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# Elimatta

Autumn 2011

## Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

ASG acknowledges the Guringai People, the traditional owners of the lands and the waters of this area.

### Marcia Rutter

Some years ago I started researching the history of my family and was delighted to discover that one of my Great Grandmothers was an Aboriginal woman named Diana Mudgee, also known as Diana Rayner. (See Diana's Story on page 2 of this issue of *Elimatta*.)

I was born Marcia Blackhall in 1944 at Coolah NSW. My parents were Benjamin Blackhall and Enid Ainsworth and they owned a wheat and sheep property. I attended a one-teacher school at Hannah's Bridge about midway between Coolah and Dunedoo.

When I was in 5th Class my parents sold the farm and bought another smaller one near Muswellbrook, where I finished my schooling, before coming to Sydney to work and live in 1962. I had been successful in obtaining a position at Manly Municipal Library. In 1966 I married Graham Rutter and we had four boys. I left the Library in 1969 when my first baby was born and spent the next few years being a full-time Mum. When my youngest started school, I began part-time work at the Warringah Shire Library and have worked there ever since. Graham and I are now divorced.

I am now a proud Grandmother myself and live in Dee Why. I have been an active member of the Aboriginal Support Group for many years.

My paternal Grandfather died when I was a baby and Grandma died when I was still too young to appreciate family stories. When I was growing up I had only occasional contact with cousins and extended family and unfortunately my own Father died of cancer at age 54 which was before I commenced my family history research. I do not believe he knew about his Aboriginal Great Grandmother, Diana Mudgee.

My Father's Grandfather was John Blackhall, a merchant seaman from Scotland who deserted his ship upon arrival in Australia. He married Diana's second child with

Robert Rayner, Elizabeth Rayner who was born in Grattai near Mudgee. Robert was an ex-convict who had been transported to Australia in 1830. After Robert's death in 1874, John and Elizabeth moved to Spicers Creek where they raised a large family. John, a farmer, was prominent in the community being postmaster for a short time and was one of several people who lobbied for the establishment of a public school in 1878.

As the children married, most seem to have moved

away and not to have kept close contact. My Grandfather William (O' Bill) Blackhall did stay at Spicers Creek and married a local girl. Their children, including my Father, who was the youngest in the family, attended the Spicers Creek Public School. Bill was a gifted water diviner and I have the references he received from local farmers whom he had helped. The family were friendly with the school teacher, Franklin Walker who wrote a poem about his friend "O' Bill". The poem has a chorus describing Bill as a "white man". Apparently, it was local knowledge about the Aboriginal connection but this was not always well regarded.



I feel very fortunate that we have been able to find lots of information about Diana from official records, but I would always like to find more. I would particularly like to find a photograph if one exists anywhere. Throughout my research, I have made contact with descendants of most of Diana's children with the exception of Mary Ann and Emma Phillips. There is now a network of the descendants of Sarah Knight and Elizabeth, Jane, Shadrack and Harriet Rayner. I would particularly like to acknowledge the help and support over many years of Faye Heany, whose husband Brian is a descendant of Diana's daughter Jane.



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# Diana's Story

**Diana Mudgee** 1826-1902

**Elizabeth Rayner** 1848-1917

**William Blackhall** 1868-1945

**Benjamin Blackhall** 1916-1971

**Marcia Rutter** 1944-

Diana Mudgee, also known as Diana Rayner, was born on 29 December 1826 probably in the Mudgee area of NSW according to her Declaration by Applicant for a Conditional Purchase (of land) to accompany Application made in 1885. As yet no record of who her parents were has been found. Diana's maiden name is given as Jennings on the registration certificates of some family members but the origin of this name is not known. Later Lands Department correspondence describes her as a "half-caste". Her first child, Sarah Knight was born at Mulgoa on 23 December 1839. According to the Baptism Register of St Thomas' Church, Mulgoa, Sarah's parents were James Knight and Diana, "an unbaptised aborigine". James Knight was a labourer who worked for the Cox Family. Sarah Knight married William Collins at Mudgee on 5 July 1858 and they had a family of fourteen children. Sarah Anne Collins died at Wellington on 25 October 1919.

On 8 September 1840, Diana Mudgee married William Phillips, a convict who worked for George Cox. Phillips arrived in Australia on the "Coramandel" in 1820. He was assigned to Windsor for distribution and in the 1828

Census he is listed as working on Iron Gang 2. Although he had been transported for life for the crime of "Larceny from Person" he obtained his Ticket of Leave on 19 February 1838. It was altered for Mudgee on 15 July 1840 and Phillips obtained a Conditional Pardon on 2 March 1846.

Diana and William Phillips had two daughters, Mary Ann born on 19 May 1842 and Emma born on 5 November 1845. Both were born at Grattai. Soon after, William Phillips seems to have parted company with Diana.

One daughter Mary Ann, as Mary Ann Rayner, married Michael Perry at Namoi in 1861 and had a family of five daughters. No record of her death has as yet been found.

