

asgmwp.net

# Elimatta

Spring 2015

Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

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

## KEVIN COOK 1939-2015 'OPENED THE PATHWAYS' FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS



Kevin Cook was an Aboriginal activist, a worker, a trade unionist, a *leftie* and an internationalist. All those things explain why he was admired, but not the mourning following his death. He thought that everyone had a value, and he worked on that principle. In an era when many of our leaders have egos that need their own postcode, Cook had no need for an ego to be stroked and did not have a grain of pretentiousness. He liked to assist, help, promote and encourage other people and never to take the limelight.

*Continued on Page 2*

## BOOK LAUNCH THE INTERVENTION



### 'Australian writers collaborate to assail Government policy on Aboriginal people'

One of the most invasive, puzzling and unprecedented actions by a government in Australian history – the 2007 NT *Intervention*.

Jeff McMullen presents select readings from a new anthology

**Monday 14th September at 7.30pm**

Mona Vale Memorial Hall  
1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale



## Indigenous mortality rate from cardiac conditions plummets 41%

The number of Indigenous Australians who died from cardiac conditions dropped from 347 per 100,000 people to 215 per 100,000 people between 1998 and 2012, according to data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

*Continued on Page 2*



## Indigenous leader: 2017 UNLIKELY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

The daughter of land rights activist Eddie Mabo says it's unlikely an agreement on Indigenous constitutional recognition can be achieved by the Prime Minister's preferred timeline of 2017.

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## KEVIN COOK 1939-2015

Kevin Cook at Tranby Aboriginal College in 1975. He liked to assist, help, promote and encourage other people and never to take the limelight.



Kevin Cookie Cook, a Wandandian and Yuin man, was born in Wollongong in September, 1939. After work in the steel mills, he headed to Sydney to work on the new high-rise city buildings. Cookie became a *dogman*, the dangerous job riding the loads up the towers. This was a dramatic time in the industry: the Builders Labourers' Federation had shifted to leadership by workers from the job sites, making uncompromising demands for safety and developing green bans to protect residents and the environment.

Cook brought his knowledge of Aboriginal and migrant communities together with these new BLF methods when he became the organiser for Aboriginal BLs on the Redfern Housing Company, and worked with the National Black Theatre in Redfern, before becoming involved in Tranby Aboriginal Adult Education Cooperative College in 1975. He believed cooperatives were useful for Aboriginal communities, but went further.

Cook had seen for himself in Wollongong how the education system was failing Aboriginal kids. With Tranby support, he spent six months at Coady Cooperative Institute in Canada, meeting activists from Africa and around the world, building international networks. He returned to become General Secretary of Tranby and built it into a centre for adult learning and cultural revival. Young Aboriginal men and women travelled from across the country to undertake courses in basic literacy, community studies, business training and preparation for tertiary education.

Read more at: <http://asgmwp.net/kevin-cook.htm>

Continued from Page 1

## Indigenous mortality rate from cardiac conditions plummets 41%



### Progress hailed in fight against heart conditions that are major contributors to life expectancy gap with non-Indigenous Australians

Indigenous women aged between 35 and 44 still die of cardiac conditions at a rate that is 15 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterpart.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people dying from heart conditions has decreased by 41% since 1998, shows new data that has been hailed as a benchmark for the future treatment of cardiac conditions.

Despite the good news in the falling mortality rates of patients, Indigenous Australians still suffer a rate of cardiac disease that is 1.6 times that of the wider community, and poorer access to medical care.

The difference between the communities is most pronounced with younger women.

Indigenous women aged between 35 and 44 die of cardiac conditions at a rate that is 15 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous men of that age are eight times more likely to die of heart problems than non-Indigenous men, the data showed.

Over the same time period, the proportion of Indigenous Australians who have had a procedure to open an artery after a major heart attack has risen from 25% to 46%. That is compared with 70% of non-Indigenous Australians.

The data looks at how cardiac care for Indigenous Australians has changed, including whether more patients are seeking treatment in the first place, and what proportion follow up after diagnosis. It also examines prevention services.

The report said: "Heart and circulatory conditions contribute most to the disease burden of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people and are major contributors to the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians."

In March 2014, federal and state representatives met to work out priority areas to cut cardiac deaths, including prevention methods and better diagnosis.

The emphasis on prevention means that nearly eight out of 10 high-risk Indigenous patients have had a blood pressure check in the past two years, and two out of five high-risk smokers discussed quitting with health professionals.

