



asgmwp.net

# Elimatta

Summer 2013

Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

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

## CORROBORREE IN THE HEART OF SYDNEY

A new way of celebrating Australia's rich cultural heritage

Over eleven days and nights in November 2013, leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, writers, dancers and musicians will showcase their creativity and share their stories. Presented at significant sites around the world-famous Sydney Harbour – from the nation to your neighbourhood – *Corroboree Sydney* offers a unique experience of Indigenous culture. Corroboree Sydney is the time and place to watch and listen, or sing and dance! You're invited to join the celebration.

The Firelight Ceremony and official lighting will take place at Pier 2 at 7.36pm (sunset) on Friday 15 November. The Corroboree Firelight will continue to burn for the duration of the festival, from Friday 15 November until Sunday 24 November.

The program for *Corroboree Sydney*, which takes place from 14 to 24 November, includes a range of free and ticketed events held around Sydney's Harbour foreshore, arts precinct and parks showcasing Indigenous literature, visual arts, performing arts, live music, films, crafts and design.

Nine of Sydney's premier institutions with strong Indigenous programs have contributed to the *Corroboree Sydney* program, including Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, State Library, Australian Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney Opera House, Blackfella Films and Koori Radio 97.3FM.



Program highlights include a parade of 1,000 school children through Sydney's city streets in celebration of local Aboriginal culture, a special firelight ceremony and a range of activities taking place at Corroboree Central based at Walsh Bay's historic Pier 2/3 including the Corroboree Black Arts Market, Corroboree Cinema and Corroboree Studio.

More information:

<http://www.corroboreesydney.com.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/CorroboreeSydney>



**LIKE US  
on Facebook!**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Aboriginal-Support-Group-Manly-Warringah-Pittwater>



**What percentage  
of Australia's  
Population is  
Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander?**

(Answer on Page 11)

Be advised – this Newsletter contains images of Aboriginal people who have passed away

---

# RETURN TO BREWARRINA 2013

## Recollections of Brewarrina Aboriginal 'Mission' in 1954 *Dr Ruth A Fink Latukefu*

### Acknowledgments

I want to pay my respects to the memory of everyone I knew at the Mission in 1954, many of whom have since passed away.

Also to acknowledge the original owners of country in Brewarrina as well as all those families who were later sent there, often against their wishes.

I returned to Brewarrina earlier this year to give the Brewarrina Aboriginal Museum and community a disk (and album) with a digital version of photos I had taken there in 1954. The AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) had restored my old negatives, as all my field work photos/recordings etc. are kept with them in Canberra. Some old men and women who came to the talk and photo screening in June were children in those pictures.

I was able to give back to these communities their photos taken long ago, which give them precious glimpses of their own youth and of their elders who have long passed away.

### Introduction

We are on a journey going back almost fifty-nine years ago, though with the hindsight of the present. I want to describe what life was like for Aboriginal people living on the Government Aboriginal Station or *Mission* where I stayed during four months' anthropological research in 1954.

Aboriginal people then called themselves *dark people*, or *Blackfellows*. Anyone of Aboriginal descent was legally classed as Aboriginal under the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Act, unless they had a Certificate of Exemption or Citizenship rights. They were controlled by the State government's Aborigines' Welfare Board, which had power over most aspects of their lives. A few people had *Citizenship Rights*, which entitled them to receive social security benefits, to vote and importantly the right to enter hotels and drink alcohol, which was then prohibited to Aborigines. Even though many Brewarrina men had served during WWI and II, and had been treated the same as other soldiers, when they came back home, they again came under the Aborigines' Welfare Act and were not entitled to the same benefits as other returned servicemen.

During the 1950s State governments were promoting a policy of *Assimilation*, they wanted to encourage people to take out *Citizenship Rights* and no longer think of themselves as Aboriginal. People were then expected to renounce any Aboriginal cultural ties and cease to socialise with other Aboriginal people except close family. The aim was for the Aborigines to gradually disappear, by being absorbed into white Australia so that in a few generations no one would know or remember they had any connection with an Aboriginal past.

There have been very big changes since then and many people who would never have owned up to having

Aboriginal ancestry are now proud of their Aboriginal connections. It was so very different in 1954 when people were still being made to feel ashamed of being Aboriginal and to reject their languages and culture, especially in the presence of white people.

Many children were sent away to special institutions. Boys were sent to Kinchella home and girls to Cootamundra. It was not until February 2008 that Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister delivered an apology to the *Stolen Generations*.

But for all those years, most Australians were quite ignorant of what had been happening to so many Aboriginal families through the removal of their children.

When I was here in 1954 I was also ignorant of the *Stolen Generation* and I did not understand why people at the *Mission* appeared so afraid of white people, and why they taught the children to fear them and warned them to call out whenever a Wodjin or Wunda approached. Then they would rush inside their houses and peep through the doors to make sure no white official had come to take away their children. The removal of children if they are found to be neglected still continues, but not in the brutal ways of the past, when a police van would arrive and forcibly take children from their mothers, even those who were well cared for and send them away, often separating brothers and sisters, so that many never saw their parents again or had to search for them, years later. The *Stolen Generations* which most white people did not know about, explain why there was so much fear and mistrust.