Their other daughter Emma married Basil Dickinson at Piambong on 4 July 1866 and a daughter Emily was born in 1872. Emma Dickinson died of typhoid fever on 31 January 1873 at Mudgee when Emily was only three months old.

After parting company with William Phillips, Diana entered into a relationship with Robert Rayner, a convict who arrived in Australia on the "Burrell" on 19 December 1830. He had been tried at Ipswich, England, on 22 March 1830 and sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing shoes. A sixteen year old farm boy, native of Suffolk, he was described as 5'1¼" tall, having a ruddy complexion, dark hair and dark hazel eyes. On arrival as a Special Order, he was assigned to work on the roads. In the 1837 General Muster of Convicts, he was listed as working for John Jones in the district of Cassilis. On 26 October 1838 Robert Rayner obtained his Certificate of Freedom.

Diana and Robert had three children born at Grattai. William was born on 22 August 1847, Elizabeth on 21 November 1848 and Jane on 12 April 1851. William did not marry and apparently died in Queensland. Elizabeth married John Blackhall on 4 July 1866, in a double ceremony with Emma and Basil Dickinson at the Rayner family residence. Elizabeth and John began their family at Piambong but moved to Spicers Creek about 1875. They had a family of fifteen, although three died as babies. Elizabeth Blackhall died at Spicers Creek on 11 October 1917. Jane Rayner had two daughters, Diana and Caroline, before she married George Vitnell at Mudgee on 6 August 1872. They had a family of five boys and one girl. Jane Vitnell died at Dubbo on 24 March 1919.

About 1855, Diana and Robert moved to Piambong where four more children were born. Shadrack was born on 1 April 1855, Caroline on 12 July 1858, Harriet on 6 January 1861 and Thomas on 26 January 1866. Shadrack Robert Rayner married Sarah Ann Metcalfe at Mudgee on 18 April 1877 and they had a family of four girls and one boy. Shadrack Rayner died at Mudgee on 13 December 1924. Caroline Rayner died of whooping cough at Piambong on 11 November 1860. Harriet partnered with Richard Smith in 1878 and had a son and two daughters.

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Harriet Smith died at Dubbo 7 December 1885. Thomas Rayner was only five years old when he died at Piambong on 3 June 1871.

Robert Rayner acquired thirty acres of land at Piambong in 1855 and another thirty acres in 1859. He was “accidentally killed by a dray passing over him” on the Piambong Road near Mudgee on 16 October 1874. He died intestate and because he and Diana had never married, he was deemed as “having no person of kin to him in the said Colony”.

The Estate consisted of ninety acres of land, eleven head of horned cattle and fifty eight sheep. Edward Cover held a mortgage on the land and had a “partnership claim upon certain cattle, sheep, crops etc”.

Robert also had a debt of ten guineas to George Henry Cox (with interest this amounted to “eleven pounds one shilling”) and also owed William Kellett of Old Flagstaff Stores “eight pounds and sixteen shillings for cash and goods supplied”. The land and other property belonging to the Estate were sold at public auction.

This is probably the time when Elizabeth and John Blackhall moved to Spicers Creek.

It seems that Robert had two other children, Ann born in 1858 and Robert born in 1863 by the unmarried Mary Cummings at Grattai. Mary Cummings was a sister of Susannah, the wife of Edward Cover. Ann Rayner was baptized on the same day as one of the Cover daughters. Diana, as the widow Diana Rayner, applied for Conditional Purchase of four hundred acres of land at Piambong in 1885 which was granted. In 1892 she acquired Conditional Lease of another eight hundred and seventy nine acres. Also in 1892 Shadrack Rayner applied for Conditional Purchase of six hundred and forty acres and Conditional Lease of another six hundred and forty acres.

However, in 1895 Diana’s land was taken over by Reginald Belmore Cox. Also in 1895, Shadrack’s Conditional Lease was taken over by George Henry Cox. It seems that the Rayners were not able to satisfy the Local Land Board Inspector that the conditions of purchase and lease were being adequately met. The Cox men allowed the Rayners to continue living in their home.

In the 1891 Census for the County of Wellington, locality of Piambong, Shadrack Rayner’s household contained two males and five females and these probably included Diana as Shadrack’s wife had died in 1888. Yewen’s Directory of the Landholders of N.S.W. which was published in 1900 lists Shadrack Rayner as a dairy farmer and grazier for Hargraves Division – Piambong P.U.

Diana died at Piambong on 4 May 1902 aged 76. She was buried at Piambong, as was Robert Rayner and other members of the family. The only family headstone there is for Thomas Rayner, son of Shadrack, who died on 12 May 1913.

*Marcia Rutter and Carol Gerrard*



## Campaign to FLY THE FLAG

### NSW Reconciliation Council – Wednesday, February 17, 2010

NSWRC has launched its campaign calling for the Aboriginal flag to be a permanent feature on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Sydney Harbour receives around 3 million international visitors every year many of whom are genuinely interested in Aboriginal culture.

