



CONGRATULATIONS to Em Marne and Emma Franks

These two young women are sitting for the 2007 HSC Examination. They have both lived for many years during school terms at Biala Aboriginal Hostel at Allambie Heights on Sydney's Northern Beaches - Emma since Year 7 and Em since Year 8. The Support Group has enjoyed their participation at many events over the years and wishes them all the very best for whatever path they choose to follow in the future.

My name is Em Marne and I am 17 years old. My heritage is Aboriginal – my mother is from Brewarrina and my father is from Moree. I have lived at Mount Druitt, Western Sydney, with my Pop since I was nine years old. My Pop is Wes Marne, an Aboriginal Elder in our community. I see my mother and father regularly. I have four brothers and three sisters. I went to Emerton and Tregear Primary Schools and I was School Captain at Emerton School. When I was starting high school I wanted to go to a boarding school to get away from the area. Then we heard about Biala so we decided that this was where I would go.

Since Year 8 I have attended Mackellar Girls High. I am a Prefect in Year 12. My subjects in Years 11 and 12 are Chemistry, English, Mathematics, Visual Arts and Biology. My favourite subject is Maths. I have won academic awards at the Aboriginal Hostels annual graduation nights. My sport at Mackellar has been discus throwing and I won the school championship in this event for several years. I have represented Mackellar in discus throwing at the state level of the C.H.S. Athletics Championships at Homebush Sports Centre. In 2006 I won the discus event at school and also at the region, then made it to the Zone Championships. Through Mackellar Girls High I have participated in the *Sister to Sister* mentoring program and also the peer support program. I have a part time job locally. My interests are reading, shopping, watching TV and music. My ambition for the future, after I finish school this year, is to become a carpenter. Biala has been like a home away from home to me. I know I have had more opportunities being here. I don't get too homesick and I can go home on weekends whenever I want which I do often. I am a city girl so it has been easier for me.

Em Marne

My name is Emma Franks and I am 18 years old. My heritage is Welsh from my mother, Tanya, who comes from Corryong, Victoria, and Aboriginal from my father, Tony, who comes from Lake Cargeligo, NSW. I was born and raised in Albury and have five younger brothers. I went to Glenroy Public in Albury and was Sports Captain at this school. I had many cousins at primary school with me. Mum and Dad wanted me to get a better education and have a better upbringing away from our surrounding area. I found out about Biala from my cousins, Karla, Belinda and Jac who had been students at Biala.

I have been going to Narrabeen Sports High since Year 9 after previously attending Mackellar Girls High. I moved to Narrabeen for the targeted soccer program which I did for two years. When I first started High School here it was so different from primary school for me as I had always had cousins around me and suddenly I was going to a very big all girls' school where I knew nobody. My subjects for Years 11 and 12 are English, Food Technology, Personal Development and Recreation and also Computer Engineering which I do through Brookvale TAFE. My favorite subject is Computer Engineering as it is hands-on and I am getting a good source of knowledge for the future. My interests are soccer – I played for Manly Vale Soccer Club for a few years but not now due to an injury last year – and outdoors activities in general, school and socialising. Living in Sydney also gave me a lot of other choices through my soccer like having the chance to play for NSW Country and having a season with the local rep. squad, Manly United Football Club, which lifted my self confidence in achieving anything! My future ambition when I finish school this year is to join the Navy – this is something I have always wanted to do.

Continued Page 2



Em Marne (left) and Emma Franks – Photo courtesy Lara Rutley

CONGRATULATIONS to Em Marne and Emma Franks



Emma Franks *Continued from Page 1*

I have really enjoyed most of my time at Biala. It was hard at the start of Year 7 but as the years progressed and now having Lara, it has become a more friendly and homely environment and has a good atmosphere. It is a great place to take advantage of. While here at Biala I have won the Biala Sports person of the Year over the last three years at the Aboriginal Hostels Graduation which is held in November of each year.

At first I did not like the environment of the big city but, as the years have gone on, I am used to it. I really miss home but I would like to live in the city.

Emma Franks

BACKGROUND TO BIALA

The Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society (ACAS) was established in January 1963 and in July 1967 opened the Kirinari Hostel at Sylvania Heights in the Sutherland Shire, Sydney. The purpose of the hostel was to house and support students in advancing their education by attending local schools.

Kirinari, the name for the first hostel, was chosen by Herbert Stanley Groves, a trustee of ACAS. Bert was a Wirrinjereng man and had earned a reputation for his knowledge and action on behalf of the Aboriginal people. It was the intention to build a string of Kirinaris, each one identified by that name and its geographical location.

In July 1968 ACAS conducted a Button Appeal. As a result of this appeal the existence of the Society came to the notice of Fred and Kath Scholes of Manly. The Scholes had had Aboriginal children staying at their home and had taken an interest in Aboriginal welfare for some years. In September 1968 the Manly-Warringah Branch of ACAS was formed with the intention to build a hostel in the area catering for girls of high school age. Within six months the Branch had received its charter, membership had doubled to 140 and it had full control of its own funds. \$90,000 was needed to build the new hostel. Doorknocks, stalls, concerts and garden parties were held and were well attended. The building commenced in August 1973.

However, it became apparent that ACAS would be unable to pay for the construction of the hostel and also for its ongoing support and maintenance. A decision was made to accept an offer from Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) to purchase the hostel and allow ACAS to continue to manage as a third party.

Continued Page 10



BIALA ABORIGINAL HOSTEL

Biala provides a 'home away from home' for Indigenous female high school students from all over NSW. The hostel is set in natural bushland at Allambie Heights with an above-ground pool for summer use, a games room and of course TVs and DVD players and computers for students to use.