But assimilation policies failed, because Aborigines continued to experience prejudice and discrimination. Many officials, police, and white towns' people still treated anyone with a darker skin who looked Aboriginal as *Aboriginal* whether they had citizenship rights or not. If you had Aboriginal features, you were branded and often discriminated against, especially in small country towns. Those white men who married or lived with Aboriginal partners were often themselves socially unacceptable to other town residents.

Exceptions were made for outstanding footballers, tennis players, athletes, gifted entertainers and lighter skinned people but prejudice remained widespread and unfortunately still continue in some places though it is no longer politically correct. In the past few Aborigines were socially accepted and generally, they remained outsiders.

In 1954 Blanche Ferguson once summed it up when she said: "To most white people we are like pigs to a Mohammedan, we are unclean".

This journey is an amazing one and would take up most of this Newsletter, so you can continue reading at: <http://asgmwp.org/brewarrina/>

Or call us and we will send this article to you as a hard copy.

*See footnotes bottom page 3*





## BUNGAREE RESERVE NAMING DAY CELEBRATION

**Sunday 24th November, 2013, 11am – 3pm  
Uratta Close West Gosford**

Koolewong and Point Clare -Tascott Progress Association is proud to invite all members of our local community to join us at this cultural event full of fun activities and historic significance for the future generations.

Activities will include: *Welcome to Country*, reflections by Bungaree family members, dedication of Memorial, Historic review, speeches by local visiting dignitaries and local Council officials, Aboriginal musical/dance performance, cold drinks and lots of more fun activities for any age group.

<http://www.kpctpa.com/>

*Continued from page 2*

## RETURN TO BREWARRINA 2013

Footnotes:

1. Earlier on it had been called the Aborigines Protection Board but many people referred to it as the *Persecution Board*.
2. White women were known as *Wodjin* and men were called *Wunda* or *Gubba*.
3. As for instance in the recent racial slur by Eddie McGuire likening the outstanding AFL player Adam Goodes to *King Kong* which caused public outrage. (May 30, 2013)
4. Blanche Ferguson and her husband pastor Duncan Ferguson were Christian missionaries originally trained by the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM), who settled in Brewarrina but no longer affiliated with AIM. They tried to influence people to take part in Christian worship and converted some of the families on the Mission, see further discussion below.

## Bungaree returns to *The Coast*

Much has occurred along the coast of Australia over the past 213 years since the Europeans first arrived and settled in Australia. With new settlers, the earliest disruptions usually occur along the fringe of a country and Australia was no different in this respect. The first major townships were located in coastal areas which provided protection for vessels from overseas as well as the important mixture of lands which could support either farming or industry plus strategic locations where trade could flourish.

This year the annual Australasian Coasts and Ports conference was held at the Manly Novotel. This is the first time since the inaugural conference in 1973 that the event has returned to Manly, its place of origin.

As this conference was being held on the ancestral lands of the Guringai people – particularly the Cooyeeman clan, it seemed fitting that the official opening should be provided by Guringai descendants. This was a great occasion to marry 40 years of scientific and engineering data with 20,000 years of indigenous observation and living from the land.

The keynote address was on sustainable engineering with its emphasis on minimal environmental impact and it was exciting to be given the opportunity to outline how these principles had underpinned the Guringai lifestyle throughout our occupation of this coastal strip – long before they were adopted by modern societies.

We are grateful to Ed Couriel, the manager of NSW Public Works' Manly Hydraulics Laboratory (MHL) for this opportunity to share our culture with professional people who are making the decisions about the future management of our traditional lands. NSW Public Works provides professional services and expert advice to government that deliver community benefits. NSW Public Works' MHL hosts one of the world's richest coastal databases and undertakes studies relating to water and engineering. This includes the modelling of sea walls and testing these out using wind and waves, flood scenarios in town areas, dam spillways and something that is closer to home – literally – the calibration of water meters. The talk generated a lot of interest and discussion amongst delegates and it provided an excellent start to a conference focussed on responsible decision making for our waterways.

*Brett Rowling 2013*



*Ed Couriel (left) and Brett Rowling (right). Photo courtesy Ian Turner*

# ABORIGINAL BURNING BOOSTS LIZARD NUMBERS Anna Salleh ABC



**The Australian Aboriginal practice of using fire to hunt sand goannas increases the numbers of this important species, a new study has found.**

The research, which was conducted on the lands of the Martu Aboriginal people in the Western Desert of Australia, further supports the idea that *patch* burning is beneficial to the Australian environment.