The Australian, New South Welsh and Aboriginal flags flying side by side symbolise the necessary partnership between Australia and its original peoples and fosters the process of reconciliation.

Flying the Aboriginal flag on one of Australia’s biggest icons, not only acknowledges Traditional Land Owners, but offers the potential to develop national pride. The Aboriginal flag is a simple way to recognise the status of Aboriginal people and their contribution to Australia.

## Roxon visits tomorrow’s Indigenous doctors

SMH Larine Statham February 18, 2011

Students in the Northern Territory – including Australia’s largest ever intake of Aboriginal medical students to a single university – will now be able to complete an entire postgraduate medicine degree without relocating interstate. Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon visited Darwin on Friday to welcome 24 students, 10 of whom are indigenous, to the new program.

She said Labor would provide \$34.4 million over the next three years to Flinders University to build a network of hospital and community-based facilities in the NT to support the course. “The money doesn’t matter if you can’t get the right people in the right jobs”, she told students, adding that she truly believed they could make a difference in “closing the gap” between indigenous and non-indigenous life expectancy.

Fourteen Aboriginal students, four of whom will be based in SA, have enrolled in the Flinders degree this year. A total of just nine Indigenous students graduated in medicine nationally in 2009.



# Iniquitous Intervention

Alastair Nicholson

Two ground breaking recent events in Indigenous affairs went unreported by the mainstream media.

On the evening of 7 February 2011, at the University of Melbourne Law School, two outstanding events took place that were entirely ignored by the print media and largely by the electronic media.

The first was a press conference addressed by former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in support of a statement making a measured and powerful attack on successive governments for their neglect and ill-treatment of the Aboriginal people of this country, particularly in the Northern Territory.

Supporting this statement was a remarkable group of Australians, including two former Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Ian Viner and the Hon Fred Chaney; Professors Pat Dodson and Larissa Behrendt; Dr Djinyini Gondarra and Rosalie Kunoth Monks; the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne and the Moderator of the Uniting Church of Australia; significant members of the academic community specialising in Aboriginal affairs and human rights; and many former judges and leading constitutional lawyers.

One would have thought this merited at least a paragraph in responsible newspapers.

The second was one of the more significant events I have attended. It was a public conversation at the Law School with seven senior Elders who had travelled from all corners of the Northern Territory to attend. It attracted enormous public interest. Over 400 attended and hundreds more had to be turned away.

During the course of this conversation the Elders described the effect of the disempowerment of their people, which is not only still going on but is reducing them to a state of disillusionment and despair. Contrary to the government's public pronouncements, the Elders made it clear that continuing policies include income management under a veneer of non-discrimination, continued compulsory acquisition of five-year leases, and hopelessly inadequate housing policies designed to force Traditional Owners to lease their land to the government, destroying Aboriginal home lands.

Education policies are in tatters, bi-lingual education has been abandoned and many children go without sufficient teachers and attend schools in a condition that would not be tolerated by the white community. No proper employment opportunities are offered and youth are left in a state of hopelessness. Local government has almost entirely broken down and the problems of child abuse and neglect have not been addressed despite the Intervention. The Elders concluded by delivering a moving call for action to the people of Australia.

This again went unreported. The government sought to justify most of their actions by a reliance on sham

'consultations' that were hopelessly inadequate and designed to achieve a predetermined result. The Elders confirmed this lack of consultation.

The reason that successive governments have been able to perpetrate this outrage has been the supine approach by the Labor party to the issue when it was in Opposition, coupled with the failure of the present Opposition to question the continuing inefficiencies and policy mistakes of the present government and the indifference and/or ignorance of the wider community.

To this must be added the incompetent and unquestioning attitude of the media to Aboriginal issues. On countless occasions Aboriginal people have asked me, 'Why don't they care about us?'—as well they might. This media neglect was even more noticeable in a week when the Prime Minister made a much publicised statement about the policy of 'Closing the Gap', while any critique of government policies was apparently unworthy of reporting. Similarly, in recent weeks, strong censure from the United Nations, under the Universal Periodic Review process of the UN Human Rights Council, barely rated mention in the media. In 2010 the same treatment was given to the criticisms by both the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Two of the many issues discussed during the course of the February 7 conversation were the government's belated reintroduction of the Racial Discrimination Act to the relevant areas of the Northern Territory, and its failure to repeal s. 91 of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act.

The former Act was notably suspended by the Howard government, with Opposition support, to enable the Intervention to proceed. The incoming Rudd government promised to reintroduce the Act, belatedly doing so at the end of 2010; however, Labor specifically legislated to preserve most of the objectionable features of the Intervention, with the effect that it is unlikely that these measures can be legally challenged.

As to the latter, s. 91 of the Act has the effect of singling out Aborigines as the only people in Australia who are not entitled to have customary law or practice or their cultural background and beliefs taken into account by a sentencing judge when they are being dealt with for a criminal offence. The government has declined to repeal this racist and discriminatory legislation.