The students usually attend Mackellar Girls High unless there is a specific reason for them to go to another school. Mackellar has an Aboriginal Education Assistant to support the girls and often has special programs for them ranging from educational and cultural outings to painting workshops. Many of the girls participate in the school's sports teams.

A room at the back of Biala which was used as a painting/sewing room (or whatever was needed) was turned into a seniors' study area several years ago. This occurred following the sad loss of a member of the Aboriginal Support Group, Ruth Morrison. Ruth had always supported Biala and following her passing, her husband Don and her family wanted to do something special in Ruth's name. So they made a very generous donation which enabled this room to be renovated and fitted with electrical appliances and computers etc for the use of the senior students. This space has been really appreciated since its renovation and is somewhere special for the senior girls to study or relax during their last two years of school. The staff and students of Biala appreciate what Don and the Morrison family did in remembrance of Ruth.

The Senior Houseparent at Biala is currently Lara Rutley. Lara has been there for 4 years now. The staff consists of Zita, the cook who has been there for 10 years; Di, the night attendant also of many years standing; Lynn, assistant houseparent, and Denise, relief houseparent.

The number of students at Biala can be anywhere up to seventeen and there are currently ten students. Some girls start at Biala but go back home for many reasons, such as homesickness. Some girls leave after completing Year 10.

However, over the past four or five years including 2007, there have been nine girls who have completed Year 12, a wonderful achievement.

Each year in November, Aboriginal Hostels Limited have a very special night which is organized in rotation between the four secondary educational hostels in NSW. This is to honour Year 12 and Year 10 graduates, and to recognize sporting and other special achievements by the students throughout the year. The other secondary school hostels are at Sylvania – boys and girls – and at Newcastle and Dubbo – boys. It is always a very exciting night for the students and families. Last year the graduation was hosted by Biala. This year it is the turn of Kirinari Sylvania Heights.

Carol Ritchie

IT'S BEEN A NATIONAL EMERGENCY FOR MANY, MANY, MANY YEARS!

When Jenny Brockie compered *National Emergency* (SBS Insight, 26 July 2007) on the Federal Government's recent intervention on child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory, the producers were overwhelmed by the response from so many Indigenous people wanting to take part in the program. Seated in the crowded studio audience was Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, the founding Head and former ATSIC Commissioner, nowadays rarely seen in the media. She spoke briefly but her words were poignant:

*'I support the Prime Minister only in that he has stated it's a national emergency and that has brought it to attention, but **it's been a national emergency for many, many, many years.** And there have been many reports and where has he been? Where has his government been?'*

When Lowitja O'Donoghue asked why the Prime Minister chose to declare a national emergency in June 2007, her question was fully justified. Since the 1990s there have been over forty official reports into problems of Aboriginal domestic violence and child sexual abuse, based on extensive community consultation and research. But, despite the accumulated knowledge and expertise now available, most governments have chosen to ignore them. Contrary to the repeated assertion that Aboriginal leaders have remained silent on these distressing issues, for years they have desperately sought more government funding and action without success. The most recent example is the NSW Government's failure to fund *Breaking the Silence*, a 300 paged report on child abuse in Aboriginal communities, written by a task force headed by Marcia Ella-Duncan. ANTaR NSW has been holding a media campaign since the report was released to pressure the NSW Premier Morris lemma to implement over 88 recommendations but so far the NSW Government has failed to provide adequate funding.

Public memory is short and most people have forgotten that four years ago, on 23 July 2003, Prime Minister John Howard held a national summit on Indigenous family violence and sat down with 16 Aboriginal leaders from around the country, including Mick Dodson, Noel Pearson, Evelyn Scott, Lowitja O'Donoghue, Jackie Huggins and Alison Anderson. Jackie Huggins, former Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, described that event as:

'...the first time, an Australian Prime Minister has held a summit in the national capital to listen to concerns and ideas on this issue from a group of Indigenous leaders. For the first time, we are reading editorials about it in our newspapers. For the first time, perhaps we now have a chance to do something solid, sensible, sensitive and coordinated to stop the violence that is killing our women and children, and destroying our communities.' (ACSSA Newsletter no 2, November 2003).

However she also recognised that the summit:

'should be seen for what it was – a highly significant symbolic act of reconciliation on the part of the Prime Minister towards Indigenous Australians. He says he's serious about tackling this problem – we will hold the Prime Minister to his word'.

(The Australian, 30 July 2003)

Three years on, in May 2006, shocking revelations of child sexual abuse and violence in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities were aired on ABC *Lateline* by Alice Springs Crown Prosecutor Dr Nanette Rogers, followed by weeks of media frenzy on the subject. Jackie Huggins, Mick Dodson, Fred Chaney and Mark Leibler, Directors of Reconciliation Australia, responded:

'Governments come and go, shocked ministers for indigenous affairs come and go. What needs to change is how Australia moves beyond serial crisis intervention to take the systemic, long-term action consistently called for by our fellow Australians living the horror.'

(The Australian, 18 May 2006)

In response to the *Lateline* revelations by Dr Nanette Rogers, the long awaited report, *Little Children are Sacred: The Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse* (co-chaired by Rex Wild QC and Pat Anderson, Aboriginal health worker), was made public on 15 June 2007 by Claire Martin, Northern Territory Chief Minister. The report's release had been delayed for two months. On 21 June Prime Minister John Howard, in the presence of Mal Brough, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, made a dramatic announcement declaring a '*National Emergency*' in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. The Prime Minister explained his actions:

'This is not an Aboriginal problem or a Northern Territory problem. It's a problem that calls for national leadership. The plan I announced on Thursday...is radical, comprehensive and highly interventionist. We believe the overriding responsibility and duty of care we have for the young of this country justifies the scale, breadth and urgency of our response'

(*Duty Of Care to the Young Justifies Government's Action*
SMH, 26 June 2007)

Much of the Federal Government's response in the Northern Territory is based on a radical reform plan, as yet experimental, which is to be tried for four years in several Cape York communities where there have been severe problems of child abuse.