But the results are not so positive in other indicators, including the prevalence of acute rheumatic fever, which can cause permanent damage to the heart. Indigenous Australians suffer the condition at a rate of 53 per 100,000 people, compared with a rate of just 0.2 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous youngsters aged between five and 14 are most likely to contract the disease.

Just over a third of episodes of rheumatic fever for Indigenous people were recurrent, compared with 11% of episodes for the wider community.

Shalilah Medhora  
4 August 2015





## Indigenous leader: 2017 UNLIKELY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Speaking on The Drum last night, Gail Mabo said: "It's nice that someone plucked that out of the air, but I don't think it can be achieved."

The artist and daughter of Eddie Mabo, who campaigned to overturn the concept of *terra nullius* in Australia, was one of 40 leaders at a summit held in Sydney last month to discuss the issue.

There is widespread support for a referendum on both sides of politics.

The Prime Minister Tony Abbott supports a May 2017 date, to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the census.

But Ms Mabo says that time frame is unrealistic: "If you think of the vastness of Australia, you think how many communities are out there and sometimes if you travel to central Australia, they might be out doing community shutdown for sorry business, they have to go out and do ceremony, so you actually have to pick your time when you go."

### Ensuring proper representation

Gail Mabo says ensuring communities all get to have their views heard will take careful planning.

"It will take a while; it will take some thought in actually pulling everyone together."

"There's many conversations going on over the tables and the conversation we need to address is the constitutional recognition and us being actually acknowledged in what Tony Abbott calls the Australian birth certificate," said Ms Mabo.

Part of the discussion includes proposed changes to the constitution around racial discrimination.

Ms Mabo says that's one of the elements she wants to see addressed in discussions.

### Indigenous consultation

The Prime Minister Tony Abbott has been meeting in Canberra today with four indigenous representatives including lawyer and constitutional expert Megan Davis; Cape York representative Noel Pearson; National Congress of Australia's First Peoples co-chair Kirstie Parker and W.A. Indigenous leader Patrick Dodson.

Discussions were derailed after the Prime Minister rejected a proposal earlier this month by some Indigenous leaders to hold Indigenous-only consultations on how to proceed with constitutional recognition, with Tony Abbott declaring it could lead to something like a "log of claims unlikely to receive general support".

But after today's meeting, Noel Pearson declared that the "show was back on the rails" after the Prime Minister changed his mind and decided to support the consultations.

Ms Mabo says she's not concerned about a lack of Torres Strait Islander representation at the meeting in Canberra and expressed confidence in the four who met with the Prime Minister today.

"You have to understand that the Prime Minister will be in the Torres Strait Islands so we can have a word to him there."

Ms Mabo says discussions with Indigenous communities are an important part of the process.

"I think we need to have consultation within our own communities first, because we are so many nations to make up one nation," she said.

But Ms Mabo doesn't deny it could be difficult. "People in different areas come from different backgrounds so therefore you have to actually have a cultural understanding of these places to go in and consult."

She says she wants to make sure women are properly consulted as part of the discussions. "For a lot of communities it's taboo for women to be in the room, so therefore you have to step out and let the men do it, but sometimes you have to break some rules to actually have a conversation," said Ms Mabo.

"But it's also having and letting everyone hear what you have to say."

### Reaching a consensus

There are concerns Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders won't reach an agreement on Indigenous constitutional recognition, causing the campaign to fail.

But Ms Mabo says she believes the group of 40 leaders will reach a consensus.

"It's actually good that [Mr Abbott] wants to revisit this because it gives us an opportunity to plead our case again to him to actually put this out so people can have a say," Ms Mabo said.

"I believe as a group of 40 we can come to a consensus as to how we need to put our message across and make sure it's the same for everyone.

"We might be a big country, but we all still believe in the same things and what it is we have to show unity," she said.

Jessica Tapp

## VALE

It is with sadness we have to tell you that David Harrison passed away on Sunday 30th August 2015.

David was the Support Group's stalwart member and treasurer for many years.

His valued contribution will be sadly missed.

Our deep condolences to his family.



## WA BILL RECOGNISES ABORIGINALS AS CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND

The Legislative Assembly last night passed a Bill which will formally recognise Aboriginal people as the first people of WA and traditional custodians of the land.

The Bill, introduced by Kimberley MLA and Gidgja woman Josie Farrer with bipartisan support, amends the preamble to WA's constitution, committing the Parliament to seek to effect reconciliation with Aboriginal people.