The Act is also absurd. A judge held recently that s.91 required him to ignore that a sacred site had been desecrated by white contractors, because he was not able to take into account customary law or practice as aggravating the criminal behaviour in question.

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## **Iniquitous Intervention** Alastair Nicholson

During the February conversation it was asked why it was possible for the government to remove the protections of the Racial Discrimination Act from Aboriginal people or to enact racist legislation as within s. 91. Both Malcolm Fraser and I pointed out that this was because Australia—unlike Canada, for example is one of the few countries in the Western world where there is no constitutional protection of human rights. This means that a perverse or misguided government can impose its will on the people without being subject to any check or balance by the law. The common law, which can be

changed at will by the government of the day, similarly offers no protection.

It is therefore clear that unless and until we enact a constitutional guarantee of human rights, we are all at the mercy of incompetent, malign or foolish governments that can operate to destroy the freedom we all cherish. This makes the conservative opposition to human rights guarantees in this country—which includes opposition from sections of the churches—all the more shameful.

*Extract from the current Arena Magazine*

Alastair Nicholson was a barrister in 1963–1982, a QC in 1979, Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1982–1988, Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia in 1988–2004 and is currently a Professorial Fellow at Melbourne University.

He has written and spoken widely on human rights issues.

[www.stoptheintervention.org/uploads/files\\_to\\_download/concerned-Australians/Eminent-Australians-statement-7-2-11.pdf](http://www.stoptheintervention.org/uploads/files_to_download/concerned-Australians/Eminent-Australians-statement-7-2-11.pdf)

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# **Rally on Sunday, March 20th to**

# **STOP THE INTERVENTION**

## **Sydney Town Hall 1pm**

### **Speakers to include:**

Chris Graham - Founding and former editor of the National Indigenous Times

John Leemans - Kalkaringi and Daguragu Strike Leader and Gurindji spokesman

Nicole Watson - Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, UTS

To mark the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney (STICS) is organising a rally in central Sydney.

### **We are demanding:**

- Stop the NT intervention - **no** to racism!
- Make all laws subject to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Welfare rights for all - **no** income management
- Land Rights - **not** Leases
- Real Jobs - **not** BasicCards

### **These control measures remain in place:**

- Government Business Managers on Aboriginal communities
- Signing over Aboriginal land for 5-40 years before housing or services are offered
- Racist alcohol and pornography bans
- People will still not have access to the Racial Discrimination Act to challenge these measures

**Demonstrate your opposition to these policies at our rally  
on Sunday March 20, 1pm Sydney Town Hall**

<http://stoptheintervention.org/>

# A Further Conversation with Elders

A forum held at the Melbourne University Law School on 7 Feb 2011.

Bringing you up to date with the impacts of living under the Intervention

From L to R: Dhanggal Guruwiwi from Nhulunbuy, George Gaymarani Pascoe from Mililingimbi, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM from Utopia, Betty Pike, a Nyoonga woman from SW Australia, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM from Nauiyu (Daly River), Djapirri Munurrungitj from Nhulunbuy, Rev Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM from Galiwin'ku and Harry Jakamara Nelson from Yuendumu.

On Monday, 7 February 2011, the group 'concerned Australians' held the forum A Further Conversation with Elders: Bringing you up to date with the impacts of living under the Intervention at the Melbourne University Law School (see: <http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/>). For the first time respected Aboriginal Elders from all corners of the Northern Territory gathered in Melbourne to speak out against the ongoing Intervention into NT communities. With more than 400 people attending the forum it was filled to capacity, many hundreds more had to be turned away.

In Koori Mail, 9 Feb 2011, p12, Dr Gondarra said: "These Elders are living in the midst of (the NT Intervention). They speak about things that they have seen with their own eyes and they are feeling the pain of their people,"

During the forum the Elders condemned the federal government's Intervention into Aboriginal communities the Northern Territory, strongly criticized the Federal Government's approach to Aboriginal Affairs and called for an end to the NT Intervention. In National Indigenous Times, 17 Feb 2011, p3, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks said: "It has taken away our rights and it has failed to deliver proper services." In a Green Left Weekly (GLW) article of 13 Feb 2011 she adds: "When I was called to Geneva to testify on the effect of the Intervention, I was not sure how to express the loss of dignity and loss of rights we felt. I had to go out of Australia to feel like a member of the human race, away from the control. We have Government Business Managers who write reports not only on communities, but also on individuals who even dare to answer back."

The Aboriginal Elders described the effects of the disempowerment, which is still going on, and results in disillusionment and despair. They also complained about current policies including income management and housing policies. In a GLW article of 13 Feb 2011 Ms Kunoth-Monks is quoted: "The Intervention has caused



Photo used with permission by 'concerned Australians'

much destruction, there is no housing, little infrastructure and the recent rain has shown the neglect, especially the leaking sewerage. All infrastructure is second grade, not built according to building programs." In the same article, Harry Jakamara Nelson said: "We have experienced very enormous pressure on our community as it has been targeted by the government as a hub town. This has led to much hardship in the last few years. After a year of the Intervention, our council was taken over, thrown out, our rights taken away. Our shire is now run from Alice Springs."