The social engineering proposals, developed by Noel Pearson, Director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership and his team, were the subject of an ABC 4 Corners documentary *The Cape Experiment*, screened on 16 July.

Continued Page 4

IT'S BEEN A NATIONAL EMERGENCY FOR MANY, MANY, MANY YEARS!

Pearson and his co-workers believe they can bring about behavioural changes and promote greater individual responsibility by punitive measures such as stripping Aboriginal people of control over their welfare payments if they fail to meet certain conditions aimed at protecting their children. Pearson argues that Aboriginal people have been destroyed by government handouts and welfare dependency:

'The new rules are: no more handouts. No more handouts for nothing. And if you think that's just my rule, sorry: it's the way Mal Brough thinks, it's the way John Howard thinks...the one thing that has destroyed our heritage has been the handout...the big mistake that was made was that we got a handout instead of a hand up.'

Pearson is also strongly opposed to alcohol, drug-use, gambling and child abuse or neglect. A hastily prepared report on the early trials of this ambitious project was released in Canberra by Noel Pearson just two days before the Federal Government announced its own measures to deal with:

'what we can only describe as a national emergency in relation to the abuse of children in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.' (John Howard, Prime Minister, 21 June 2007)

However, there are some notable differences between Noel Pearson's welfare reforms in Cape York and those of the Federal Government. Importantly, Pearson intends to set up a Families' Commission from within each community, made up of two respected Elders and a retired magistrate, which will have the power to re-direct welfare payments where necessary to a more responsible family member. His least favoured option and last resort would be compulsory income management, which has been the only strategy mentioned so far in the Federal Government's proposals. In Pearson's plan, it is the community itself which will engage in changes whereas in the Government's proposals it will be Centrelink officials and other outside bureaucrats who will be brought in to manage the reforms. These will include withholding a proportion of welfare payments from all families irrespective of whether they are capably managing their own finances.

Noel Pearson emphasised that:

'the best protectors, the best solution finders, the best saviours for each of our problems...is ourselves. Yes we need support, we need a hand up, we need opportunity – but if we don't understand that the first people to take responsibility must be ourselves, you can chuck all the opportunity you like at us and we'll squander that.' (4 Corners transcript, 16 July 2007)

Unfortunately this warning has been ignored by the Federal Government which seems determined to systematically exclude any Indigenous people who are critical of its policies or have dissenting opinions:

'Abolishing ATSIC and redirecting Indigenous services through

main-stream government departments has similarly diluted Indigenous Australians' voice...Diluting the public voice of Indigenous Australians appears to be driven by welfare reform that is dismissive of empowering them.'

(Nerelle Poroch, *Welfare Reform and Indigenous Empowerment*, Australian Aboriginal Studies 2006/1, p.5)

The interventionist and imposed approach in the Northern Territory has worried many of those with long experience in working with Aboriginal communities, such as paediatrician and former *Australian of the Year* Professor Fiona Stanley who recently wrote:

'Like many others, I am anxious to see the detail of the Government's longer-term strategy for this intervention to make a real and sustainable difference. I certainly agree urgent action is necessary. I also know unless we start to address the complex causes, and not just the appalling manifestations of that disadvantage and dysfunction, many children will continue to be at risk This must be done in a way that includes Aborigines. Measures that exclude the views and involvement of Aborigines will serve only to further diminish their capacity, exacerbate marginalisation and add to the damage in these vulnerable communities.' (Fiona Stanley, *Saving Children's Lives a Matter of Long-term Will*, SMH, 31 July 2007)

While the Government's justification for the emergency measures was supposed to be the urgent need to intervene in order to save Aboriginal children from further abuse, the legislation, which was brought to parliament on its first day after winter recess, early in August, contained many highly controversial measures. These related to the leasing of Aboriginal lands and the permit system which seemed to have little connection with the eradication of child abuse. The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 introduced a package of five bills totalling 700 pages which were read out by Minister Mal Brough over nearly two hours:

'These were the bills that legalise John Howard's burst of fervour, after 11 years of indolence, to supposedly save little black children in the Northern Territory from sexual and physical abuse.' (Alan Ramsey, *No Opposition, No Debate, No Contest*, SMH, 11-12 August 2007)

The Bills, which will cost almost \$600 million in the first year of implementation, included welfare restrictions, changes to the permit system, alcohol and pornography bans, medical checks for children and the acquisition of townships through five year leases over twenty six communities.

The rushed manner in which the legislation was passed, with insufficient time for politicians to consider its details, and the Government's senate majority, which enabled it to defeat all amendments, has been deplored by most observers including Fred Chaney, formerly a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Fraser Government, who stated:

'In the past I have asked for a comprehensive national response to the evils of child abuse and I strongly support urgent intervention ...

Continued Page 10

COMMUNITY EVENTS

PEACE PARK

On Sunday 12 August, the Oxford Falls Peace Park held its twelfth anniversary. Warringah Council Events and Cultural Services invited the Aboriginal Support Group to participate by having an information stall. Vanessa Walsh and I were able to attend and set up this stall with the Group's informative collection of materials. Quite a good number of people came to find out what we were about and what we offered and we handed out (and sold) quite a bit of material, answering queries as best we could.

The whole program on the day was very well received by all who attended, I am sure. Bob Waterer very eloquently gave the *Welcome to Country* and briefly told his wonderful story. Paul Couvret, who first conceived of the Peace Park in 1993, addressed the crowd.