“Hunting removes the lizards but burning appears to increase lizard populations,” says study co-author Dr Rebecca Bliege Bird, an anthropologist at Stanford University. Bliege Bird says fire is integrated into Aboriginal dreamtime logic, which is an understanding of the important role that (indigenous) humans play in the desert ecosystem.

“The dreaming tells them that the country must be used, lived in, for all the animals and plants within it to prosper,” she says. “Animals must be hunted and fires must be set, else the whole thing will collapse.”

In spinifex grasslands of the Western Desert, Aboriginal people burn the land in small patches that result in much smaller and cooler fires than occur on unmanaged land where lightning is the main cause of fires. “They are thoughtful agents who look for fire breaks and who don’t burn when fire weather is too extreme,” says Bliege Bird.

Scientists have hypothesised that by creating diversity of vegetation and stages of regrowth in spinifex grasslands, Aboriginal fire mosaics enhance a range of niche habitats that support biodiversity in this landscape. But, says Bliege Bird, to date there’s been little evidence to back up this idea.

In previous research Bliege Bird and colleagues used satellite imagery to document the different scales of fire mosaics brought about by Aboriginal burning versus lightning-generated fires.

In this latest study, published today in the Royal Society Proceedings B, the researchers explored how these different fire regimes impact on an important species called the sand goanna (*Varanus gouldii*).

The Martu people use fire to hunt the sand goanna during the winter months, when the lizards are in their burrows. Women light fires in mature spinifex grass to clear the ground and make it easier to find occupied burrows. They then use a long digging stick to find the lizards and dig them out of their holes.

## Counting burrows

As part of the study, Bliege Bird says she walked a total of 100 kilometres through the desert, recording the number and location of fresh lizard burrows every 10 metres. She discovered that there were almost twice as many lizard burrows in areas that were being burnt by the Martu people.

“The negative effect of hunting in this case is counterbalanced by the positive effect of niche construction.”

Where there were no Aboriginal hunters, lightning fires spread over vast distances, patchiness was low, and the sand goannas were less abundant, says Bliege Bird.

She says the findings suggest Aboriginal burning could help prevent climate-driven shifts in fire size, and in turn help prevent species from going extinct.

And they support the argument that the decline and extinction of small animals in the Western Desert in the past century could be in part due to the absence of traditional Aboriginal burning.



## HELLO FROM OUR NEW CEO

Hi everyone,  
My name is Kirsten Gray and I am a Kamilaroi/Muruwari woman.

I have lived most of my life in Sydney but my family hails from Brewarrina. I have a background in law and human rights and am very excited to come on board with the NSW Reconciliation Council.



The departure of Leanne Townsend after four years has left some very big shoes to fill but I am confident that we will be able to continue to move the NSWRC and the *Reconciliation* movement forward.

I look forward to meeting you at our AGM (if not before) and to updating you regularly about our progress here at NSWRC.

Kind regards, Kirsten Gray

[nswrc@reconciliation.org.au](mailto:nswrc@reconciliation.org.au)

# THE ANCIENT STORY OF AUSTRALIA IS MISSING FROM OUR NATION'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE

**If conservatives claim a special place in safeguarding the country's heritage and traditions, they have a special responsibility to back Indigenous recognition in the Australian Constitution.**



Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles, Australia's first indigenous state of territory leader, made the remarks at a forum organised by Recognise, which is leading the campaign to correct the discriminatory absence of any

mention of our first people in the Constitution.

It appears to be a battle already mostly won, with Prime Minister Tony Abbott having said he would release a draft form of words within 12 months of the election.

Attorney-General George Brandis will head a bipartisan referendum committee and Recognise, through Reconciliation Australia, is leading a grassroots national campaign to ensure this is not a divisive but uplifting event.

Mr Giles said the story of indigenous Australia was Australia's story.

"And yet the ancient story of Australia is missing from our nation's birth certificate," he said.

"What message does that absence send about the value of Aboriginal people and knowledge and culture to Australia? What message does it send when there are more mentions of lighthouses in the Australian Constitution than the first people of this land, whose long history is entirely missing from its text?"

Mr Giles said the movement to amend the Constitution would not offend people from any political persuasion.

"Like me, they know that constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians will help our country to heal old wounds."

More than that, he said it was "just the right thing to do".

Mr Giles said he was "a pretty conservative person" who wouldn't want to change the Constitution lightly.

"This is a cause for conservatives – every bit as much as it's one that people on the left of politics can and should get behind. As conservatives, we are called to safeguard our nation's heritage and traditions," he said.

"Recognising the people who keep alive Australia's unique ancient cultures and who are our modern nation's living link to an unbroken thread of our country's people and history and culture fits squarely with that responsibility."

<http://www.recognise.org.au/uploads/custom/e67ed9e2eaf42e60b4fc.pdf>

## Saltwater Freshwater Festival

Australia Day 26 January 2014  
Kempsey Showground 10am – 4pm

The Festival is run by the Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance Aboriginal Corporation, a regional body for Aboriginal arts and culture on the Mid North Coast, that aims to position Aboriginal art and culture as the foundation for the long-term social, economic and cultural development of the region's Aboriginal communities.