The Bill, which is symbolic and creates no new rights or obligations, also removes archaic and discriminatory clauses from the 1889 constitution relating to the defunct Aborigines Protection Board and excluding Aboriginal people from an official count of the State's population.

Standing orders were suspended and the Parliament's usual business put on hold yesterday to debate the Bill.

"It is overdue that Aboriginal people be acknowledged in our constitution as the traditional custodians of this land," Premier Colin Barnett said.

"The State Government hopes that for the 96,000 West Australians who identify as Aboriginal, this change to our State's constitution acknowledges there and their ancestors unique place in WA's history, our heritage, and the cultural identity of this State.

"Unfortunately, the State's constitution only mentions Aboriginal people for the purpose of discrimination. With the passage of this Bill, we can correct this mistake."

Referring to Mrs Farrer, Shadow Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt said it was extraordinary that a woman born on Moola Bulla station and sent to Fitzroy Mission as a child would through grit, determination and merit, rise to the WA Parliament and introduce a Bill to amend the constitution.

Mr Wyatt spoke of how he kept his deceased grandmother's file from the former Department of Native Affairs as a reminder of the control Government exerted over people's lives that occurred in living memory.

"When people ask me, is it a symbolic gesture, yes. But it is also the story and acknowledgement of the standing of Aboriginal people," he said.

"The passage of this Bill won't address that we talk about most days in this Parliament ... But you cannot underestimate the importance of these sorts of acknowledgement of Aboriginal people, the acceptance of the story and cultural practice of Aboriginal people into the document that deliberately discriminated against and excluded them when the document was first passed by the British Parliament back in 1889.

"These are important historical times that we must all acknowledge and celebrate."

*Gareth Parker | State Political Editor  
August 20, 2015*

**The West Australian**

## WELFARE CARD TRIALS POINT TO WAY AHEAD

The anticipated trial of Andrew Forrest's "healthy welfare card" in the East Kimberley could be extended to some troubled Aboriginal remote communities if the trial in Halls Creek succeeds.

Wunan Foundation chief executive Ian Trust said the almost-cashless system, which the Federal Government is considering for the trial, could reduce substance abuse in communities such as Kalumburu in the far north-west.

Mr Trust, who is expected to be involved in the State Government's process of reforming remote communities, said there were ways of helping places like Kalumburu to become healthy and reduce the reliance on welfare.

"There are tourism opportunities," Mr Trust said. "There are things like community gardens they could do there that might not be a full-time job but it still gives people dignity and respect.

"They have got things going for them but they've never had anybody bring it all together to work.

"It needs to be someone with a vision for the bigger picture who can go in and say, 'Here's the skills and the opportunities'."

Under the State Government's reform plan aimed at better outcomes, particularly for children in remote areas, "leadership groups" are being assembled in the Pilbara and Kimberley.

They will take advice from "strategic regional advisory councils", including Aboriginal leaders, on providing services.

A "reform unit" under Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier will oversee the project and also report to Regional Development Minister Terry Redman and Child Protection Minister Helen Morton.



*Kalumburu kids. Photo Courtesy Sharon Smith*

Mr Trust, the indigenous West Australian of the year last year, won praise for the Wunan Foundation's involvement in a program in Kununurra that moves indigenous families into home ownership.

But to qualify, the children must go to school, adults must have work, the rent must be paid and their State home looked after.

Mr Trust said the aim was to have a sizeable Aboriginal middle class in Kununurra in 20 years and home ownership was important to achieve that.

*Colleen Egan  
August 22, 2015*

## \$11.9 MILLION TO PRESERVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

**The Australian Government today announces \$11.9 million for 2015-16 to support work to revive and maintain Australia's Indigenous languages.**

The Indigenous Languages and Arts program aims to showcase, protect and encourage participation in traditional and contemporary Indigenous artistic expression to strengthen pride in identity and culture through language.

Languages and the arts are essential to the wellbeing, culture and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and this funding will play an important role in sustaining and strengthening Indigenous communities.

The funding, which comes from the languages stream of the Indigenous Languages and Arts program, will support community driven activities designed to address the erosion and loss of Indigenous languages across Australia.

This \$11.9 million will help preserve Indigenous languages in communities' right across Australia.

Funded activities include multimedia programs, cataloguing and digitising language material, the production of stories, a language conference, development of dictionaries and other language resources, online language lessons and news in languages.

The funding will also enable Indigenous language centres and service organisations to provide professional development opportunities for Indigenous language workers. For example, the How Do I Say Language Learning project will work with experts from the Indigenous Language Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico to upgrade the training resource, Miromaa, designed by Indigenous staff from the Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association to revive Indigenous languages.