Carol Ritchie with performers from *Thullii Dreaming*

Then the following performers were included in the program: *Thullii Dreaming*, (Aboriginal performers), Tibetan dancers, Japanese and Tongan singers, Maori performers (a very hilarious version of the Haka with men from the audience) and Chinese dancers creating a beautiful Chinese dragon.

There was also a Japanese Tea House, an Indonesian grass puppet workshop and a workshop making Prayer Flags for Peace. Hundreds of these Prayer Flags had also been made at schools in the area and were draped all around the park.

The Peace Park has become a place to reflect on peace and the need for acceptance and understanding in our multicultural community. For me, I have always felt a sense of peace whenever I have been there and I think that these annual 'get togethers' go a long way to strengthening the importance of peace in our community.

Carol Ritchie

GO GREEN DAY AT NORTH NARRABEEN PUBLIC SCHOOL

North Narrabeen Public School invited students from Elanora Heights and Narrabeen Lakes Schools to share their annual *Go Green Day* on 4 September. Students spent the day visiting presentations that included Early History, Global Warming Domes, Weather and Climate Change, Sustainable House and Habitat Restoration and Sydney Wildlife.

The day usually opens with an *Acknowledgement of Country* and a brief talk about the first inhabitants of the area. However, this year the students didn't just hear that for hundreds of years Aboriginal people were hunters, gatherers and fishermen, that there were more than 600 tribal groups in Australia and they spoke different languages and had different legends and art, and that the people who lived along the Northern Beaches were known as the Guringai. This year Bob Waterer gave a *Welcome to Country* and enthralled students, teachers and parents as he outlined his wonderful heritage as a descendent from the last of the Broken Bay Aboriginal people. His fascinated audience warmed quickly to Bob as he told how he had been able to trace his ancestry back to Biddy Bungaree, step-daughter of the famous Bungaree, Chief of the Broken Bay tribes in the early nineteenth century.

Cr. David James, the newly elected Mayor of Pittwater, and I gave the presentation on early history and when I spoke a little about early Aboriginal family life I was often interrupted as children related what I was saying with Bob Waterer's ancestry. Bob is so very proud of his heritage and we are proud of Bob!

Nan Bosler

BROOKLYN TO BAR ISLAND BOAT TRIP

A small island in the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney, was the destination for a group of enthusiastic travellers, all guests of Bob Waterer for the day. Bob is the great great grandson of Biddy Bungaree, later known as 'Granny' Lewis (1803-1880), one of the Broken Bay Aboriginal people. With her husband John Lewis she settled on the river, was given a land grant in her name in 1831 and raised their large family.

'Granny' Lewis was brought to life for us by Tom Richmond, a local historian and author whose knowledge of the area and its people is only matched by his passion for the Hawkesbury and surrounds. He told us fascinating stories about life on the river in the early days of European settlement and highlighted the importance of its bridges in the history of Australia. The first railway bridge opened in 1889 to provide the final link that connected Queensland to South Australia by rail. Tom also recited several moving poems.

Bar Island, at the junction of the Hawkesbury River, Berowra and Marramarra Creeks, is a significant heritage site. Uninhabited for nearly a century and lacking a jetty which made gaining access quite interesting, the island is now under the control of Hornsby Council. Immediately on landing we saw the remains of a large Aboriginal midden.

Continued Page 10

ASG INFORMATION NIGHTS

BUSH SCHOOL

What an inspiration this true story is!

The documentary *Bush School* tells how not long after Colin and Sandra Baker arrived at Warrego, a remote Northern Territory mining town, the mine closed and the school where they were employed had no students. This changed when Colin Freddie, the traditional owner and Elder of Mungalawurru forty kilometers away, challenged Colin Baker to enrol his community's kids at the school and also to teach them to ride his horses.

The Bakers, fitting the description *grey nomads*, took up the challenge. Colin the teacher and Sandra, his wife, as school assistant and bookkeeper. Despite enormous difficulties a great rapport developed. Getting the children to school was the first hurdle to overcome. An eighty kilometer round trip in Colin Freddie's old car, then as numbers increased the Bakers also did the journey. Finally a minibus was provided that meant only one journey each way a day and more comfortable for all concerned. Colin Baker had an amazing ability to make learning exciting. His primary school curriculum used horse riding to teach mathematics. Rote learning was adapted to be sung in the bus to and from school. It was a happy, fun filled day. Two Elders, Marie Rennie and Eva Kelly, came with the children each day to school. They were responsible for teaching traditional methods and helped with discipline.

Swimming was introduced into the school curriculum and the children took to this like the proverbial duck to water. They triumphed in the Tennant Creek Carnival and some went on to win more medals at a competition in Darwin.

Sandra broadened her role extensively. We saw her preparing a week's supply of stew for a midday meal she had instigated as part of the health and nutrition program. When the children

arrived at school they washed, brushed their teeth and got into their school uniforms which they wore with pride. This meant uniform washing was added to each weekend's chores. The students' health was checked and many were found to need hearing aids and other on-going treatments which Sandra provided. There were lots of laughs from the audience at the rank and honest responses of the children to questions. We heard of their aspirations to become *a teacher, a nurse, a policeman, a bus driver, a horseman*. I felt for Latenzia Grant as she commenced her education at New England Girls High School as a boarder. It was so different from Mungalawurru and so far away from home. But what an opportunity.

During the time the Bakers were running Warrego School there was 100% attendance and students achieved national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. How's that Mr Brough!! Without need for police and army intervention!

Ruth Latukefu, facilitator for the Information Night on 6 August, brought us up to date with what has happened since the making of *Bush School*.