Other problems addressed by the speakers included the threat to their culture by cuts to bilingual education in Aboriginal NT communities, the health situation and the delayed reintroduction of the Racial Discrimination Act, which has been modified to allow the continuation of most of the objectionable features of the Intervention. In a GLW article of 13 Feb 2011 Dr Gondarra told the meeting: "I wouldn't be here if the Intervention was good. It's not a special measure, why is it only targeting Indigenous people in the NT?"

In the Koori Mail, 9 Feb 11, p12, he added: "we are hoping that by gathering together we can pour our hearts out to the Australian people and invite them to become part of our struggle. We need other Australians to stand with us in solidarity, to fight this legislation that is dividing us as a people"

The forum was facilitated by Jeff McMullen, a distinguished former foreign correspondent and reporter for both Four Corners and 60 minutes and CEO of Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth, who for many years has been actively engaged with Aboriginal issues.

Before the forum the former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser expressed in a press conference his support of a statement making a powerful attack on successive governments for their neglect and ill-treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory <http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/Statement-by-Eminent-Australians.doc>.

This press conference and the forum were widely ignored by the media, in contrast to the Prime Minister two days later delivering the third annual Prime Ministerial Speech on *Closing the Gap* on Aboriginal disadvantage to the Federal Parliament.

Submitted by Sabine Kacha  
Members of ASGMWP

# Statement by Elders

TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA

7 FEBRUARY 2011

We are the people of the land. The land is our mother. For more than 40,000 years we have been caring for this land. We are its natural farmers.

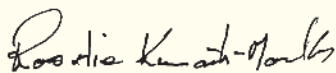
Now, after so many years of dispossession, we find once again we are being thrust towards a new dispossession. Our pain and our fear are real. Our people are again being shamed.

Under the Intervention we lost our rights as human beings, as Australians citizens, as the First People of the Land. We feel very deeply the threat to our languages, our culture and our heritage. Through harsh changes we have had removed from us all control over our communities and our lives. Our lands have been compulsorily taken from us. We have been left with nothing.

The legislation under which we now live does not comply with international law. It is discriminatory. We are no longer equal to other Australians. We are no longer equal to you.

As people in our own land, we are shocked by the failure of democratic processes, of the failure to consult with us and of the total disregard for us as human beings. We demand the return of our rights, our freedom to live our traditional lives, support to develop our economic enterprises to develop jobs and to work towards a better future for all our peoples.

So extreme have been the actions against our people that we must appeal to all people of Australia to walk with us in true equality. Speak out and help to put an end to the nightmare that Northern Territory Aboriginal people are experiencing on a daily basis.



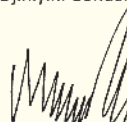
Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Utopia



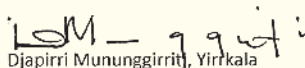
Rev. Dr Djinyini Gondarra OAM, Galiwin'ku



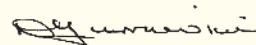
Harry Nelson, Yuendumu



Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM, Nauiyu

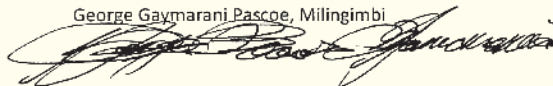


Djapirri Mununggirritj, Yirrkala



Dhanggal Gurruwiwi, Yirrkala

George Gaymarani Pascoe, Milingimbi



Aboriginal Elders Statement see

<http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/Elders-statement-7-2-11.pdf>

Statement on Aboriginal Rights, by 33 leading Australians see:

<http://www.concernedaustralians.com.au/media/Statement-by-Eminent-Australians.doc>





## ASGMWP Sorry Day Sunday May 29th 2011

Come and meet members of Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater at 2.30pm at Berry Park, Narrabeen for Welcome to Country then Remembrance Walk to Bilarong Scout Hall where we will commemorate *Sorry Day*. Dancers, Speakers, Storyteller, Magician, Painting and a BBQ. It's all Free.

This is a great opportunity to come together, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to yarn, remember, and enjoy.

If you can't make it for the Remembrance Walk, please come and join us at the Bilarong Scout Hall in Wakehurst Park Rd Narrabeen from 3pm - 6pm.



## The First National Sorry Day

The first National *Sorry Day* was held in 1998 – one year after the tabling of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report *Bringing Them Home*. This report recommended that a National *Sorry Day* be held each year.

This day offers the Australian community the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of the policies of forcible removal on Australia's Indigenous peoples; to express their sorrow; and to celebrate the beginning of a new understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia.

## Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a multi-layered process. At its core, it is about addressing the divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, divisions that have been caused by a lack of respect, knowledge and understanding.

Reconciliation is about recognising the truth of Australia's history, and moving forward together with a commitment to social justice, and building relationships based on mutual understanding, respect and trust.