More information about the Indigenous Languages and Arts program and a full list of funding recipients can be found on the Ministry for the Arts website.

26 August 2015

## RESEARCHERS WORK TO PRESERVE RICHNESS OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

**Elizabeth Marrkilyi Ellis is documenting her native language to help preserve Indigenous verbal arts and ensure it's not lost to future generations.**

Every few weeks, at least one Indigenous language around the world dies, according to a report from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

More languages are reportedly being lost in Australia than in any other country, with more than half completely lost. Ms Ellis is a Ngaatjatjarra educator, interpreter and linguist from Western Australia who has received the Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Grant to work with the ANU for three years.

In a few months she will assist winners of the ANU's Summer Scholarship program to manuscript dictionaries of several Aboriginal languages.

For the past few years Ms Ellis has been documenting, through audio and video, people speaking her language, and analysing the various speech dialects to save the richness of her language.

She is passionate about encouraging "complementary teaching" for Indigenous students, and said she is "writing up resources that our education department can use in the schools".

Ms Ellis believes Aboriginal children start kindergarten with insight not taught in schools, such as that of space, orientation, kinship, and narrative.



"We want our knowledge and skills to be incorporated with the white man's education," Ms Ellis said.

"You can save a language when you have support from all sides."

Professor Jane Simpson, of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, is also involved with the scholarship program.

It will consist of six dictionary projects that will document the native language, society, natural history, land and cultural traditions.

Dr Simpson believes this work is crucial to save a valuable part of Australia's heritage, and stresses the urgency on the government to fund programs that train language workers, interpreters and language teachers.

"It would give information to people who desperately need it through interpreters ... [and] help provide resources for children to enrich their traditional language when at school."

This allocation of funding was a recommendation from an Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies report.

In the long term, Dr Simpson believes the programs would provide the materials for people to study Indigenous languages at a matriculation level.

The ANU's Summer Research Scholarship will run from November 23 to January 22.

Applications are open to all Australia-based university students through the Centre for the Dynamics of Language website

Clare Sibthorpe  
August 20, 2015



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# Australia developing first ever school curriculum for Indigenous languages

## Curriculum set to be finalised in October and be available as an online resource to primary and high schools

Teaching language to Indigenous children empowers them to ‘think along the lines’ of their own culture and to see the ‘incredible intelligence’ of their own people, says Darug man and teacher Richard Green. Australia will soon have a national school curriculum for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Jakelin Troy, director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research at the University of Sydney and a key writer of the curriculum, currently in draft stage, said it will mark the first time in the country’s history that an Australian language will be recognised in schools nationally.

“Children were once beaten for speaking [their own] language,” said Troy. “It’s interesting that it’s come full circle. It’s a very big shift.”

The curriculum, developed in consultation with community groups across the nation, should be finalised by October, Troy said.

It will be published by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority and be available as an online resource to primary and high schools that wish to teach an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language.

“This gives schools a model on how to introduce teaching Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages in the way they would teach any other language,” said Troy.

A 2009 study found only 260 schools in the country offered Indigenous Australian language classes, with more than 80 different languages taught.

Troy said one of the most important aspects of teaching an Australian language is involving the community associated with the language. “For example, if you’re in Darug country the main thing for a school is that you need to engage with the local [Darug] population and with the people who are the custodians of that land.”

Darug man Richard Green has taught his language in Sydney high schools for several years. He has witnessed first-hand the positive impact speaking language has had on Indigenous children and said it empowers them to *think along the lines* of their own culture and see the *incredible intelligence* of their own people. “I’ve seen kids stop stealing cars to learn lingo and turn their lives around,” Green said. “It’s something they have a lot of fun with. They realise its benefits.”

Green is a key figure in the revival of the Darug language, which he began speaking as a teenager. He studies at least two hours a day, breathing new life into word lists and other studies compiled by academic linguists that are held in the State Library of New South Wales.

“Why write the bible if no one is going to read it? Why put them together if no one is going to read it?”, he said.

A 10-year study released in 2008 into the mortality rates of the residents of Utopia, a pastoral station north-east of Alice Springs, linked outstation lifestyles including “connectedness to culture, family and land, and opportunities for self-determination” to positive health outcomes.

The findings reflect a 2014 report into Indigenous youth suicide called Culture is Life, which compiled interviews with Indigenous elders and outreach workers from across Australia. Many identified connection to country and culture as vital tools in the fight against a rising epidemic of Indigenous youth suicide.