The Bakers took leave and the new Principal did not continue with the same activities and as a consequence the attendance dropped off. In May 2007 the mining company wanted the school off the property. Colin Baker is now living in Tennant Creek and drives the children from the Mungalawurru community to Tennant Creek for schooling. Horse riding is an after school activity. Four students from the school are now in interstate boarding schools including Latenzia, who is completing Year 10 at NEGS. Sadly her father was killed in a car crash and her mother seriously injured. Ruth had provided some interesting notes about education in remote areas and in particular where English is the second language. An interchange of experiences and of the challenges this presents ensued and we benefited from having in the audience several who had been teachers in such situations. We were reminded that at Warrego School, despite having the two Elders attending, no bi-lingual programs were available and that this demonstrates how sadly Aboriginal language is fast disappearing.

The Support Group are assisting the education of the *Bush School* students through various donations and bequests. Further donations are always welcomed by our Treasurer.

Bush School was written, directed, filmed in beautiful colour and produced by Bryan Duffy. The DVD can be borrowed from the Support Group and from Belrose Library, Warringah Library Service. It can be purchased from Marcom Projects

www.marcom.com.au or telephone 073340 8900

Anna Bell



Colin and Sandra Baker with the Warrego school bus
– Courtesy of Bryan Duffy

Did you know that there was no *Welcome to Country* at 2007 APEC?

LARISSA BEHRENDT and GEOFF SCOTT

Larissa Behrendt is Professor of Law and Director of Research at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Geoff Scott is the CEO of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Not always, but very often, I come home from the Aboriginal Support Group meetings feeling depressed. Sometimes I wonder why I attend and the Information Night on 3 September with Larissa and Geoff was no exception. I came home depressed. That response was understandable.

One of the first statements that Larissa made was that *'things are not cheery in Indigenous affairs'*. It went downhill after that.

The opposition to Government policy has, in the main, been silenced and this is particularly true in relation to the opposition to the policy regarding Indigenous affairs. David Marr's recent Australian Quarterly Essay clearly makes this point.

Despite the assumption behind the 1967 Referendum that the Government would make laws for the benefit of Aboriginal people, all that has happened is that Aboriginal people have been caught in legal conflicts between state politicians and federal politicians. Exorbitant amounts of money have been wasted on bureaucratic administration. The Government hides behind their much trumpeted acts of supposed generosity. (I became lost in the figures but I think I heard something like three and one half billion dollars.)

The recommendations of the Report concerning child abuse had all been ignored by the Government's recent invasion of Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal people had not been included in the decision making process concerning their future. If there happens to be a change in Government later in the year there is little hope that there will be a significant change in policy regarding Indigenous matters. Kevin Rudd does little more than re-state the attitudes of the current Government and appears to support the ill-informed decisions of the Prime Minister.

A delegation of Aboriginal people, seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister, is ignored while the Exclusive Brethren are able to organise an audience.

And there were a number of other critical statements that Larissa made and she had not even declared herself angry. But when Geoff came to the microphone the negative pronouncements became even more marked. Forty-eight million dollars were equal to *thirty pieces of silver*. Land claims might not be acted upon for another ten years because of the lack of Government surveyors. Aboriginal people were forced to sell their land when in fact it should have been used for the development of culture.

If you have read this far in my report you will understand why I think twice about coming to Support Group meetings.

And it is not just that I become depressed but rather that the reasons for the depression do not abate. I sensed that I was not the only one feeling this depression, or at least confusion.

Members of the audience raised questions like *'I want to do something. What can I do?'* And voicing the depression Lizzie Landers asked *'what is the one thing we should be addressing?'* The answers to both these questions gave no energised encouragement for hope.

But that was not the last word for the evening. There were the reminders that at the 1967 Referendum 90.77% of Australian people made it clear that they wanted a better deal for Aboriginal people. And the significance of Paul Keating's speech at Redfern was remembered and steps suggested for a re-visiting of that remarkable day.

There was a ready acknowledgement by Larissa that, despite the depressing period that Aboriginal affairs is going through, there are groups like ours that provide support and friendship. That support and friendship is essential for the maintenance of any movement. There was the buzz, over a cup of tea, of animated conversation. People swapped stories of small steps taken, achieving impact that was lasting. Plans were discussed for the next meeting. Members expressed their delight that Larissa and Geoff had been part of the Support Group. Warmth, commitment and a well informed and creative doggedness were the characteristics for which they will be remembered.

When I arrived home from the meeting I read a copy of the letter that had been given *first word* status in the Sydney Morning Herald on 31 August.

It was over the signature of Larissa and others. It said in the final paragraph *'We see our culture and people as an asset, not as a liability. If we cannot persuade Governments, then we will take our case to the Court of Public Opinion – to Australians, to give us a chance to create a better future'*.

The dominant attitude at the meeting may very well have been depressing. But it never, strangely, became despair. My hunch is that I will be at the next meeting. And resilient.

Grahame Ellis

NOVEMBER INFORMATION NIGHT

The documentary *LIYARN NGARN* will be screened at the Monday 5 November Information Night. Further details are given on Page 12



BOOK REVIEW

THE MURDER OF NELLIE DUFFY

by Stephanie Bennett, published in Sydney

by Simon & Schuster 2001

Nellie Duffy was found with her throat slit in her bedroom at the homestead of the remote Carpentaria Downs station in 1908. She was working at the time as housekeeper-companion to the station manager's wife, Fanny Wilson. It was rumoured that she had been having an affair with the station boss, Henry Wilson, some years before when they were all living on another station. However, at the time of her death she was being 'courted' by Darcy Day, the head stockman who was some years her junior. Although records of the time refer to Nellie Duffy as a girl, she was then a woman of 36. Fanny Wilson and Billy Wilson, an Aboriginal station hand, were subsequently charged with the murder but the trial in the Georgetown Court House subsequently failed and the truth of the case never surfaced. Stephanie Bennett has written a well researched account of the murder and its background and presents a convincing argument as to who the real killer was.