The *Saltwater Freshwater Festival* is a showcase of the best Aboriginal talent in the country and most importantly, in the region. It is a culmination of a range of arts and cultural activities undertaken by Saltwater Freshwater Arts during each calendar year, providing an authentic Aboriginal experience for visitors and local communities.

### 'Whitefella, Blackfella, Come Together'

On Australia Day in 2014, the whole community will come together to enjoy the excellence of Aboriginal talent, Aboriginal stories and Aboriginal lifestyle.

It's all about what Saltwater Freshwater Executive Officer Alison Page calls *Aboriginal Advantage*: "the rich and diverse culture that can connect people to the land, to community and to one another."

## the YABUN festival

Saturday 26 January 2014

The *Yabun Festival* 2014 is not to be missed. *Yabun* comes from the Aboriginal language and means 'music with a beat' or 'music made by singing or beating time', and is a great way to describe the feel of the entire festival that is presented by *Koori Radio 93.7*.



*Yabun* is the largest single day Indigenous festival drawing an audience of between 10,000 and 15,000 and is one of the most important Indigenous music events in the country reflecting the huge wealth of Indigenous creative talent.

*Yabun* is renowned for its artistic line-up – presenting some of Australia's best in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music from around the country, including well established artists to those just emerging onto the scene.

*Yabun* also delivers a very current and informative cultural program, presenting panels and speeches by some of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's most recognised leaders, academics, politicians and artists.

*Yabun* is a no alcohol event and admission to Victoria Park is free. Victoria Park is at the intersection of City and Parramatta Roads, Camperdown, adjoining Sydney University.

<http://kr00.com.au/category/events/yabun/>



# BLACK ON WHITE:

**Belinda Mason, photographer**

**Photographic Exhibition at the State Library of NSW  
May to August 2013**

My friend Bronwyn rang me and said she'd seen a photographic exhibition and that my friend Clair Jackson was in it. I rushed to town to see it. Fantastic and thought provoking!

The subjects in the photographs each carry a placard which gives the viewer an understanding of the feeling Aboriginal Australians have about Non Aboriginal Australians and their cultures. Here is a selection:

Ashuruhny Walker, 10

*"Come and learn about our cultures  
I go to school to learn about yours."*

Steve Munguall

*"Remember who you are and where you come from  
'Cos if you don't know who you are and where you come from, you don't know where you're going".*

Clair Jackson, Ugarapul/Jagera Nation

*"We are people. We know just as you do,  
how to run our lives. Listen to us and we'll listen to you."*

Auntie Eva Richardson, Palawa Woman,  
Trawlwoolway, Tasmania

*"All people need to work from their heart not head".*

Unnamed

*"Our way is easy. Balanda/white way is hard.  
Please understand me".*

*"This is a travelling exhibition so you may find it in  
your travels."*



*Djamarr Djordila (from Maningrida NT) won the 2008  
Australian Human Rights Award for Photography.*

The project *BLACK ON WHITE* began back in 2008, when photographer Belinda Mason travelled to remote communities in Arnhem Land NT, on the first anniversary of the Australian Government's Intervention Policy to hear community reactions and ask them to make a visual record of their opinion.

Since then, the project has expanded across Australia, and each new community has added their voices to this exhibition. Each with their own story to tell and message to give to non-Aboriginal Australians. Over 200 Indigenous people from regional, remote and urban communities have participated in this project.

## **DJAMMARR DJORDILA**

*Yolngu (black)* "Our law stays the same, doesn't change. We got home, we know our home. We know our identity even know our native food. We still speak our language. We lived here for over thousand years.

*Balanda (white)* "Too much drugs and alcohol. Killing the world. White man makes too much pollution. White men destroys the earth. Too much talking, not enough action"

*Lizzie Landers 2013*



## **THE FIRST INTERACTIVE INDIGENOUS COMIC BOOK** *LARTESASHA GRIFFIN, Livng Black*

A group of teenagers from Roebourne in WA have created the first interactive Aboriginal comic book.

The year is 2076 and the land has been destroyed by radiation; the future of the world

depends on fourteen teenagers called the *Love Punks*.

Despite being a fictional fantasy, the characters and places are real. Each adventure showcases different aspect of Indigenous culture and connection to country throughout the Pilbara desert region.

Roebourne elder Allery Sandy says there's been a

noticeable transformation in the kids since they started the project. "There's a lot of boldness within them to speak out and to perform. I've never seen that in my day. Aboriginal kids are very shy, but these kids make me proud".

Digital artist and one of the creators of *NEOMAD* Nathaniel Edwards says he's always thinking about the comic book. "I had a dream I was using *Photoshop* and these people came to have a look, they took pictures and then asked me if I wanted to go to New York to do some drawing."