Troy said while not all the community elders will be fluent, there are always some who are “language knowledgeable” and “any language teacher can teach any language, provided there are resources”.

Developing those teaching resources was the next critical step and more funding was required, Troy said. “Resourcing this curriculum is going to be an issue. But it sets a challenge: to seriously see this implemented we’re going to have to see resourcing put into it.”

Monica Tan  
Guardian News

## Elder calls for science of Indigenous stories to be recognised

### Aboriginal botanist Frances Bodkin is using National Science Week to call for Indigenous knowledge of the land to be recognised as a science.

Ms Bodkin is a D’harawal woman and teaches botany and ecology through Indigenous story-telling at Mount Annan Botanical Gardens in Western Sydney.

She has degrees in climatology, geomorphology and environmental science.

She’ll speak about her passion for the recognition of Indigenous Science at an event at the University of New England this evening.

Ms Bodkin said Aboriginal oral histories give insight into the changes that have occurred over time.

“If we don’t recognise it, if we don’t record this old knowledge, this ancient knowledge, we’re going to lose it,” she said.

“We have stories when the sea levels were three days walk from South Head to the east and that’s where the sea shores were, that’s about a hundred miles.”

Ms Bodkin said Aboriginal observations through the centuries should be formalised as a science.

“We’re trying to join the two manners of science together and that is to use the historical and pre-historical observations and experiences with today’s modern methods of measurements and experiment.”



## Racing to record Indigenous languages under attack from 'onslaught of English'

About 10 languages will be painstakingly recorded as part of a major Australian research project but many more are on the brink of extinction, warns academic

Cultural traditions such as weaving are kept alive by Indigenous women, but some Aboriginal languages are at risk of extinction. Photograph: Alamy

Comprehensive documentation of several Indigenous Australian languages, some of which are highly endangered and at risk of extinction, has begun.

The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language is building a library of audio and video recordings, grammar lists and dictionaries for at least 10 languages.

Professor Jane Simpson from the Australian National University said Australia's Indigenous languages remain "inherently fragile under the onslaught of English and government policies which make it hard to keep [them] going."

A 2014 National Indigenous Languages Survey found that of 250 Indigenous languages only 120 are still spoken, with 13 of these considered "strong" – five fewer than when the survey was first conducted in 2005. Around 100 languages are described as "severely or critically endangered".

Some of the highly endangered languages in the project include Dalabon from Arnhem Land, Warumungu from Tennant Creek and Ngarrindjeri from southern South Australia.

The work also examines the impact European settlement had on Aboriginal languages. Simpson said one of the first things to pique her interest in Aboriginal languages was

reading an 1840 dictionary of the Kaurana language from Adelaide, and learning the words for glasses, razors and trousers.

"You can see the creativity people had when they came across new things," she said. "They looked at the horse, for example, and saw a large animal that belongs to white people: a 'whitefella kangaroo' (pindi nantu)."

In Guugu Yimithirr, from far north Queensland, directions are embedded in language. "You have to say which cardinal point something is," said Simpson. "You don't say this or that way. You say, this-south or that-east; you build directions into the language."

The work, according to Simpson, is not only important for speakers of each language to document their past, but could be used in language revitalisation programs, such as those in schools.

It was also significant for the broader field of linguistics. "In order to understand the human language, we need to know about many different kinds of languages and what the possibilities of language are."

Simpson said the dictionaries would be "treasure houses of information on language, society, natural history, land and cultural traditions".

Key to documenting any language is finding a speaker who "really loves language – likes explaining it and thinking about its patterns", she said. While it was easy to point at objects such as plants, animals or rocks, and ask for the word, gathering translations for more abstract concepts and emotions was trickier.

The project would also support the four-decade-long work being done on the biggest dictionary of any Australian language, the Warlpiri dictionary.

"There was a wonderful bloke, the late Patrick Jangala, who worked with linguists on words someone like me would never have thought of."

Such words which do not have a direct English translation include jamulu-nyany, which Simpson said roughly translates into "when people just look at someone

who is hitting another person and don't say anything or take part or intervene, or when someone sees a snake and doesn't kill it".

Other languages such as Mithaka from south-west Queensland no longer have any living fluent speakers. In this case, linguists rely on recordings, dictionaries of the past and draw inferences from languages of neighbouring regions.

Simpson said many Indigenous language programs struggle because

they do not have the same abundance of teaching resources that other more popular languages, such as Chinese and French might have.