I found this book particularly interesting because I visited the Georgetown Court House in the early 1990s whilst on a tour from Cairns to Karumba and back.

And being interested in all things Aboriginal I found Ms Bennett's background information on the Aboriginal people caught up in the saga most illuminating. I was intrigued as to why Billy carried the surname of Wilson as he was not a natural son of Henry Wilson and in fact Henry Wilson was known to police for accusations of cruelty to Aboriginal people.

I didn't think there was anything left to shock me about the practices of European Australians toward the Indigenous population but reading this book showed me that this was wrong. Aboriginal labour for the stations in the Gulf country was often obtained by arrangement between employers and the native police, who would round up and shoot adults in the camps and abduct the children for station work. Individual squatters would also use the same methods themselves to procure young Aboriginal people for labour. The children would be taken away to distant stations to work as slave labour.

In 1908, Billy Wilson was about 23 years old and had been with Henry Wilson for about fifteen years. Ms Bennett notes the chilling record of the cruelty that Billy suffered at Henry Wilson's hands in a register (part of an official document compiled in 1909) of identifying marks on his body: *scar over left ear, large burn mark on right elbow, large burn mark on right thigh, large scar left side outside, two scars left calf, lumps left groin ...*

Concerns were expressed at our last Aboriginal Support Group meeting that the current *History Wars* were intended to airbrush contact history from the Australian historical record, but I don't think this will happen because truth is the daughter of time and truth will continually pop up in books like *The Murder of Nellie Duffy*. I highly recommend this book as a really good read.

Carol Gerrard

ALBERT

Sunday 16 September 2007 marked the 130th anniversary of Hermannsburg, the former Lutheran mission station, set in dramatic desert landscape, 200 miles west of Alice Springs. Among the many celebrations held by the Strehlow Foundation was the launching of *Albert*, a book about Hermannsburg's most famous painter and son – Albert Namatjira.

Albert: Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg Watercolour Artists is written in English and Western Arrarnta languages by Lenie Namatjira, Albert's granddaughter and artist, and Damien Kamholtz, a lecturer in visual and expressive arts at the University of Southern Queensland. The book is illustrated by the Ntaria and outstation community students. It also offers useful information in maps, glossary references and photographs.

Albert Namatjira was born at Hermannsburg on 28 July 1902. He was given the name Namatjira which means *flying white ant*. Albert died at the Alice Springs Hospital in 1959. In this short and often tragic life Albert achieved fame and lionisation. He was taken to London, introduced to royalty, hailed as the first Indigenous artist to paint the dramatic Central Australian desert in water colours in the European tradition.

The forerunner of the current booming Aboriginal art movement,

Albert's paintings sell well in today's auction houses, but who is selling and who is buying? His family do not receive the copyright on his works. What would he have thought of the million dollar mark up on today's Aboriginal art works?

Albert is published by Openbook Australia and funded by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Water Resources under the *Sharing Australia's Stories* program. Delightful reading and charismatically illustrated.

Ria Murch

CARPENTARIA SCOOPS MORE AWARDS

Alexis Wright has won three more awards with her epic novel *Carpentaria*, the winner of the 2007 Miles Franklin Literary Award. It took the best literary fiction prize at this year's Australian Book Industry Awards and won the Vance Palmer Prize for Fiction at the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Carpentaria has since been awarded the \$25,000 prize for best fiction work at the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. Alexis Wright was born in Cloncurry and is a member of the Waanyi Nation of the Gulf of Carpentaria. She said it meant a great deal to her to be recognised in her home state for the hard work that went into her second novel.



HOPE TREE by Jessica Louise Birk

HOPE TREE

HOPE TREE is a beautiful painting in earthy tones by Cromer artist, painter and printmaker Jessica Louise Birk. It was the image for the 2007 Guringai Festival event held by North Sydney Council at Civic Park. Messages of reconciliation from the many people who attended this day were written on cards featuring the *HOPE TREE* which were then hung from the trees in the park. The cards have been collated to be made into a book which will be on display at Stanton Library, North Sydney. Jessica is a descendent of the Yeaghl people from the Clarence Valley, NSW. Her body of work looks at the two regions to which she has a strong connection – the Northern Rivers of NSW and the Northern Beaches area of Sydney where she was born and lives.

Eight of Jessica's artworks were exhibited recently at the Warringah Civic Centre, Dee Why, in conjunction with a public forum *A Climate For Change*. This was part of Warringah Council's program for Local Government Week 2007. The exhibition, with water as its theme, also included works by John Hawley and Raden Chechvela. One of Jessica's prints – of Red Rock on the Corindi River, the southern boundary of Yaraygir National Park – has a particular significance for me. It is my good fortune to holiday regularly at Red Rock, one of the most pristine and tranquil places on the coast. Jessica's work can also be seen at Mooramba Park, Dee Why. She created the art for the soft fall landings in the new children's playground featuring imagery inspired

by her Indigenous heritage and using colours associated with the local coastal environment.

Jessica also worked with ceramic artist Fran Bartolo to create the *Fish Dreaming* series. Workshops were held with people from the community and with Dee Why Public School students to paint designs onto hundreds of clay tiles in fish and circular shapes. These have now formed a colourful and distinctive border to decorate the paths around the park which is on the corner of Mooramba and Redman Roads in the heart of Dee Why. Well worth a visit. In May Jessica graduated from the University of NSW with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Her creativity continues to shine and allows us to appreciate the landscape through her eyes.