A dream not far off reality.

*NEOMAD* has been invited to the International Comic Festival in South Korea where it will be launched to the rest of the world.



## ABORIGINAL NAMES FOR NEWCASTLE LANDMARKS

**DAMON CRONSHAW** *Newcastle Herald* Sept. 24, 2013

Eight features of Newcastle – including Nobbys Head, Hunter River and the port – would be given twin names under a plan to recognise Aboriginal history.

Newcastle councillors voted unanimously yesterday to endorse an application to the Geographical Names Board for the proposal.

A council report said giving geographical features Aboriginal names was a “reconciliation initiative”.

“The Aboriginal name does not replace the European name in the dual naming process,” the report said. “Each name is recognised in its own right.”

Both names would be shown on signs and maps.

“The name most likely to be used by the community is placed first in the sequence,” the report said.

Council or grant funding would be used to put names on signposts, maps and guides once names were gazetted. The twin-name plan mirrors the dual naming of Ayers Rock with its Aboriginal name Uluru.

Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee, which advises Newcastle council on indigenous matters, created the proposal. “It makes Newcastle that much more interesting,” Cr Therese Doyle, a Guraki committee member said. Newcastle should have many more Aboriginal names, Cr Doyle said.

Dual names should be limited to sacred sites, Lord Mayor Jeff McCloy said.

Cr Nuatali Nelmes said the plan was “something we need to celebrate” and would be good for education.

Linguist Sophie Nicholls said the first documented reference to Nobbys Head with the Aboriginal name Whibayganba was found in a Sir Thomas Mitchell sketch in 1828.

Dr Nicholls said Matthew Flinders, the first person to circumnavigate Australia, recorded the Aboriginal name Yohaaba for the port at Newcastle during voyages from 1798 to 1803. “It is likely that his source was Bungaree, an Aboriginal man from Broken Bay,” she said.

European name	Aboriginal name
Nobbys Head	<i>Whibayganba</i>
Flagstaff Hill	<i>Tahlbihn Point</i>
Pirate Point :Stockton	<i>Burrabihngarn</i>
Port Hunter :Newcastle Harbour	<i>Yohaaba</i>
:The Basin	<i>Yohaaba</i>
:Throsby Basin	<i>Yohaaba</i>
:North Harbour	<i>Yohaaba</i>
:Port Waratah	<i>Yohaaba</i>
:Fullerton Cove	<i>Yohaaba</i>
Hunter River	<i>Coquun</i>
Shepherds Hill	<i>Khanterin</i>
Ironbark Creek	<i>Toohrnbing</i>
Hexham Swamp	<i>Burraghihnbiing</i>

## ARTEFACTS MUST GO BACK

Pomona near Noosa is the home of the Gubba Gubba people. This is where I returned a stone axe head that was given to me by someone who found it over 60 years ago. It was found at Murdering Creek near Noosa. A small boy was seen smashing it on the ground not knowing what it was so my friend took it off him and for safe-keeping kept it all this time in his home in Sydney not realising that artefacts must go back where they come from. I flew to Noosa to personally return the stone axe to the Gubba Gubba people.

If you find or have found artefacts like these, please get in touch with me Laurie Bimson, I will try and return them back to where they came or contact The Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council on 02 8394 9733.



Stone axe head (left) and skinning knife (right) returned to the Gubba Gubba people.



## WE NEED A NATIONAL KEEPING PLACE FOR OUR ‘LOST’ REMAINS

**Paul Daley** 24 October 2013

Tony Abbott’s proposal for a national war cemetery in Canberra dramatically failed to capture the support he needed most. Consistent with that sentiment, Abbott could, if he chose, advance the cause of *reconciliation* immeasurably by redirecting the millions he’s apparently willing to spend on what he called “Australia’s Arlington” to a much-needed national keeping place for the remains of hundreds of Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders whose birthplaces remain unknown.

The National Museum of Australia in Canberra presently holds the remains of 725 of our indigenes whose bodies became collection items in Australian, European and US medical, educational and cultural institutions between the early 1800s and the mid 20th century. An absence of records means 434 of them will not be able to be returned to their communities for reburial or ceremonial disposal.

Essentially, the remains of these *lost* Indigenous Australians will remain indefinitely in cardboard boxes until the federal government builds a permanent *national keeping place* for them.

For Indigenous Australians, the obligation of people to country manifests – culturally and spiritually – in returning the dead to where they were born. The soul can’t rest until the body is home.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/24/we-need-national-keeping-place-for-lost-indigenous-remains>



# ANNIVERSARY OF DEATHS IN CUSTODY ROYAL COMMISSION

*Ryan Emery reports*

Almost 30 years ago, Aboriginal teenager John Pat died in police custody.

The 16 year-old was caught up in a drunken brawl with police in 1983 outside a hotel in Roebourne, a predominantly Aboriginal town in Western Australia's Pilbara region.