Projects such as the Living Archive of Aboriginal languages, developing language apps and "localisation" of commonly used sites such as Facebook are vital to the preservation and increased accessibility to indigenous languages, she said.

She added that the new national curriculum for languages, while acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous languages and their varying health across the country, would only be effective if properly funded and implemented, including its recommendation to train more Indigenous teachers.



*Cultural traditions such as weaving are kept alive by Indigenous women, but some Aboriginal languages are at risk of extinction. Photograph: Alamy*

Monica Tan  
20 August 2015



# FIRST CROPS SOWN IN IRRIGATION TRIAL AT ABORIGINAL CATTLE STATION

**An Indigenous cattle station in Western Australia's far north is sowing crops as part of a ground-breaking irrigation trial.**



*A cleared area before the centre pivot was installed at Mowanjum Station near Derby.*

*Photo: Jason Russ*

Four years ago Mowanjum Station, near Derby in the West Kimberley, was not even operational and it had been decades since the last cattle were sold.

Now water is flowing for the very first time, following the recent installation of a centre pivot irrigator.

The idea is to use groundwater to grow cattle feed to fatten cattle quicker and get them off to markets sooner.

Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation CEO Steve Austin said it was an exciting milestone.

“When you start these projects it’s a distant dream and now it seems like a distant memory when we started it,” he said.

“There’s been a lot of hurdles to cross, but it is so exciting now. It’s more a relief for me, that it’s coming to the end of the production side of it.

“Now we can actually get into the serious side of actually growing fodder for our cattle.”

Mr Austin said they started sowing crops on the site earlier this week.

“As we speak right now, the tractor’s out there sowing. I was out there an hour ago just checking on the progress,” he said.

“They’re probably high way through the sowing and that will probably finish late today or early tomorrow.”

The station will start by growing Rhodes grass and if successful will move onto growing other types of cattle feed. “It’s all about intense grazing and putting kilos onto the beef as quickly as we can,” Mr Austin said.

“The quicker we can fatten them, the quicker we can send them to market.”

The \$3.6 million irrigation trial at Mowanjum is part of the State Government’s \$40 million Water For Food program.

If successful, the trial will act as a model for other Aboriginal pastoral stations.

Mr Austin said it had potential to create employment not just for Mowanjum but also the wider Derby district.

“We want to become a leading employer in the area and we want to use agriculture to do that, as well as our station, so we’re looking at having a number of different opportunities in a wide range of jobs,” he said.

“It could go as high as sending someone to university to be an agronomist for us. The sky’s the limit.”

Mr Austin said the trial had the entire Derby community feeling optimistic.

“People stop me in the street and they say ‘it’s so great that something like this is coming to Derby’. It’s really hard to get any sort of industry here at the moment,” he said.

“With mining taking a bit hit and a lot of mines shutting down, it’s given people a bit of hope now.”

He said the corporation had ambitious plans to build a large feedlot and eventually run up to 30,000 head of cattle.

“We don’t just want to stop at this centre pivot. We want to expand this operation so that we can turn off large numbers of cattle and that stations up the Gibb, they can send cattle down for finishing for markets.

“So that’s the sort of opportunities we’re looking at.”

*Tom Edwards  
WA Country Hour*





# INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN DETENTION



**Two and a half decades on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody,**



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are more likely than ever to be locked up. This is particularly so for young indigenous people.**

It is a shocking fact that indigenous children aged 10 to 17 years are 26 times more likely (53 times in Western Australia) to be in detention than non-indigenous children in the same age bracket. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise just over 5% of Australia's 10 to 15 year olds but almost 60% of the prison population of that age.

In Western Australia, the figure is nearly 70%, largely because of draconian laws mandating a 12 month sentence for three offences, however minor.

Our treatment of young offenders is often in breach of the Covenant on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which Australia signed and ratified. It provides that incarceration of minors is only to be used as a last resort and the welfare of the child is to be the main factor.

The widespread imprisonment of young indigenous people is ineffective as a deterrent and very costly. It has become a rite of passage followed by repeat offences. Imprisonment brutalises young offenders, especially when they end up in adult prisons.

Amnesty International Australia is convinced that there are more effective alternatives. These include bush camps where respected elders teach at risk young people about their culture; scholarships and apprenticeships; and sporting activities linked to education. A strategy of redirecting funds for prisons into alternative activities would be more effective in the long run. Amnesty is committed to working with community leaders in a long-term campaign to reduce indigenous child incarceration by 25% by 2020.

