and the impetus for a Treaty, that was foremost in my mind when an Aboriginal activist friend challenged us: '*...don't you think there is work to do in Australia?*'

We returned to the Northern Beaches. One of my strongest memories is of the last meeting of that small Treaty Organisation group held in the home of Pam Beasley. I remember there was Enid and Shaun McIlraith, Joy Smith, Terry Macadam, Jan Heeks, Harvey and myself. Pam was very unwell; she was anxious that the group continue, conscious of the wealth of documentation in her hands. We made promises for the future but we did not realise that Pam's life time was so limited.

As the Treaty Organisation floundered in the early '80s, Koori friends talked about *support*... so, in the Elimatta Road home of Joy Smith, the growing group decided to become an Aboriginal Support Group. The big issue was Land Rights. We spent a lot of time on the streets, rallying for justice – and constantly writing petitions. We searched for resources, books, historic information. Aboriginal visitors to the group guided, supported us. One cold evening two local Aboriginal women very shyly joined our circle. It was from Nancy Wood and Jean Begg we learned first-hand of the *Stolen Generations*. Years later, one of the most memorable NAIDOC Week public meetings the Group sponsored was *The Stolen Generations – Their Stories – Our History*.

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*Jill Perkins, Frennie Beytagh
and Lizzie Landers (L to R)
Courtesy of Megan Van Frank*



Continued from Page 3

In 1988, Australia's bicentennial year, we celebrated the *Long March for Justice Freedom and Hope*, celebrating 200 years of survival – the *dream* of Uncle Charles Harris. Planning this event in a small back room office in Sydney it seemed impossible. The reality was greater than the dream. In old cars, buses, motor cycles, trains, on foot – 50,000 and more people from across the continent gathered together for days, weeks. Black and white together, we celebrated something unforgettable.

The 90's were busy, locally, nationally. Small meetings often ferment great events. I remember one winter Sunday afternoon meeting with about 25 others in the Edmund Rice Centre, Balmain. We wanted to act for Land Rights, Native Title, in a politically oppressive environment. Today, ANTaR is a national movement. As contentious as the word *reconciliation* can be, at that time, core-group ASG members firmly contended for its use in the title and it was accepted.

ANTaR people created *The Sea of Hands*. I remember the moment the *dream* was shared by a small group meeting in an old building on Kippax Street. The sight of the multi-coloured hands – in front of the Parliament Building in Canberra, on iconic beaches, in small parks, in distinctive gardens... and around the country from the coast to the desert, has excited us all. We believed in change. We committed to it.

Who will ever forget the *Bridge Walk* – 250,000 women, men, children; young, old, robust, infirm; First Nations people, later settlers, peoples from diverse

backgrounds and nations, all sharing *The People's Walk for Reconciliation* across Sydney Harbour Bridge in May 2000? Another *dream* from a small group! It was preceded by *Corroboree 2000* at the Sydney Opera House where the Council for Reconciliation presented to national leaders their Declaration Towards Reconciliation. There was, even, further talk of a Treaty!

Sometimes we think nothing changes. We despair still about Aboriginal well-being – health, education, black deaths in custody, child welfare, mental health, equal opportunity. There is still no Treaty! There are few Indigenous Members of Parliament. I hold on to hope... There has been change!

We can regularly watch *Message Stick* on national TV and listen to *Awaye. Koori Mail* is in Indigenous hands and often has inspiring themes. The Bangarra Dance Theatre has celebrated 20 outstanding years nationally and internationally. Iconic First Nations painter Emily Kame Kngwarreye took the Japanese art world by storm. *Samson and Delilah* received accolades in Cannes. Aboriginal writers and poets are publishing wonderful books. Myall Creek massacre site is acknowledged. Friendships have been forged. I could go on... you could name more... The National Museum of Australia opened a new exhibition – *From little things big things grow* – the untold story of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working for justice, 1910-1970. We, and all those before us, are part of that continuing story.