Social justice for Indigenous Australians must include: recognition of the distinct rights of Indigenous Australians as the first peoples of this land, including the right to self-determination; reparations for past injustices, elimination of racism and discrimination, and closing the gaps in health, social and economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Reconciliation Week is held every year from 27th May until 3rd June. The week marks two important dates – the anniversary of the 1967 referendum (27th May 1967) and the anniversary of the Mabo land rights decision (3rd June 1992). The week commemorates the gains made for Indigenous rights and reconciliation throughout Australia's history, and provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the work that still needs to be done.

Each year community groups, schools, and other organisations across the country mark Reconciliation Week by holding events including discussion forums, Indigenous cultural festivals, flag raising ceremonies, walks, school fetes and other projects aimed at raising awareness of Indigenous social justice issues and exploring ways of meeting these challenges in our communities. Events are also held for *Sorry Day*, which precedes Reconciliation Week on the 26th May, to commemorate the day the *Bringing Them Home* Report on the *Stolen Generations* was presented to Parliament.





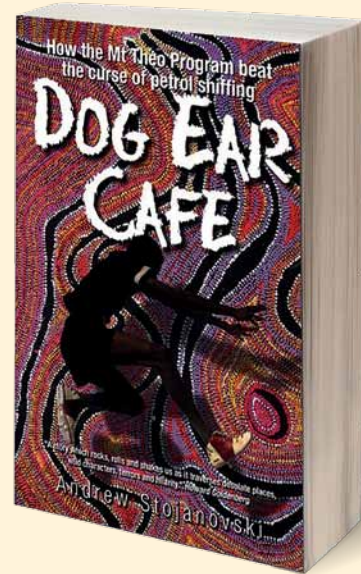
# How the Mt Theo Program beat the curse of petrol sniffing

This is an inspiring memoir of a young man's dedication and remarkable effort with Aboriginal youth to prevent their addiction to petrol sniffing and to bring positive changes to their lives. It is the story of Andrew Stojanovski's personal development over the 8 years he spent at Yuendumu, a remote desert community, where he learned to speak the language, was taught the Jukurrpa (dreamtime stories), and absorbed himself in the Warlpiri culture, bonding strongly with the Yapa (Aboriginal people). They adopted him into their kinship system, named him Yakajirri (bush sultana), and gave him a skin group, Jangala, which defined his relationship to everyone Yapa.

His personal connectedness with the Yapa gained him their trust and made him an effective communicator and well loved youth worker. At the same time, there is the narrative of the relentless but eventually successful campaign waged against petrol sniffing, which during the early 1990s had become such a serious problem, that it threatened the very survival of the community. The parents felt helpless and unable to cope.

Peter Toyne, then school principal, who had a long association with Yuendumu, called a meeting of Yapa and Kardiya (whitefellas) to find a way of eradicating petrol sniffing. They formed the "Petrol Sniffing Working Party" and with a traditional landowner's approval, established an outstation at Mt Theo, 50 kilometres from the nearest road, where young sniffers could be sent for a rehabilitation program. This was run by a small group of Warlpiri Elders, helped by a youth worker but initially, without any support from government. Only when Mt Theo began to show results were they granted some official funding, and that was not always reliable, as Chapter 5 "We'll fund you, but you'll starve" reveals.

The success of the program depended on the support and active participation of a small group of dedicated founding Warlpiri Elders who lived and worked at Mt Theo, caring for the young sniffers and tracking them when they tried to run away. Eventually their contribution was officially recognised in 2007, when Johnny Hooker Creek, Peggy Brown and Andrew Stojanovski were awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for their work on the Mt Theo Petrol Sniffing Program. In the course of Andrew's narrative we come to know them and many others, Whitefella and Warlpiri who were involved, and all their names are listed at the end of the book. As I finished reading it, I felt so glad that the



Aboriginal Support Group has supported the Mt Theo program financially for some years and continues to do so. Royalties from the book's sales will also be donated to Mt Theo.

The intriguing title *Dog Ear Café* was the nickname given to Andrew's house, 'a place of endless cups of tea with so many visitors'. Gradually, as he learned to understand Yapa ways of dealing with each other, Andrew used them strategically himself. This was especially true of "humbugging" (demand sharing): Humbugging invites the other person to enter into a sharing relationship with you. Even though humbug will centre around an immediate need, it also carries with it an implicit obligation of reciprocity. If you give to someone, they have a duty to give to you too (p.30)

Andrew and another youth worker Liam developed interesting ways of avoiding the humbug system yet still working within Warlpiri kinship: The process of becoming family created the glue, the most important characteristic of the Mt Theo Program... we were able to bridge the gap between our cultures and work together for a common cause. (pp121-2). *Dog Ear Café* is readable and entertaining, but it has a serious message for teachers, public servants and others who intend to work in remote Aboriginal communities. The reasons why the program has been so successful where so many others have failed? Rather than trying to impose solutions, they were prepared to listen and learn from the local Elders and show them respect.