The starting point is getting it on the national agenda. Amnesty members will be urging Commonwealth, State and Territory leaders to put on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) the development of a national plan of action, based on the experience and wishes of communities. This will be supported by petitions and letters to local members of Parliament to show community support and publicity through social media.

**You can help by signing a petition on 14th September at the ASG Information Night and THE INTERVENTION book launch at Mona Vale** or by visiting the Amnesty website at

<http://www.amnesty.org.au/indigenous-rights>

## Sydney Park wetlands to be named in Aboriginal language to commemorate history



**The City of Sydney proposes new names may be given to Sydney Park's four wetlands to commemorate Aboriginal history:**

- ④ **Wirrambi** Wetland - meaning 'bat', relates to the newly-created habitat for microbats at the park
- ④ **Guwali** Wetland – meaning 'shag' or 'cormorant', recognises the waterbirds that were part of the pre-industrial landscape
- ④ **Bunmarra** Wetland – meaning 'lizard', refers to the growing blue-tongue lizard population in the park
- ④ **Gilbanung** Wetland – meaning 'grasshopper', is an insect prevalent in the park

The City of Sydney will present the proposed names for public feedback this month before taking the results to the Geographical Names Board of NSW for consideration later this year.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the proposed names were an important way to promote awareness of local Aboriginal languages and culture. "The City's historians have researched Sydney Park and have considered names of Aboriginal origin that reflect the biodiversity of the park and its wetlands," she said.

Sydney Park was once a site of swamps, marshes and heath, where the Gadigal and Wangal people hunted kangaroo on the grasslands and fished and camped at the swamps.

The area was known by the early European settlers as the District of Bullanaming or the 'Kangaroo Ground'.

The City worked closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council to identify appropriate names for the wetlands.

The names were sourced from The Sydney language by Jakelin Troy, the most comprehensive word list of the Sydney language published and accepted by the Aboriginal community.

*Inner West Courier Inner City  
August 31, 2015*



## SCIENTIST DEBUNKS NOMADIC ABORIGINE ‘MYTH’

Before white settlers arrived, Australia’s indigenous peoples lived in houses and villages, and used surprisingly sophisticated architecture and design methods to build their shelters, new research has found.



A picture in Dr Memmott’s book shows an Aboriginal man sitting in the doorway of a dome-shaped building. Photograph: the Aboriginal Environments Research Centre collection

Dwellings were constructed in various styles, depending on the climate. Most common were dome-like structures made of cane reeds with roofs thatched with palm leaves.

Some of the houses were interconnected, allowing native people to interact during long periods spent indoors during the wet season.

The findings, by the anthropologist and architect Dr Paul Memmott, of the University of Queensland, discredits a commonly held view in Australia that Aborigines were completely nomadic before the arrival of Europeans 200 years ago.

The belief was part of the argument used by white settlers to claim that Australia was *terra nullius* - the Latin term for land that belonged to nobody.

Dr Memmott said the myth that indigenous Australians were constantly on the move had come about because early explorers made their observations in good weather, when indigenous people were more mobile than at other times.

Many of the shelters the Aborigines built were dome structures. In the rainforest area around Cairns, in Queensland, where there was heavy rain for much of the year, people would occupy such villages for up to a year, he said.

The villages had to be near a staple food source, such as rainforest trees, from which Aborigines could harvest nuts. “Some of the nuts were poisonous, but the Aborigines developed a way of leaching the poisons out of them by burying them in mud for a period of time,” he said.

“This source of nutrition allowed them to remain put instead of forcing them to go off hunting.”

Dr Memmott also found evidence of dome housing on the west coast of Tasmania, with triple layers of cladding and insulation.

In western Victoria, Aborigines built circular stone walls more than a metre high, constructing dome roofs over the top with earth or sod cladding.

Missionaries drew on Aboriginal technology for buildings, using tree bark for roofs and walls, and grass thatching for gables, as well as reeds and animal hides, he added.

Very little indigenous architecture in Australia remains after local authorities burned or bulldozed the structures in the belief they were health hazards.

Dr Memmott’s evidence, collected over the past 35 years, comes from oral histories, explorers’ diaries, paintings and photographs. It is published in *Gunyah, Goondie and Wurley*, the first book to detail Australian Aboriginal architecture.

Dr Memmott said he hoped continuing research in the area would not only clear up the historical record but also help architectural designers working on current housing problems.

Barbara McMahon  
Sydney



## Experience the new Indigenous *Welcome to Country* app

A brand new Australian app from a native indigenous developer called *Welcome to Country* aims to give anyone a warm welcome to Australia with great information.