Four years after his death, a Royal Commission began into Aboriginal deaths in custody: John Pat's case cited as one of the major factors.

22nd September 2013 there were national rallies to commemorate the passing of John Pat and to question what's changed since the Royal Commission.



The push for the commission was led in part by Noongar woman Helen Corbett.

She was shocked into action when, as the Director of Studies at Tranby Aboriginal College in Sydney, she read about the manslaughter trial of five police officers.

They were accused of causing the injuries that led to the death of Aboriginal teenager John Pat who had a fractured skull and torn aorta.

The 16-year-old died an hour after he was taken into police custody following a drunken brawl outside the Victoria Hotel in Roebourne, in north Western Australia.

A coronial inquest led to the officers involved being charged with manslaughter.

But they would be found not guilty of causing John Pat's death.

Helen Corbett says action was needed.

"And I was quite horrified about what I was reading and I said to another colleague, who was also from Western Australia; we need to do something about this. So we cut out the newspaper clipping, photocopied it and then we faxed it to a number of Aboriginal organisations and West Australian people we knew who were living in Sydney and said let's have a meeting and talk about what we should do because it's quite an horrific situation and we need to do something to give support to the families and all our mob back in WA."

The Committee to Defend Black Rights was formed and the push for a Royal Commission began in 1984.

In the meantime, more Aboriginal deaths in custody began to emerge.

But Helen says the wider community didn't connect the dots and they appeared to be isolated cases.

The committee started a listening tour around the country in 1986.

"And as we went around to each spot, more people were coming up to us and telling us their situations and so at the end of the tour, which ended in Perth, and Mavis Pat, the mother of the young boy, joined us in the final leg of the trip, we had something like 100 deaths that we'd collected from this tour."

Armed with the facts, they began to build a prima facie case with 12 thousand dollars from the federal Labor government led by Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

But the committee also took the cause overseas.

Helen Corbett describes walking into Amnesty International's London office.

"I brought a second-hand old suitcase full of all our information and dragged it into the office and they showed me an empty filing cabinet of Oceania and said 'look we have no complaints about human rights violations in Oceania, which includes Australia' and I said 'well, here's a suitcase full' and left it there with them."

Helen Corbett also spoke to a United Nations delegation in Geneva, Switzerland in 1986.

"People were very interested to hear what was going on and within four days of delivering the speech the Hawke Labor government, well Hawke himself got on TV and was crying and said we need to hold a Royal Commission into deaths in custody. There was a lot of international pressure. There was a lot of waking up of Australian people themselves, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, about what was really happening about our people dying in custody."

The Royal Commission became a reality.

Hearings started in 1988 and covered the deaths of 99 Aboriginal people in custody, including John Pat's.

A report in 1991 made 339 recommendations including arresting people only when there was no other way to deal with a problem and imprisoning someone as the last resort.

Rallies were being held in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria marking the 30th anniversary of John Pat's death.

On September 27th WA Deputy Opposition Leader, Ben Wyatt put forward a motion for an apology on Wednesday, which was unanimously supported by the house.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/09/20/anniversary-deaths-custody-royal-commission>





## LIZZIE VISITS MELBOURNE, HER BIRTH PLACE

### Tanderrum and Creation October 11 2013

For the first night of the Melbourne Festival, Elders of the five Kulin Nations came together to perform a *Welcome to Country*. Wearing the traditional possum skin cloaks, the deeply moving performance fused music, fire, storytelling, dance and cultural traditions going back tens of thousands of years to celebrate and share the proud, living culture of the land of the traditional owners.

The production was facilitated by the ILBIJERRI Theatre Company. And I was fortunate to be there.



Later as twilight deepened Archie Roach gave us his new show *Creation*. Can you imagine being in Melbourne's heart, Federation Square listening to Archie and other performers. Sheer bliss!

### Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre – Melbourne Museum, Carlton

Spend some time – days maybe – at this extensive exhibition featuring language as the connection to country; the way to knowledge, identity and awareness of the past.

The interactive language map where you can hear the different places in language is great.

I was born and lived on Woiwurrung/Wurundjeri land. The name Bunjilaka is derived from the word *Bunjil* (Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung language). *Bunjil* was a significant Creation Ancestor for most of Victoria's Aboriginal language groups; *Aka* means land or place. Bunjilaka holds Aboriginal cultural heritage items from a collection that is one of the most significant in the world.

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/>

Lizzie Landers

## ABORIGINES DISADVANTAGED ACROSS THE NATION

Patricia Karvelas, *The Australian* October 12 2013

Aboriginies do not come close to socio-economic equity with other Australians anywhere. Over a third of Indigenous Australians (36.6%) live among the most disadvantaged 10 percent of the population and only 1.7 percent lives among the top 10 percent.

The paper, by the Australian National University's Nicholas Biddle, finds that in every area analysed, the indigenous population had higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage than the non-indigenous population. Although disadvantage was generally higher in remote locations, there was wide variation in both urban and remote and regional locations.