Pat Frater

BACKGROUND TO BIALA

The hostel was ready for occupancy in February 1975 and the first students took up residence in April 1975. Kirinari Allambie Heights was officially opened by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Les Johnson, on Saturday 23 August 1975. By October of that year the Branch was in dispute over the running of the hostel and had to take advice from the Administrator of the Society, Eric Frater. Many members of the Branch had taken an interest in a hostel at Neutral Bay conducted by the Aboriginal Girls Promotion Council and in December 1976 the Branch approached Aboriginal Hostels Limited to transfer management of the Allambie Heights hostel to that organization. AHL refused.

Towards the end of 1977 ACAS leased Kirinari Garden Suburb, Newcastle, and Kirinari Sylvania Heights to AHL at the nominal rent of \$1 per year. Use of these Kirinari hostels for the education of Aboriginal youth and administration by Aboriginal people was secured.

Meantime the Manly-Warringah Branch continued to operate Kirinari Allambie Heights. Correspondence from the Branch up to this time indicates that it avoided calling the hostel Kirinari but always referred to it as the Aboriginal Girls Hostel, particularly in fund raising. By resolution of the Branch on 12 December 1978 the hostel was renamed Biala, a North Coast word meaning *understanding*.

The Branch dissolved on 13 December 1982 and full management was handed over to the owners Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

AHL oversees many types of hostels throughout Australia. These cater for various needs such as access to medical treatment, visiting family in hospital, education, looking for work/housing, visiting legal and other services, prison rehabilitation and diversion, substance use rehabilitation and aged care nursing homes. The hostels are government funded and managed by a Board which includes Aboriginal board members.

IT'S BEEN A NATIONAL EMERGENCY...

... but let me make my own feelings on the matter clear. I am shocked at the extent to which the legislation, rushed through Parliament last week, is contemptuous of Aboriginal property rights and of the principle of non-discrimination; authorises an absurd and unattainable level of micro-management of Aboriginal lives far beyond the capacity of the federal bureaucracy that would permit the notorious protector, Mr Neville, to ride again; provides for desert dwellers to be forced into towns, as they were once emptied out of the cattle stations in the 1960s with devastating social effects; and could see successful communities and families returned to dependence, crushing the engagement that is essential to making progress.'
(Fred Chaney, *This Hasty Legislation Could Create a New Regime of Injustice and Failure*, *Australians All*, 19 August 2007)

More than a month has now passed since the Emergency Response legislation was introduced and its effects have already been felt in remote Aboriginal communities but we may not hear much more about what is happening as the media quickly loses interest. Those of us living far from Aboriginal communities in the north need to remain vigilant and one way is to give support to forthright Aboriginal leaders such as Lowitja O'Donoghue and Olga Havnen who are currently involved in resurrecting the lobby group *Women for Wik*. They have established a website (www.womenforwik.org) and are eager for as many as possible to join them in opposing the manner in which the Federal Government is trying to impose its intervention on the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue has characterised this policy as:

'patronising and unworkable. We need policies that will take us forward, not backwards.'

(Wik Women Sign Up for New Battle in Territory, SMH, 1-2 September 2007)

Ruth Fink Latukefu

BROOKLYN TO BAR ISLAND BOAT TRIP

Further up the hill, where once stood St Johns Anglican Church, only the secured stone chimney could be seen. Opened in 1877 the church was also used as a school. Tom led us through the small cemetery which was the main burial ground for the local community from 1878 until 1906. He has accounted for fifty-one grave sites. The fifth burial on the island, in 1880, was that of 'Granny' Lewis, one the few tribal Aboriginal people from the Sydney region whose burial place is known. At her funeral leading citizens acted as witnesses.

A start on the restoration of the cemetery is soon to be made and there are plans to build a monument to 'Granny' Lewis and the river pioneers buried on Bar Island.

On our return to Brooklyn, Bob treated us to a delicious fish lunch of deepwater mullet caught locally the evening before.

What a special outing this was – a boat trip with experienced skipper Tom Cosgrove, beautiful scenery, good company and a most informative commentary liberally sprinkled with humour. We were given the opportunity to reflect on a life very different to the present time. This was a day to remember and most timely as it was the start of History Week. Thankyou Bob.

Pat Frater

2007 BLAKE PRIZE WINNER

Shirley Purdie, an Indigenous artist from the remote Warmun community Northern WA, has won this year's prestigious Blake Prize for Religious Art, selected from a record field of 500 entries from all over Australia. The \$15,000 prize was awarded for a traditional ochre painting of the *Stations of the Cross* – with an Aboriginal interpretation. The Warmun community has a long history of combining Indigenous spirituality with the Catholic tradition which is called *two-way*.

Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan

It's with great pleasure that we announce the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan (NSASP) 2007 to 2011 is to be launched on 13 November 2007. Manly Council has generously offered to host the official ceremony. The launch will be held directly following the Northern Sydney Region Reconciliation Network Meeting. It is anticipated that Mayors and Councillors from across the region will join with members of the Aboriginal community in celebrating its completion.

The NSASP project was developed to provide strategic direction for meeting the social needs of the Aboriginal community across the Northern Sydney Region. It is funded by ten Northern Sydney Councils – Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Pittwater, Warringah and Willoughby. In addition to identifying areas of high need and proposing strategies it also promotes a commitment towards achieving social justice and reconciliation.

The NSASP 2007 to 2011 *'builds on the foundations of the previous Plan'* and contains recommendations in the following key areas:

Collaboration and Cooperation, Health and Wellbeing, Education and Training, Housing, Employment, and Culture and Heritage.

The Plan was written in close consultation with the Aboriginal community and the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Advisory Group, a body created to advise and guide the project during its development. This has resulted in a comprehensive, outcomes based document that will no doubt provide a solid base for achieving our regional goals.