J Jill Perkins

IYURA MARRIYALA BILYA

Iyura marriyala bilya

(Many people are laughing together)

Australians all let us rejoice

Ngyina guulyangarri

(We are all young)

for we are young and free

Yarralga bembul wulbungada

(With yellow earth we're hunting)

with golden soil and wealth for toil

Ngurrah garragarang waru

(All the country is surrounded by sea)

our home is girt by sea

Beranga wa temura garaga waru buuyuri

(The country around the trees is beautiful)

our land abounds in nature's gifts of beauty rich and rare

Yellamundie waru beranga, yanmalibula iyura

(The storyteller around country walking with people)

in history's page let every stage, advance Australia fair

Waru bugi beranga

(In happy places in the country we're dancing people)

in joyful strains then let us sing

Garriberri iyura

advance Australia fair



... Advance Australia Fair

In 2008 Dharug linguist and teacher Richard Green translated the words of the national anthem into the Dharug language. Eighteen year old Aboriginal singer/songwriter Corey Kirk of Avalon sang the anthem in the Dharug language for the 2009 Australia Day celebrations at Darling Harbour. She also performed it at the ASG *Sorry Day* in May and at the opening ceremony of this month's Sydney World Masters Games. Corey has been invited to sing at the Woodford Folk Festival in January.

For several years Corey performed in the *Sydney Children's Choir* and *Gondwana Voices*, travelling the world, and when she was nine she sang in the Qantas *I Still Call Australia Home* promotion. Last year Lyn Williams, conductor of the *Sydney Children's Choir*, asked Corey to mentor a new choir of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – the *Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir*. She performed with this choir for the Papal visit last year and witnessed the joy of these youngsters many of whom had had no musical training nor visited a large city before.

Jan Kirk

The English lyrics of *Advance Australia Fair* were written by Peter Dodds McCormick and translated into the Dharug (Darug) language by Richard Green.

NEWS FROM BIALA

It is really hard to believe that this is the last school term before the end of the year – how fast 2009 has gone. 2009 has been another pretty good year here at Biala. There has been the usual movement with students. Girls come and girls go. It is really hard for some girls to be so far away from home and so they do not stay in Sydney for too long. Other girls just are not suitable for the education system away from home.

At this stage we have a nice group of girls here, with a few more either just having arrived or starting in the near future.

There are two Year 10 students at present, both capable students, and I am hoping that they may continue at Biala until Year 12.

The Hostel Graduation this year is being hosted by Warrina Hostel in Dubbo on November 13 and we are all looking forward to this event. The Biala girls always look forward to these graduation nights as they love getting all dressed up and looking really great on the night.

As usual, I would really like to thank the Homework Centre helpers who have continued to work with the girls – Suzen Meagher, Pauline Byrne, Jocelyn Che, Shane Leddin and Carol Ritchie. They are really dedicated helpers and our staff, the girls and I really appreciate their support.

We also had for a few weeks a Uni Student from Kuringai Campus, Jessica, who is training to become a High School teacher and was doing some work experience as part of her course and this was very beneficial to both Jessica and our students.

I would like to thank the Aboriginal Support Group and its members for their continued support and also for the representations they have made to the Sub Branch of the Forestville RSL Club on our behalf.

The Sub Branch has awarded a Youth Grant to Biala over the past several years now and this is usually put towards the costs of the end of year graduation. Thankyou Forestville

RSL and the Support Group for their continued support.

The girls have been attending hiphop classes on Monday nights for a while now and really enjoy this. These classes are run by *Youth Reach*, part of St Vincent de Paul at Brookvale. We saw how hip they had become when the girls were invited to the Orpheum Theatre Cremorne to perform a hip hop dance together with other young people from the *Youth Reach* program. This performance opened Warringah Council's Youth Concert which culminated in the awards for the 2009 Youth Filmmaking Program. Carol Ritchie came with me and the girls and the performance was really great showing what they had learned from the hiphop class. There were also some older boys from the program who performed some amazing break dancing. Following the performance all the young people were taken to dinner at McDonalds at Cremorne. It was a real fun night for us all and it was nice to see the girls mixing so well with the other young people. They are continuing the hiphop classes this term.

We have also formed a touch football team recently and play in a competition on Friday evenings – another activity that the girls are really enjoying each week.

During the year the girls have been on several excursions such as:

- The girls have been doing a course with Koori Radio, arranged through Sue Pinckham, the Aboriginal Social Planner in the northern area – this has been a lot of fun and learning. The two Year 10 girls, Tioka and Kersain, have organized to do work experience with Koori Radio.
- Tioka went with the school to Williamstown Air Base which was very interesting
- Two girls went with Carol to Barrenjoey High's Music Night during NAIDOC Week to hear a night of *Indigenous Women and Their Music*. It was a really great night – Corey Kirk and her band

performed, together with the *Stiff Gins* and Casey Donovan.

- Carol went with the girls to the Art Gallery of NSW to see the Archibald Prize paintings and they all enjoyed walking through the Botanical Gardens and catching the ferry to and from Manly. They also saw the film *Samson & Delilah* at Collaroy Cinema. Thanks to the Support Group for the movie tickets.
- Tioka and Kersain with Jocelyn Che and Carol Ritchie attended the Tranby Annual Dinner in the city and really enjoyed the night. It was good for the girls to attend such a function and they talked to many people during the evening, telling them about Biala.