The report ranked, in a joint pool, the non-indigenous and Indigenous populations of 368 locations around the country based on a socioeconomic measure that incorporated three employment measures, three for education, two for housing and one for income. The non-indigenous and Indigenous components of a community were then compared to see whether there was socioeconomic equity.

The average difference was 48.3 percentile places, meaning the non-indigenous population in an area ranked about 48 places (out of 100) higher than the Indigenous population in the same area.

The smallest gap was in "Sydney lower north", where the Indigenous population ranked in the 9th percentile while the non-indigenous population ranked in the top.

Three areas where the Indigenous population ranked in the 100th (most disadvantaged) percentile while the non-indigenous population ranked in the first (most advantaged percentile): Ramingining-Milingimbi and outstations; Great Sandy Desert; and Kaltukatjara and outstations.

Between 2006 and 2011, the eight areas that improved their relative socioeconomic ranking by 20 percentile places or more were in remote parts of the country including Bulloo-Quilpie-Barcoo and Nhulunbuy-Gunyangara. "The areas that worsened the most tended to be in regional areas, including Atherton in Queensland," Dr Biddle said. "However, there was also a worsening in the outcomes for the Indigenous area of South Perth-Victoria Park."

Dr Biddle said that possibly the most important finding from the paper was that in every area in Australia, Aborigines had substantially worse outcomes than non-indigenous Australians.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/aborigines-disadvantaged-across-the-nation/story-fn9hm1pm-1226738606644#sthash.FgQShgXy.dpuf>



# A BIG THANK YOU!

## BIALA HOSTEL 2013 GRADUATION CEREMONY

This year the graduation will be held in Dubbo. It's a long drive home so that they can stay in Dubbo for the weekend of the graduation the ASG-MWP has donated \$1000.

Have enjoyable night and weekend girls!

Congratulations to Lara and her staff for another successful year. Great work!

## BUSH TO BEACH 2014

South Narrabeen Surf Club hosted its ninth *Bush to Beach* on 25th to 28th January – an opportunity for the children from a remote NSW town to do things we on the Northern Beaches take for granted. It going to be a hectic but enjoyable four days for the *mob* from Brewarrina. Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater is happy to be a sponsor and **thanks the South Narrabeen Surf Club** for helping to *close the gap*. For more information about the event:

<http://southnarrabeensurfclub.org/bush-to-the-beach>



## ASG-MWP RAISE \$1,000



The Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation  
**WALLOFHANDS**

Help us make more kids happy – go to:

[www.wallofhands.com.au/Wall/View/3551](http://www.wallofhands.com.au/Wall/View/3551)



## ASG members donate \$1000 for Ian Thorpes FOUNTAIN FOR YOUTH



Thanks to Ian Thorpes *Fountain for Youth* and the support of ASG-MWP members, Toomelah School is getting \$1000 towards new equipment.

Aboriginal Support Group is a not for profit group, so all moneys raised through membership fee and donations goes into supporting the education of the young. To all our members and friends – a big THANK YOU – well done!



**ASG-MWP would like to thank Dee Why RSL, Pittwater RSL, Forestville RSL Pittwater Council and Warringah Council for their continued support in 2013**



**INDIGENOUS** is a word that refers to Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islander people



**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER  
POPULATION NEARING 700,00**  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Media Release 2013

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has reached 669,900 (or 3 per cent of the total population), according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today. That is up from 455,030 in 2006.

The Director of Demography at the ABS, Bjorn Jarvis, said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples mainly lived in urban areas. "Contrary to popular belief, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population predominantly lives in Australia's most populous areas, with about 60 per cent living in major cities and inner regional areas, and just over 20 per cent living in remote and very remote areas," Mr Jarvis said.

"New South Wales has the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (208,500), followed by Queensland (189,000) and Western Australia (88,300). About three-quarters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in these three states.

"Almost a third (30 per cent) of the Northern Territory's population were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the highest of any state or territory. Victoria had the smallest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at just under 1 per cent.

"The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a younger age structure than the non-Indigenous population, with larger proportions of young people and smaller proportions of older people. The median age of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population as of June 2011 was 22 years, compared to 38 years for the non-Indigenous population," Mr Jarvis said.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/latestProducts/3238.0.55.001Media%20Release1June%202011>

## **SCHOLAR ESCAPES CONVICTION OVER HUMAN REMAINS** *Steve Butcher, The Sunday Age*

Respected anthropologist Neville White has pleaded guilty in a Victorian court to 46 charges over human remains – some Aboriginal – that he had kept for about the past 30 years. But a magistrate, who regarded the prosecution of the emeritus scholar at the department of genetics at La Trobe University as an overreaction, dismissed the charges without conviction or costs.