It should be noted that one of the major recommendations of the current Plan was to provide a regularly updated database of Aboriginal services and networks. The result was the creation of the Northern Sydney Aboriginal Services Directory. The officers at Hornsby Council recently revised the Directory. Copies can be accessed from Council websites or by contacting Hornsby Council on 9847 6611.

Earlier this year, the Aboriginal Heritage Office agreed to auspice the NSASP allowing the project much needed momentum and direction.

The next step will be the employment of the new Project Officer to facilitate, monitor and implement the Plan. The NSASP Funding Group will provide shared and rotating line management support and supervision to the Project Officer.

Kathryn Ridley
Willoughby City Council

For further information contact
Kathryn Ridley on **9777 7970** or
kathryn.ridley@willoughby.nsw.gov.au



Cover artwork by Jessica Louise Birk

2007 GURINGAI FESTIVAL

RECONCILIATION WRITING COMPETITION

The Reconciliation Writing Competition for schools in the Guringai area was very successful this year. It was conducted by Willoughby City Council and Harbour to Hawkesbury Reconciliation. Peter Clayton and I gave *Power Point* presentations to almost eight hundred children and we were delighted with the response and interest from pupils and teachers.

One hundred and thirty entries were received from nine primary schools and almost all were of a very high quality on a difficult topic of *'What does Reconciliation mean and how can I help?'* Several schools entered that did not see the presentation.

This year the rather defined topic confined the imaginations of our young writers compared to last year but young Trumayne Niha from Brookvale Public School ended his list of ideas on how children can help reconciliation with the most powerful and basic message that we all should remember when we come in contact with Aboriginal people. He wrote *'Talk to them and make friends!'* So important for new class members!

About ten entries were received from only one High School. It is planned next year to extend the competition to Year 9 in the secondary section, though there will still be just two sections: one for Years 5 and 6 and one for Years 7, 8 and 9.

Thanks must be given to Sarah Maddock of Willoughby City Council for the effort she put into organising this activity and to the Council for the two \$100 prizes for the winners. Harbour to Hawkesbury Reconciliation gave the two \$25 prizes for the second place getters.

And the winners were Alexandra Morrison (first) and Amelia Burns (second) both of Loreto Kirribilli; Ingrid Bromhead (first) of Allambie Heights Public School and Trumayne Niha (second) of Brookvale Public School. Congratulations to the winners and to all participants!

Malcom McClintock
Harbour to Hawkesbury Reconciliation



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Monday Oct 15 **ASG Business Meeting** : 7.30pm at Nelson Heather Centre*
- Monday Nov 5 **Information Night – Screening of *Liyarn Ngarn*** : 7.30pm at Nelson Heather Centre*
- Monday Nov 19 **ASG Business Meeting** : 7.30pm at Nelson Heather Centre*
- Monday Dec 3 **Planning Meeting** to talk about the Group's focus and to share responsibilities for 2008 : 7.30pm at Nelson Heather Centre*
- Saturday Dec 15 **ASG Christmas Get-Together** : from 4pm by the shore of Narrabeen Lagoon at the end of Robertson Street. Please bring picnic food to share and a blanket or chair to sit on. Telephone Pat Frater 9971 0735 if the weather is not fine.
- Monday Feb 18 **ASG Business Meeting** : 7.30pm at Nelson Heather Centre*

*Nelson Heather Centre is on the corner of Jacksons and Pittwater Roads, North Narrabeen.
Access to the centre's car park is from Boondah Road. ALL WELCOME.

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

The Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

meets on the third Monday of each month, from February to November, at 7.30 pm

Information Nights are held throughout the year on the first Monday of most months at 7.30pm.

Venue: **Angophora Room**

**Nelson Heather Centre, Corner Pittwater & Jacksons Roads
North Narrabeen.**

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

☎ For further information ☎

(02) 9939 0123 (02) 9982 1685

P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

www.asgmwp.net

Elimatta is the newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater. Articles are welcome with the understanding that editorial changes may be made and that contributors agree that the material will be archived by the National Library of Australia.

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

Please email articles where possible to annadbel@bigpond.net.au

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

Editorial Committee: Anna Bell and Pat Frater

Proof Reader: Carol Gerrard

Graphic Design: Mark Ansiewicz: (02) 9979-9112

Distribution: Jackie O'Hare, Anna Bell, Pat Fisher, Carol Gerrard, Clair Jackson, Jan Kirk, June Maguire, Susan Meagher, Marcia Rutter, Don and Pat Frater.



NOVEMBER INFORMATION NIGHT *LIYARN NGARN*

This documentary reflects the thirty year mission of Patrick Dodson to bring about a lasting and true reconciliation between the original owners of this country and the later settlers and immigrants. It aims to change peoples' perception and attitude to Indigenous people and to assist in rekindling the process of reconciliation. Also it offers some kind of meaningful epitaph to the Indigenous lives lost through sheer inhumanity.

Patrick Dodson is joined by acclaimed British actor Pete Postlewaite, who tells the story of the film, and performers Archie Roach and Shane Howard.

The world premiere of this documentary, organised by ANTaR NSW, was held at Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace, Cremorne, in August. Eight hundred people attended and an estimated four hundred people were turned away.

Take this special opportunity of seeing *Liyarn Ngarn* with the ASG and joining in the discussion after the screening.

Date: Monday 5 November
at 7.30pm

Venue: Nelson Heather Centre,
North Narrabeen*

Cost: Free

Enquiries: Lizzie Landers **9918 2594**

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The ASG once again thanks the following organisations for their financial support:



to purchase videos and to pay speakers' fees for the Information Nights



RSL CLUB

to assist with the publication of *Elimatta* for 2007/08



for its annual youth grant to BIALA Aboriginal Hostel