So, once again, we – the students, staff and I – thank you all for your continuing support of Biala over this past year. It is really appreciated by us all.

Lara Rutley
Senior House Manager
Biala Aboriginal Hostel for Girls
Allambie Heights

FUTURE OF BIALA?

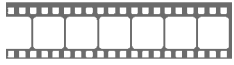
Many of you would have seen the articles in the press about the possibility of Aboriginal Hostels Ltd closing Biala at the end of the year. This would be a very sad event if it were to happen as Biala has been operating for thirty years in this area giving high school aged Aboriginal girls from areas all over NSW an opportunity to continue their secondary education in Sydney.

The opportunities gained from the education at Mackellar Girls High School, together with other activities which are very often not found in regional or remote areas of NSW, have led many girls going on to an adult life doing more study and gaining jobs.

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A NORTHERN TOWN



FILM REVIEW

This documentary was presented by Pittwater Council and the ASG on June 18 at Avalon Beach RSL Club

A Northern Town, directed by Rachel Landers and produced by Dylan Blowen, examines a history of race relations in the NSW mid north coast town of Kempsey – *Slim Dusty Country* or the nation of the Dunghutti people. The documentary format of the film reveals through interviews, in very subtle measures, the inequity and injustice experienced by the local Aboriginal people and the repression of a past that gives them few opportunities to tell their story. The film successfully presents a redress to conventional histories which justify European land claim and land usage with a position that this was simply wrong and the process of native land dispossession saw the active destruction of local Aboriginal people. The course of interviews with Kempsey locals and elderly residents at the Booroongen Djugin Aboriginal Corporation Nursing Home give an oral history of Aboriginal massacre, rape and abuse. These stories are told by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and there appears agreement that something short of an Aboriginal holocaust has stained a past that has been veiled in secrecy. The slaughter of Aboriginal people such as the Myall Creek massacre has been well documented but more stories of atrocities against Aboriginal people continued up to 1950, according to one interviewee. The direction of the film changes with stories of non-Aboriginal interviewees who had suffered greatly in their lives. These stories run parallel with the Aboriginal experience ie killed or wounded defending one's land,

the tragic loss of family members, the scare of being taken away from family. While mateship and a *fair go* are important Australian values they are not extended to Indigenous people. The collision of cultures and a chemistry of hatred saw Kempsey segregate the Indigenous population who were barred from the council pool, separated in the theatre and on buses. There was a systemic European repulsion of Aboriginal people without question. The only solution was to hide the problem and believe assimilation would solve the issue. Assimilation programs, such as Kinchela Boys Home for Aboriginal boys at Kempsey, only produced problems which often ended with trauma and self destruction in drinking binges.

Kempsey had a distinctive bias against Aboriginal people and it is little wonder that over 40% of the local population voted against the 1967 referendum to decide whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be counted in the Australian census.

The great pity is that reconciliation has been so successful for those nearing the end of their lives in the Aboriginal managed nursing home rather than at the start of people's lives. The film is a professional production and an intelligently constructed documentary. I recommend the film for its interest and provoked reflection of history.

Ian Jacobs

The Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater has shown *A Northern Town* on two occasions with guest speakers who were featured in the documentary.

In March John Gurri Kelly, a Dunghutti man, who is a cultural teacher and artist, spoke of his life and personal experience of having a parent at Booroongen Nursing Home. In June as part of the Guringai Festival program Mavis and Cyril Davis spoke at Avalon RSL Club. Their presence made the night a warm and inspiring experience. Mavis told us stories and Cyril assisted and sang. Both are Dunghutti Elders, teachers and community leaders.

Nobody who was present will pass through Kempsey without thinking of that miraculous healing place of reconciliation – Booroongen.

Lizzie Landers

If you would like to purchase your own copy of *A Northern Town* contact dylan@ponyfilms.com.au

Darug Guringai Elders Art Project and Exhibition

The project was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Heritage Office. Elders and community representatives from neighbouring traditional lands were invited to participate. The group included many talented artists, some painting for the public for the first time. Willoughby City Council hosted a briefing dinner for participants at which they were given a canvas to create artwork based on the Guringai Festival 2009 theme *Star Dreaming*. Ten beautiful works were submitted and 125 people attended a Mayoral reception on Monday July 6 to celebrate the efforts of the participants.