Magistrate Richard Pithouse said the reality of the case was that the Victorian minister for Aboriginal affairs knew at all times where the remains of the 23 individuals were. He also took into account Dr White's character evidence and health issues.

Appointed as an officer of the *Order of Australia* in 1998 for his research in biological anthropology, he has for years been devoted to studying and forging relationships with Aboriginal people.

A character witness wrote that Dr White had the "utmost respect for the customs and traditions of the people he serves" and that he and his family were "exemplars of unselfish, considerate people".

He faced charges of failing to report the existence of human remains, likely to be Aboriginal, and of failing to report their existence to the secretary of the department – with a maximum fine totalling over \$100,000.

In a summary, prosecutor Greg Elms said Dr White came into possession of the remains during the late '70s and early '80s while undertaking identification, analysis and research for the then Victorian Archaeological Survey.

Mr Elms told Heidelberg Magistrates Court that from 1984 it was an offence to possess, display or control any Aboriginal skeletal remains without consent and that later that year Dr White informed VAS all "materials", save for some remains, had been deposited with the National Museum of Victoria.

In June last year, officers from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria confirmed remains were present in his office and then photographed and catalogued the seized items. Other remains were identified in a locked storeroom used by Dr White.

His lawyers told Mr Pithouse that Dr White was permitted by the then director of VAS to use the remains for identification and description, for teaching, research and in work about population genetic affinities. They said he was never asked to sign a receipt for any items delivered to him, nor was he asked to return them, and while he retained possession after his work ceased on them in about 1985, he eventually forgot about them.

The parties had initially agreed to the charges proceeding by diversion, which would avoid a formal hearing, but there were disagreements between Mr Elms and Mr Pithouse about the conditions of that order that included prosecution costs of \$26,000.

Contacted through his solicitor Jim Robinson, of Best Hooper, Dr White did not want to comment.

A spokesperson for the Office of Aboriginal Affairs told *The Sunday Age* the Aboriginal human remains have been in the custody of the state while the matter was being dealt with. "Inspectors investigate suspected offences and appropriate action is taken to promote compliance with the act which may include prosecution when warranted by the circumstances of the case," the spokesperson said.

"The withholding of Aboriginal remains causes great distress for the affected communities."

The government was also considering "what other legal options are now available", which *The Sunday Age* believes centres on a possible appeal against the judgment.



**Monday Nov 11**  
7.30pm start

**FIRST FOOTPRINTS** The documentary that took TV ratings by storm. Meet the Director Martin Butler – with time for Q/A after the screening. Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale. (See page 4)

**November 14-24**

**CORROBORREE SYDNEY** – the time and place to watch and listen, or sing and dance! You're invited to join the celebration. See page 1.

**Sunday Nov 24**  
11am-3pm

**Bungaree Reserve Naming Day Celebration**  
<http://www.kpctpa.com/>

**Monday Dec 9**  
7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Business Meeting** – All members welcome.  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale.  
Last meeting of 2013 - bring a plate to share.

**January 16-19**

**GUDIRR GUDIRR** Carriageworks Bay 20 is conceived and performed by Dalisa Pigram. It is a solo dance piece and a warning cry to a people facing the complexity of cultural change. <http://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/2014/Theatre-and-Dance/Gudirr-Gudirr/>

**January 17-26**

**BLACK DIGGERS** Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House  
*Black Diggers* uncovers the contribution of WWI Aboriginal Diggers, following their exceptional stories from their homelands to the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and Flanders. An all-male, all-Indigenous cast will evoke these heroic men, largely unknown to history. <http://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/2014/Theatre-and-Dance/Black-Diggers/>

**January 23-26**

**THE SHADOW KING** Carriageworks Bay 17  
Bringing together the country's finest creative talents including performers Tom E. Lewis (*The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*) and Jimi Bani (*Mabo*) this majestic and physical reworking of Shakespeare's *King Lear* employs the timeless tragedy to speak to the history and current circumstances of Indigenous Australia. Working across cultures and generations, *The Shadow King* is unmissable theatre of a scale and significance to match the land upon which it is made. <http://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/2014/All-Events/The-Shadow-King/>

**Saturday Jan 26**

**YABUN** The largest single day Indigenous festival. Drawing an audience of between 10 and 15 thousand people, this is one of the most important Indigenous music events in the country reflecting the huge wealth of Indigenous creative talent. For more information see page 5 or go to: [www.gadigal.org.au/](http://www.gadigal.org.au/)

**Monday Feb 10**  
7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Business Meeting** – All members welcome.  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale.

**Monday Mar 10**  
7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Information Night** – All Welcome  
Kathy Ridge from the ALC outlines the future for Gai-mariagal Aboriginal owned National Park. Areas of Belrose and most of Oxford Falls.  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale.



**THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2013 AND BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEWYEAR!**

## 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.



Editor: Neil Evers  
Proof Reader: Carol Gerrard  
Graphic Design: Mark Ansiewicz: 0466 346 785