*Hybrid publishers, Review by Ruth Fink Latukefu.*





# the ASG – busy again in 2010!

**Uncle Bob Waterer** honoured with a 2010 NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award

**Clair Jackson** nominated for Pittwater Council Volunteer of the Year

## Some events in 2010:

- February 11 **Outback Meets the Beach** organised by the North Palm Beach Surf Club – various events held – a welcome dinner – morning tea with the visiting women at Ruth's place, Uncle Bob talked to the visitors about the local history of the area, a farewell gathering that some of us were able to attend.
- March 8 **Information Night** – Ruth showed a film at the Mona Vale Community Hall about Brewarrina.
- March 31 **Seniors Event at Warringah Council** – audience enjoyed seeing the DVD *Going Bush* with Cathy Freeman and Debra Mailman.
- May 19 **Information Night** – Uncle Max Harrison spoke at Mona Vale Community Hall about his beautiful book *My People's Dreaming*.
- May 22 **The Guringai Festival** was launched at Glen Street theatre and included a forum on the arts – David Page's wonderful performance in *Page 8*, and also a performance by the Stiff Gins at the opening ceremony. Many events held throughout the area.
- May 30 **ASG's Sorry Day 2010** organised by Clair – a wonderful event as per usual – crowds of people. The event started with Remembrance Walk, then Corey Kirk singing our national anthem, then speakers, a performance by Eric Ellis and his group and a BBQ by Helen and Alan Ford.
- June 16 **ASG Guringai Festival Movie** – at Collaroy Cinema where a good number of people enjoyed *Fire Talker* about the life of Charles Perkins. Thanks to Lizzie for organising this.
- July 12 **ASG Guringai Festival Information Night** featured David Watts and his team from the Aboriginal Heritage Office. We had a great crowd and very interesting talks by David and his staff.
- August 23 Volunteers from our group helped with preparing and serving food at Julie Jansen's launch of posters about the Guringai people which also featured Aboriginal people living in our area.
- October 22 The forum at Chatswood with Frances Rings and highlights from the Bangarra Dance Theatre.
- November 8 **Information Night** – The film *Our Generation* shown by Jeff McMullen who spoke about what is happening in Aboriginal communities especially in the Northern Territory and the Top End. Corey Kirk sang our national anthem in Darug – wonderful to hear – a great night.
- November 28 **Christmas at the Zoo** – Nancy, Clair and the Biala girls attended – all had a great day.
- December 7 **ASG social** – a get together to finish 2010.

## Special thanks to:

Anna, Pat and others involved for all their hard work producing *Elimatta* over the years. Congratulations to Neil who is now the editor of the on-line *Elimatta*.

Vanessa and Mark for looking after the website and for the new great looking site.

Our minute takers at business meetings, usually Jan, Helen and Juliette.

Pat Fisher who always has great supper ready for us on our Information Nights.

Angela for getting our financial bookwork onto Excel – this should make David's work as Treasurer easier and Angela now knows how it all works for the future.

Our thanks to DYRSL, Pittwater and Manly Councils for grants received.

To Warringah Mall Club and Forestville RSL Sub-branch for donations to Biala.



## KIDS HOPE AUS®

On Sunday 13th February 2011 a Public Meeting was held at Mona Vale Memorial Hall to launch a local partnership between World Vision Australia and St John's Anglican Church, Mona Vale.

We were very privileged to have as guest of honour the Reverend Tim Costello.

Also in attendance were Bronwyn Bishop and Rob Stokes. Uncle Bob Waterer gave the *welcome to country*. St John's minister Matt Elkin described **KIDS HOPE AUS** joint program as a one-to-one mentoring and support to disadvantaged Indigenous children living in the Northern Territory. The aim is to improve opportunities for mentored children in the areas of education, self-confidence and wellbeing. To date 17 churches in NT are interested in developing the partnership with World Vision and local primary schools.

Tim Costello then spoke and began by saying that it takes only one child to destroy a classroom or a teacher's career. There is a great need to invest time in changing negative behaviour. For one hour each week, a caring adult from a local church mentors a child needing additional support at their school. This usually involves helping the child with homework, playing games, arts and crafts, or just spending time together. The mentor offers academic, social and emotional support to children referred to the program. The mentoring hour is not used for any religious purposes.

**KIDS HOPE AUS** focuses on children at primary school because during this phase the children are most likely to benefit from a close relationship with an adult. This is when self-esteem and values are learned, and critical academic skills are acquired.

Positive human relationships are essential for children to grow up happy and healthy. Yet many Australian children lack significant close relationships with a caring adult, other than their parents.

Children who receive help early on, especially those considered vulnerable and at-risk, significantly improve their chances for a good education, health and wellbeing, and social competence.

To the end of 2010 there are 300 **KIDS HOPE AUS** programs around Australia.

*Extract from World Vision website*

For more information or to make a donation please contact –

World Vision on 13 32 40, or  
<http://www.worldvision.com.au/OurWork/Solutions/KidsHopeAus.aspx>

St John's Anglican Church on 9999 2062, or  
[www.neighbourhood2239.com](http://www.neighbourhood2239.com)



## Aboriginal Student wins Rhodes grant

Rebecca Richards is the first Indigenous Australian to receive a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University.