Denise Catt
Events Coordinator
Willoughby City Council



GURINGAI FESTIVAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Guringai Festival is a strategic connection of ten councils, across a wide culturally-diverse and vast geographical area, to present an Aboriginal* cultural program which is by, with, and for the community. Intrinsic in its nature is the need for ongoing community and inter-council consultation.

In 2008 Warringah Council adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which was the subject of extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community.

As a result of the adoption of RAP it was decided to increase Warringah's contribution to the Guringai Festival by programming a two day program at a mainstream venue within the local government area.

Warringah Council officers, as members of the Guringai Festival Committee, played an active role in attending and reporting to the community at bi-monthly meetings. All meetings were held out of standard work hours and held at venues nominated by the Aboriginal community. This participation is a crucial part of the large external festival framework which feeds into the creation of a diverse six weeks of Aboriginal cultural activities. This does not, however, encapsulate the full extent to which community consultation is vital in the process. The need to understand cultural protocols and procedures is a vital link in making a project successful and sustainable.

Warringah Council is a values driven organisation and, to ensure the integrity of the program being presented, it was essential to have close and ongoing relationships

with the Guringai Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (GLAECG). This pro-active group of local Warringah women met on several occasions to exchange programming ideas, thoughts about new ways to engage different sections of the community and inform council about the work of Aboriginal artists in the community. These meetings also provided the opportunity to build trust between the officers and community as well as consult on culturally appropriate activities (brochure wording, welcome to country and smoking ceremony requirements, to name a few).

This year Warringah Council held their part of the Guringai Festival at Glen Street Theatre and Belrose Library. This free weekend of family activities *Serpent Rainbow Dreaming* was a great success, albeit hampered by the deluge of rain over the weekend!!! Aboriginal Elders came from far and wide to participate in the weekend which made it extra special for the community and visitors. Thank you.

The Guringai Festival is primarily to promote cultural understanding, with the aim of bridging the gap to building stronger communities.

There is no point to any community activity without appropriate community consultation. Next year the Guringai Festival will celebrate its 10th anniversary and due to the success of the 2009 Warringah contribution to the Festival, Glen Street Theatre has been chosen by the community as the launch pad for the 2010 Festival.

*Staff Cultural Services – Warringah Council
Enquiries to Margot Woodward, Manager, 9942 2678*

*denotes from Aboriginal or Torres Strait descent

Aboriginal History Day at Newport School

On Wednesday August 5 the assembly at Newport Public School was honoured by the company of Bob Waterer, a descendant of the Guringai people of Sydney's Northern Beaches. Bob was born and has lived on the peninsula all his life.

Addressing over 750 Newport School children, Bob gave an interesting talk about his proud Aboriginal heritage, pointing out that much of our local Aboriginal history is documented to have taken place in the Newport area.

In the spirit of NAIDOC Week celebrations, students were dressed in black red and yellow theme to acknowledge the Aboriginal flag, and participated in a variety of Aboriginal inspired activities – from story telling to bark and dot painting and weaving.

Students also researched local Aboriginal names that occur in our community, and gained exposure to Aboriginal literature and learning about inspirational Aboriginal people both past and present.

Mark Ansiewicz



*Front Row (L to R) :
Organiser Trudy Alcorn, School Captains Claudia Brooks and
Nathan McCoy, and School Principal Margaret Charlton
Back: Bob Waterer and Year 6 Teacher Sheridan Ansiewicz*

AN EVENING WITH LORRAINE MCGEE-SIPPEL

There was something charming about the evening right from the start. Well, almost.

Initially we were sitting in our chairs in their well-defined rows. This created the anticipation of a lecture. And why not? We always sat like that at Support Group Information Nights. But then, into that self-inhibiting atmosphere, Lorraine spoke with invitational warmth – ‘Can’t we bring our chairs a bit closer? Why not make a half-circle?’

Immediately our hearts responded and we were ready to hear the story.

It was not the dramatic story of a *Stolen Generations* victim. Rather, Lorraine was given away. Not taken. And that was only the beginning of the dislocation, exacerbated by racism and poverty.