We've all seen *Welcome to Country* ceremonies take place at important events, celebrating Australia's indigenous Aboriginal peoples and their custodianship of the land.

Now comes an opportunity for anyone with the free *Welcome to Country* app, local or tourist, travelling through Australia's unique cities, towns and communities to receive an alert on your smart phone, advising you have now entered the boundary of a traditional tribal group.

This alert directs you to an informative video, where an Elder or knowledge carrier will warmly welcome you and provide you with important information about their country. Already featuring 37 different Aboriginal groups around Australia, the app's developer looks forward to expanding the app's contents, inviting any and all tribal groups wanting to get involved to get in contact so each tribal group's content can be added to the app and how to advise those groups on how to make a welcome video.

We're told that 'international visitors excited to embrace the many facets of Australian culture and learn about the Indigenous people of our land will also love this app,' and that by 'downloading the Welcome to Country app and scrolling through the locations travellers can pick and choose their destinations.'

It's billed as a great example of how 'an innovative new smartphone application is modernising engagement with Aboriginal communities throughout Australia.'

So, who is behind the app's creation? Its developer is Ngarluma man, Tyson Mowarin, who noted 'the dream to create this type of technology interface was born about five years ago' and how the app already caters to the aforementioned 37 different groups around Australia.

Mowarin stated: "I remember people talking about how Kevin Rudd speaks Mandarin and although he could say hello at the foot of the Great Wall of China, our Prime Minister at the time couldn't say hello at the foot of Uluru.

"I wanted to teach people how to speak the languages and acknowledge all our different nations. I wanted to create an extension of the traditional Welcome to Country, which is a custom that dates back even before settlement. This application is only designed to complement the real thing."

The app, developed by Mowarin and his team at Weerianna Street Media, is an extensively researched information portal and archive of Welcome to Country videos and messages. The videos include a welcoming message, details of the boundaries of the tribal area, and messages about cultural safety from the traditional land group.

Weerianna Street Media explains that it 'engaged with local Elders and knowledge carriers, and worked with Indigenous media practitioners to create educational content in an app that seeks to transcend Native Title.'

Developed as part of Weerianna Street Media's *Digital Dreamtime Project* and supported by Woodside and the Australian Government, the app is 'proving popular right across Australia after its release' two weeks ago, with hundreds of people already having downloaded the app.

To download the app for free, search *Welcome to Country* on the *iTunes app store* – while Weerianna Street Media seeks sponsorship to expand the application to Android and help other tribal groups create their own Welcome to Country videos.

Mowarin added: "It would be amazing to see a major airline get on board and then they can use the Welcomes on the plane as they descend into various countries, if the groups would like that."

The app recognises where you are as you pass through invisible geofences, and offers the viewing of Welcome to Country before directing you to the relevant tribal page.

Other features include social media links to share the app and offer feedback, as well as a section that allow users to pre-select their destination and add it to their favourites list.

Tribal groups not yet represented on the app wanting to get involved are invited to contact Weerianna Street Media via email: [tyson@wsmedia.com.au](mailto:tyson@wsmedia.com.au).

The apps Twitter page is here, while its Facebook page is here.

Alex Zaharov-Reutt



**Monday Sep 14**  
7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Information Night** – All welcome  
**BOOK LAUNCH:**  
**THE INTERVENTION**  
With guest Jeff McMullen  
at the Mona Vale Memorial Hall,  
1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale.  
A free event (donations welcome)

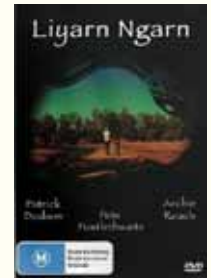


**Monday Oct 12**  
7.30pm start

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

**Monday Nov 9**  
7pm-9pm

**FREE SCREENING:**  
**Liyarn Ngarn**  
A Documentary tells of the devastation and inhumanity  
brought upon Indigenous people. Patrick Dodson, Archie Roach,  
Pete Postlethwaite.



## Support Aboriginal Education

As an independent not-for-profit organisation, the ASG-MWP relies on donations to help our many endeavours to create support for Aboriginal Education.

Education is the single most powerful weapon against disadvantage – it is the key to a brighter future!

You can make a donation / join ASGMWP at [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net) and hit the join-up button.

**Thank you.**

ASG-MWP would like to thank Dee Why RSL, Pittwater RSL, Forestville RSL, Avalon Beach RSL, Pittwater Council and Warringah Council for their continued support in 2015



Warringah Council

### 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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