## Other happenings during the ASGMWP 2010 year

The Guringai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corporation released 2 informative books for children on the Guringai language.

ASG supported Sabine's work with the Redfern Rally. Sabine brought over the book *This is What We Said* with Aboriginal people's views on the Northern Territory Intervention. The book is for sale at Information Nights.

Pittwater Councils have renewed its partnership to fund the Aboriginal Heritage Office for the next 5 years.

The Book *Story of Bob Waterer and his family* is coming along well, and is due to be launched in August 2011 Nan Bosler is the writer, Pat Frater the editor and Clair Jackson the Aboriginal consultant.

Laurie and Neil were invited by the Woollahra Council to unveil a commemorative plaque in honour of Bungaree and his first wife Matora, dedicated in a beautiful terraced garden at Rose Bay now named Bungaree Reserve.

Carol went to ANTA AGM – Mick Gooda spoke and the Minister for Juvenile Justice also spoke about juvenile justice in Aboriginal communities and young people in detention.

Nancy, Lizzie and Carol went to the NSW Reconciliation Council AGM held at Tranby.

In the afternoon they went to the Richmond Hill Memorial. This was really a wonderful experience.

ASG have continued to have representatives attend the meetings of the RN: NSR network meetings – usually Clair/Anna/Lizzie attend and report back to us what is happening in this important network.

Of course, ASG continues to support the Biala Hostel, Lara Rutley and the girls staying there and attending Mackellar High School – Susan Meagher and Carol Ritchie have been helping out at the homework centre at Biala.





## Guringai Festival 2011 Theme "One Voice"

The Guringai Festival is unique in incorporating events with ten Local Governments across Northern Sydney working together to celebrate Aboriginal culture and heritage, one of the oldest cultures in the world.

Founded in 2001, the festival aims to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Sydney region. The Aboriginal people who reside here come from many different Aboriginal nations or countries throughout Australia and call this area – Guringai Country – home.

**Kuringai Council** – workshop at Wildflower Gardens in school holidays for children – art exhibition Children's Voices for Reconciliation

**North Sydney Council** – workshop for children with performers, etc.

**Pittwater Council** – display of resources – workshop for children – evening talk by author.

**Mosman Council** – Elder's lunch – library art exhibition – Indigenous show for children with dancers etc. – talk on Bungaree.

**Mosman Reconciliation Group** – working with Mosman Council – also children from Mosman Primary and High Schools – art works on theme of festival.

**Manly Art Gallery** – exhibition of basket weaving – launch of this exhibition – artist's talks – children's workshop

**Warringah Council** – forum towards end of festival on Constitutional Reform with special speakers – at Glen Street Theatre.

**Hornsby** – a launch is planned to be held in association with GPs and health professionals with an art auction – fundraising will be for a scholarship for an Aboriginal student to do medicine.

For more information on any of the above Guringai Festival events log on to the Council's website

**19 Feb – 8 May** *FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW: Fighting for Indigenous Rights 1920-1970*

Open daily 9.30am – 5pm. At the Museum of Sydney  
Cnr Bridge & Phillip Streets, Sydney (near Circular Quay)

**14 March** **ASG Information Night** 7.30 pm – 9.30, ALL WELCOME

A talk and discussion with Paul Morris (CEO) & Ricky Lyons (Chairperson) of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC)  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, Free Entry – includes light supper. Enquiries: Anna 9913 7940

**10 April** **STORIES FROM AN AMAZING WATERWAY**

Church Point Ferry Wharf 12.15pm Enquiries: Maureen Rutlidge 9913-1474

**11 April** **ASG Business Meeting** 7.30pm, Mona Vale Memorial Hall

**2 May** **Film *Our Generation*** Free Public Screening of groundbreaking new documentary on Aboriginal Rights, 6.30 for 7pm, Hornsby RSL, Acacia Room, 4 High Street Hornsby

**9 May** **ASG Information Night** 7.30 pm – 9.30, ALL WELCOME

**29 May** **ASGMWP *Sorry Day* 2011** Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen. For more info: Clair Jackson 9913 9922

**15 June** **Film *Bran Nue Dae***. Collaroy Cinema, 1097 Pittwater Road, Collaroy. Time: 10 am-12 noon  
Gold coin donation. For more info: Lizzie Lander 9918-2594

## 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](http://www.asgmwp.net)**

**Elimatta** is the newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater.

Articles are welcome with the understanding that editorial changes may be made and that contributors agree that the material will be archived by the National Library of Australia.

Contributors to **Elimatta** are from many different cultures and backgrounds. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or members of the ASG.

Please email articles where possible to [the\\_elimatta@gmail.com](mailto:the_elimatta@gmail.com)

If you use any of the material it would be appreciated if the extract is set in context and the source acknowledged.



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