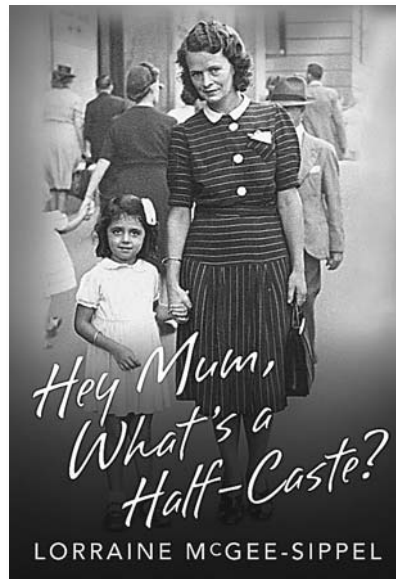
She realised that she was in some way different to the white society into which she had been adopted. That realisation came, when she heard from the lips of one of her school friends, words spoken disparagingly – ‘half-caste’. Not knowing the meaning of the term Lorraine raced home to ask her mother. ‘Hey Mum, what’s a half-caste?’ And therein lies the title of her book.

Avoiding an answer, mother Flo only prompted more curiosity. Looking at family photos, Lorraine was confirmed in her feeling, at a deep level, that she was different. When the revelations came that she did not have an origin in white society but rather was a descendant of the American negroes there was nothing but shame and the destruction of a very significant relationship. But in truth that revelation was not the truth. Lorraine was the daughter of an Aboriginal woman and that fact was only revealed much later. ‘Shame’ and ‘pretence’ were the words she used to describe that period of her life.

Lorraine spoke in moving terms about the joy of eventually discovering her Aboriginal ancestry and her meeting

with her birth mother. ‘Hazel and I fell into each others’ arms, and held on tight, too afraid to let go, to even speak. I watched the tears as they glistened in my mother’s eyes. I didn’t want this day, this moment to ever end.’

Lorraine’s story unfolds with tragedy and drama and the occasional cause for delight. That delight was especially experienced when she, with her Aboriginal cousins and extended



family, met on the lawn of Parliament House Canberra and heard the Prime Minister say ‘Sorry’. That delight still seemed to be rippling through Lorraine as she spoke to the Support Group. In response to questions, Lorraine acknowledged that she still felt the loss of all those years of not knowing her origin and identity. But that loss had not denied her the ability to grow to the point where she spoke movingly about her present experience of contentment. Her words, silences and her being proclaimed this to be true.

It was for no egocentric delight that Lorraine wrote her story. True, both in print and speech, she shares her essence – what she was and what she is still becoming – but with the purpose of encouraging others to do the same. On one occasion, after speaking at a Family History Group, an elderly couple, maybe in their eighties, told her that they had two sons both of whom were adopted. And it was

not until that night, when Lorraine spoke so freely of her own story, that they had the courage to reveal their secret. That night was the first time that they had told anyone. It was clear that Lorraine had the ability to help the members of her audience to be free and open with their stories and to rejoice in the telling.

Those who were present at the Monday Information Night knew, first hand, that freedom, openness and joy. Inevitably that knowing will be a force for healing and well-being.

Lorraine McGee-Sippel’s book ‘Hey Mum, What’s a Half-Caste?’ is on sale at all good book shops and especially Next Chapter at Warriewood Square. Also the Top Shelf Library at the Uniting Church Dee Why has a couple of copies available for loan. Have a word with David Harrison **9971 4160**.

Grahame Ellis

Hey Mum, What’s a Half-Caste? was reviewed by Lizzie Landers in the last issue of *Elimatta*

NOVEMBER INFORMATION NIGHT



Reporting on the Current State of Affairs In Aboriginal Australia

Date: Monday November 9

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: Mona Vale Memorial Hall next to Mona Vale Library

Guest Speaker is Jeff McMullen, the CEO (Honorary) of Ian Thorpe’s *Fountain for Youth*

For further details contact Vanessa **9970 5456**

or Lizzie **9918 2594**

or visit www.asgmwp.net



KEEPING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ALIVE

Indigenous languages will live on for future generations of Australians under a new approach being taken by the Australian Government. The new National Indigenous Languages Policy is aimed at keeping Indigenous languages alive and supporting Indigenous Australians to connect with their language, culture and country. Minister for the Arts, Peter Garrett and Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin announced the new approach on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. Each year on 9 August the United Nations celebrates and showcases the culture, history and languages of the world's Indigenous people.

The Government's new approach to preserving Indigenous language comes as a report found that of the 145 Indigenous languages still spoken in Australia, 110 are at risk of disappearing. *The National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005* revealed that the languages under threat are now spoken by only small groups of people, mostly over 40 years old and are at risk of being lost. This new national approach will improve coordination between those who are already working to support Indigenous languages including government, cultural institutions, Indigenous languages organisations, and education and research bodies. It will focus on five key areas:

- bringing national attention to Indigenous languages;
- encouraging the use of critically endangered languages to maintain and extend their everyday use as much as possible;
- making sure that in areas where Indigenous languages are being spoken fully and passed on, government recognises these languages when it interacts with Indigenous communities;
- helping restore the use of rarely spoken or unspoken Indigenous languages to the extent that the current language environment allows; and
- supporting the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in Australian schools.

"We recognise the intrinsic connection between languages, culture and country and the vital role they play in building and enriching Indigenous community life", Mr Garrett said. "These languages are also a significant part of Australia's heritage, and we must ensure they are protected for the benefit of future generations... A focused and coordinated national approach is critical to safeguard Indigenous culture and save these unique languages." Ms Macklin said reconnecting with language helped many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to feel proud and strong in their identity. *"It is so important for all people to be aware and proud of their traditions and culture and this, of course, includes*

celebrating the unique qualities of their own language", Ms Macklin said. "Recognising the importance of language and culture is also an essential part of resetting our relationship with Indigenous Australians and working more effectively together. ...All Australian Governments have committed \$38.6 million towards interpreting and translating services as part of the new Remote Service Delivery sites. We are also committed to introducing a national framework for the effective provision and use of Indigenous language interpreters and translators."

The Australian Government's Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program will continue to play a central role in the rescue and maintenance of Indigenous languages.

The program supports 65 projects across Australia involved in the development and use of databases, language resources and the delivery of language programs.

The Australian Government has committed \$9.3m over the next year towards protecting Indigenous languages.

THE TALL MAN

Chloe Hooper has won a swag of literary awards for her book *The Tall Man: Death and Life on Palm Island*, the story of Cameron Doomadgee who died in tragic circumstances in a Queensland police station. It has won the NSW, Queensland and Victorian Premiers' Literary Awards, the inaugural *John Button Prize* for writing on political and public policy, the true-crime prizes at the *Ned Kelly* and *Davitt Awards* and an Australian Book Industry non-fiction prize.

Continued from Page 5

FUTURE OF BIALA?

Lara Rutley, the Senior House Manager at Biala, intends to fight to keep the Hostel open and is seeking any help available to do this. The Guringai Local AECG, Mackellar Girls High, the ASG and the wider community will back Lara as she endeavours to have this important educational facility continue for Aboriginal students and their families. I am sure we all agree that education is so important for the future of all young people.

Please lobby in whatever way you can on behalf of Biala and sign one of the petitions which are circulating through our networks. Your support will be appreciated.

Carol Ritchie

Ricky Maynard's PORTRAIT OF A DISTANT LAND

From June 4 to August 23, the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney hosted a photographic exhibition by award winning Tasmanian Aboriginal photographer Ricky Maynard titled *Portrait of a Distant Land*. The exhibition comprised a selection of sixty images from six bodies of work developed over more than two decades of practice. The series are *The Moonbird People* (1985-88), *No More Than What You See* (1993), *Urban Diary* (1997), *In The Footsteps Of Others* (2003), *Returning To Places That Name Us* (2000) and his latest and on-going series, *Portrait of a Distant Land* (2005-).

Ricky Maynard is based on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait between Tasmania and the Australian mainland. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia, the Art Gallery of NSW, Queensland Art Gallery and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

As part of the exhibition, Indigenous curator Keith Munro organized a number of panels of speakers and performers to respond to Ricky's work, focusing on particular issues. Jason Behrendt and I were invited to participate on a panel focusing on native title and responding to the portraits of the Wik Elders by Ricky Maynard. Jason is an Aboriginal solicitor, practicing in the area of native title and land rights, and gave some insights into working as a solicitor on native title cases.

It was also great to catch up with Aunty Nancy and Carol Ritchie from the ASGMWP who attended. It's always nice to see some familiar faces from the north side of the harbour!

The Museum of Contemporary Art has commissioned Ricky to develop a major public presentation of his works on billboards and railway station platforms throughout Sydney for October's *Art&About*. His work is really special as he brings his particular perspective to the process of creating the images and the results are enormously warm, honest, moving and beautiful.

He works closely with the people and land he photographs to produce uniquely person images.

On the way he works Ricky Maynard says: *'Standard photographic technique is essentially an act of subjugation, in which people are invariably reduced to objects for the use of the photographer... To build an alternative practice, a convivial photography we need to abolish this oppressive relationship. Co-authorship must be established beforehand. It is impossible to fight oppression by reproducing it.'* (Ricky Maynard, MCA website)

Ricky is a wonderful Aboriginal artist and I really hope that you get to share in his work. Keep an eye out also for MCA Indigenous curator Keith Munro's panel discussions at the MCA. He often invites local Aboriginal people to come and speak about work on display at the gallery or relevant events and really creates a wonderful space for the audience to hear the thoughts of a whole range of Sydney based Aboriginal people while enjoying the artwork.

Robynne Quiggin

ULURU

I've been there, and your rock I've seen,
It slumbers in its sadness dream
Glowing in the sun's warm beam
Caressed with tenderness.

This rock is something, part of you,
Part of your culture given to you
By your forebears, dark in hue
Who rightly, you revere.

Few white men truly understand
How once your people owned this land
That they, unjustly, turned their hand
And took your land away.

But you, with time, have turned around
Now Koori claim their Koori land
The justice that is due to you
Cannot be doubted,
Must come through.

You must keep on and not give way,
Your destiny will have its day,
The creator has the final say,
You are His children too.

And this monumental Uluru
Speaks of your past, it speaks for you,
And those who listen, hear it too.
Uluru Uluru

Helene Rendall

YEMMERRAWANYEA

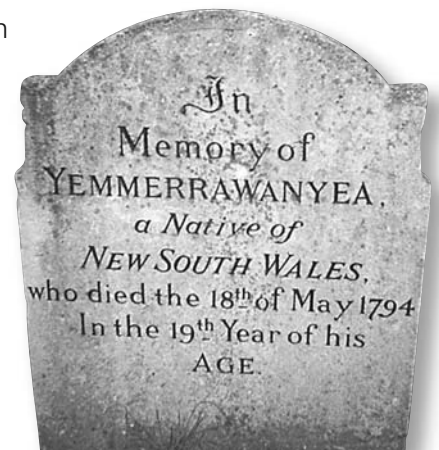
The oldest burial site in Britain of an Indigenous Australian is the grave of Yemmerrawanyea.

He was a nineteen year old Eora man of the Port Jackson area who died on May 18, 1794 in London.

Yemmerrawanyea was befriended by Governor Arthur Phillip. He periodically lived at Government House, dressed in European clothes and was taught to wait at the Governor's table.

When Phillip returned to England in December 1792, he was accompanied by Yemmerrawanyea and Bennelong, the first two Aboriginal Australians to visit England. They were presented to King George III.

Within a year Yemmerrawanyea was dead and his body interred in the churchyard of St John the Baptist at Eltham, London.



Courtesy Yvonne Nolan

Yvonne Nolan

Bob Waterer – A Guringai Man of the Northern Beaches



Photo courtesy of Ingrid Storm

The Winter 2007 issue of *Elimatta* carried a story about Bob Waterer who had discovered in 2005, at 81 year of age, that he had Aboriginal heritage. Bob found documents at the back of a wardrobe shelf in his late sister's home that authenticated his heritage – just days before the house was demolished!

This documentation proves that Bob is a 6th generation Guringai man. He is a direct descendant of Matora, the first partner of Bungaree who was the head of the Broken Bay tribe in the early 19th century. Colonisation brought disease and racism which decimated the Aboriginal people of the Northern Beaches of Sydney and it was believed for many years that there were no Guringai descendants living in the area. The Support Group approached Bob to publish a book about his life, a book written in a manner to foster a better understanding of the Aboriginal history of the area. It is a story that needs to be told.

Involvement has been sought from authors who have already undertaken research relevant to the book. The guidance and assistance of Warringah Council and Tina Graham, the Local Studies Librarian at Dee Why Library, have provided invaluable support and encouragement for this project. The Support Group received a cultural grant of \$1,500 from Warringah Council to scope the possibility of publishing the book and that scoping has led to the more refined current project. Consultation has taken place with members of the Aboriginal Community who have

advised on the appointment of an Aboriginal writer to draw the story into an accurate, informative and enjoyable format.

The book will be Bob's story. The youngest of five children he was born in Brookvale on October 13, 1924. His mother had been born on Scotland Island in Pittwater in 1894 and his father had come to Australia about 1900 from Middlesex England.

Bob served in the Australian Army from 1943 to 1946 joining the 2/4th Field Regiment as a signaller. He is NSW Secretary of his regimental association and has been a Life Member for the past twenty years. One of his greatest sporting loves is Rugby League. He played in the first ever D Grade competition in Manly Warringah and when in the Army played front row in the regimental team which went on to win all its games.

Bob, his late wife Joan and their four children lived in Brookvale and were involved in many sporting and community activities. In 2005 Bob moved to the RSL Retirement Village, Narrabeen.

Since discovering his heritage Bob has been a guest at many events speaking with enthusiasm and passion. His story is engaging and informative and those fortunate enough to hear him are fascinated by the glimpses of Australian history that creep into Bob's narration as he proudly speaks of his heritage. He also brings a realisation of the importance of local Aboriginal history which is virtually unknown to so many. This book will build on Bob's story with historically sound research. It will be a family story told chronologically and set against Australia's history.

Nan Bosler is managing the project on behalf of the Support Group. Funding for the book is being sought. All material found or developed during the researching of this project will be lodged at Dee Why Library for use by future researchers into the rich Aboriginal history of this area.

Nan Bosler and Pat Frater

BL BLAST OFF 2009

On Monday October 5 Bob Waterer gave the *Welcome To Country* at Palm Beach for the start of the BL Blast Off 2009 pre-junior surfing competition held on the Northern Beaches. Blast Off aims to introduce young surfers to the world of competition in a friendly and encouraging environment. It focuses on surf improvement and family fun.

Bob Waterer spoke to about 200 girls and boys attending the event telling them about his Aboriginal heritage and his ancestors who lived in the West Head and Broken Bay area. A smoking ceremony followed Bob's Welcome.

BL Blast Off is run by former world surfing champion Barton Lynch who wanted this year's event to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Proceeds from the event's traditional raffle were donated to the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern and will assist in developing its surfing program for Aboriginal youth.

THANKYOU TO ...



Pittwater RSL Club for a CDSE grant for speakers at ASG Information Nights and special events.



Forestville RSL Sub Branch for a Youth Grant to Biala Aboriginal Hostel for Girls, Allambie Heights





Monday Nov 9 ASG Information Night. Guest Speaker Jeff McMullen
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale – next to Mona Vale Library.
7.30pm. Parking available. Enquiries contact Lizzie 9918 2594

Saturday Dec 12 Christmas in the Bush – contact Herb Smith for details 9847 6052 or 0438 777 545

Monday Dec 14 ASG Meeting and Christmas Get Together Come and see our new venue. After a short Business Meeting will be a chance to chat and enjoy refreshments. Mona Vale Memorial Hall – next to Mona Vale Library. 7.30pm. **All Welcome.** Enquiries contact Anna 9913 7940

2010

Monday Feb 8 ASG Business Meeting – Mona Vale Memorial Hall – next to Mona Vale Library 7.30pm

To See...

The Dreamers at the Art Gallery of NSW until Dec 8.
This exhibition profiles key works from the Gallery’s collection by eight distinguished Aboriginal artists – *The Dreamers* for the future. Enquiries 1800 679278.

Menagerie at the Australian Museum, College Street Sydney, until November 15. This groundbreaking exhibition features animal sculptures by thirty three established and emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists. Enquiries 9320 6000.

Stone Bros. written and directed by Richard J Frankland, is Australia’s first feature Indigenous comedy by an Indigenous filmmaker. The film addresses the issue of Aboriginal identity and the futility of drug use. Now screening nationally at selected cinemas. M15+

RACERELATIONS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Preamble and Articles 1 and 2 says it all. Briefly, that all human beings are born equal and free. This is United Nations effort to bring freedom and peace irrespective of individual’s colour, creed, caste or class.

This Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed in 1948, was not applied to Indigenous Australians, living as non-entity on their own land. It was not until after 1967 that they were counted in the census. As a member for years of Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater, I always saw kind of sadness, dejection on Aboriginal faces.

Earlier this year I was invited to a breakfast for the first celebration of Prime Minister’s official *Apology* to the Aboriginal people for their abuse and neglect, specifically to the *Stolen Generations*. I was amazed at the transformation in one year. Was it because of the *Apology* that many were cheerful, smiling with hope for a better future? Imagine living with a hopelessness for two hundred years. Now they could move forward with other Australians, with improved children’s education, healthy measures for all and with freedom of practicing their own culture and spirituality. Slowly though.

Sadly racism is still rife in this country but hopefully it will get better by multiculturalism and Bill of Rights. Maybe in a couple of generations?

Mina Singh Batra
Executive Convenor for Race Relations
United Nations Association of Australia (NSW)

*An Invitation
to join us*

**Aboriginal Support Group
Manly Warringah Pittwater**

Founded 1979

Membership is \$25 per year

(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. 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: Anna Bell and Pat Frater
Proof Reader: Carol Gerrard
Graphic Design: Mark Ansiewicz: (02) 9979-9112
Distribution: Jackie O’Hare, Anna Bell, Pat Fisher, Helen and Alan Ford, Carol Gerrard, Clair Jackson, Suzen Meagher, Marcia Rutter, Don and Pat Frater.