

asgmwp.net

# Elimatta

Winter 2015

Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

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

## RAY JACKSON 1941-2015

### A TIRELESS FIGHTER AGAINST A ROTTEN SYSTEM

How sad it is to learn that our comrade and friend, Uncle Ray Jackson, has died.

A Wiradjuri fighter for Koori justice (“fkj”, as he always signed his fascinating emails), Ray will be best known for his tireless work against Aboriginal deaths in custody, the countless hours investigating cases, supporting families of victims, and organising rally after rally to back that up and make it clear to the authorities that without justice there would be no peace. The breadth of Ray’s fighting spirit meant he stood against all injustice. He was a socialist.

Ray had been in the Communist Party when younger, and later the Freedom Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance. When I was revising a pamphlet on Aboriginal struggles that I’d written for Socialist Alternative in 1997, it was Ray who read the draft and gave me his uncompromising feedback.

As a young man he’d been a rigger, working on an oil platform off the coast of WA. He was a militant union delegate. When the Communist Party supported the Accord deal between the ACTU and the Hawke government in the 1980s, Ray opposed it and argued against the CP union officials that it would strangle the working class struggle.



Those class politics never left him. The same sharp perspective lay behind his denunciation of the emergence of a new stolen generation in recent years: “Some of what’s happening now beggars belief. A FACS worker wanted to take a boy because he didn’t have any shoes. Give him some shoes! Don’t take him from his family!”

Ray himself was part of the *Stolen Generations*, taken as a two-year-old during World War II and, without even a name to go by, never able to find his family.

His experience gives the lie to the current Anzac mythology. “All I know is that my father was a soldier and he went up to Papua New Guinea. He was killed on the Kokoda Track and instead of giving his wife a war widow’s pension, the bloody government came and took his children away. Because of my mother’s Aboriginality.”

Despite all his numerous health issues, Ray had a tireless spirit. (And a wicked sense of humour. No-one who visited him in his Housing Commission flat in Waterloo would have escaped Ray pointing out the name of the building he lived in: *Captain Cook!*)

If you were to make a list of every demo in Sydney this (or any other) year, Ray would have been at most of them.

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**THANKYOU**  
**in advance for renewing**  
**your ASG Membership**

[Click here to renew membership now](#)

**More than \$53.6 million was spent**  
**last financial year on services for**  
**about 800 Aboriginal residents.**

See page 4 for details

## Guringai FESTIVAL

Story of Place

A celebration of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage



See page 2 for details

# Guringai

## FESTIVAL 2015

### Story of Place A Celebration of Aboriginal Culture and Heritage

Founded in 2001, the Guringai Festival aims to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Sydney region. The festival usually starts on Sorry Day, 26 May and goes through to the end of NAIDOC Week, the second week in July each year. The festival involves 11 Councils and numerous reconciliation and community groups. Events include workshops, art exhibitions, performances, films and talks.

Banner artwork *Story of Place* by Kerrie Kenton

**Sun May 24**

3pm - 5.30pm

#### ASG Sorry Day Remembrance Walk

Free Event – All welcome. An opportunity for Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal community members to get together on a *Journey of Healing*. Smoking Ceremony, Indigenous Performers, Kids Activities, BBQ and refreshments available.

Full Details see page 3



**Mon May 25**

7pm - 9.30pm

#### 'Hands On' Aboriginal Arts & Crafts activities evening

Free Event – All welcome. In the Assembly Hall of Narrabeen Lakes Public School, 1299 Pittwater Rd, Narrabeen

in association with the Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment.

Details: Judith Bennett 02 9905 2135

**Sat May 30 and**

**Sun May 31**

10am - 2pm

#### 4 HOUR BUSH WALKS

**in the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment** – Free. All welcome

See impressive carvings and extraordinary biodiversity when traversing the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment. Don't forget your camera! Allow good 4 hours. BYO lunch and water. Meet up at 27 Morgan Rd, Belrose. Details: Conny Harris 0432 643 295



**Wed June 17**

9.30am - noon

#### Free Screening: CHARLIE'S COUNTRY

– All welcome  
Charlie (David Gulpilil), an aging Native Australian living in the Northern Territory, is broke. He does not have a house. He is also hungry and his spirits are low as a result of the erosion of his way of life. The *Intervention* is making life more difficult so Charlie takes off.

Thanks to Josephine and Roy Mustaca of Collaroy Cinema

Free screening at 1097 Pittwater Road, Collaroy

Details: 02 9999 3045



**Sat June 20**

10am - noon

#### KIDS BARK PAINTING with Karleen Green

– \$15pp  
Kids just want to have fun (and they get to take their work home!)  
All equipment and refreshments included.

Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve Wakehurst Parkway, North Narrabeen.

Booking Essential: 0419 219 770

**Sat June 20**

1pm - 5pm

#### NATIVE GRASS WEAVING with Karleen Green

– \$15pp  
Karleen will teach you the basic skills in traditional grass weaving.  
Learn how native grasses can be made into beautiful and useful objects. All equipment and afternoon tea included.

Scout Hall, Bilarong Reserve Wakehurst Parkway, North

Narrabeen. Booking Essential: 0419 219 770



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# ASG SORRY DAY Invitation to join us

**An opportunity for Aboriginal People and non-Aboriginal Australians to get together**

**SUNDAY MAY 24 at 3pm**

- Ⓞ Remembrance Walk – a *Journey of Healing*
- Ⓞ *Smoking Ceremony* and *Welcome to Country*
- Ⓞ Biala girls give a reading from Auntie Nancy Wood's short poem book *Nobody's Child*
- Ⓞ Boomerang painting, Craft and Jewellery making for the children – with a show at the end of the day with what they have made – and they receive an extra gift from the ASG.
- Ⓞ A talk on the *Stolen Generations* by Karen Smith from the Aboriginal Heritage Office
- Ⓞ Dancing by the beautiful Jannawi Dance clan Jannawi means *With You, With Me*
- Ⓞ A performance by Gerard McMinn, Aboriginal Dancer and Scott Romain on didgerido
- Ⓞ The BBQ is going all the time and refreshment will be available all afternoon
- Ⓞ The day concludes at about 5.30pm
- Ⓞ A free event – All are welcome



Meet at Berry Park Narrabeen where a *Welcome to Country* will be given and brief talk, followed by a silent walk to the Scout Hall Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway, a *journey of healing* to remember the *Stolen Generations*, the children and their families and the meaning and repercussions of this to all Australians today. Walkers will be greeted by a *Smoking Ceremony* and a cup of tea or cold drink and refreshment upon arrival at the Scout Hall

## WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The systematic removal of children has a devastating intergenerational effect on families and communities. It's estimated over 100,000 Indigenous people have been affected.

The first *Sorry Day* was held in Sydney on 26 May 1998, and has been commemorated nationally on 26 May each year since then. Australians from all walks of life participate in commemorative meetings, survival celebrations and community gatherings, in honour of the *Stolen Generations*.

*Continued from Page 2*

## Guringai FESTIVAL 2015

**Thursdays**  
**June 4 to July 9**  
1pm - 3pm

**THE ALBERT NAMATJIRA ROOM** – Free – All welcome  
Only 6 Thursday Showings of these hidden national treasures! See original art work rarely displayed. The bigger than life size painting. Rare collection of spears. Not to be missed. Mona Vale Bowling Club at 1598 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale NSW 2103. More details: 0419 219 770



**Sun June 21**  
10am - 2pm

**WALK THE BASIN TRACK with Uncle Laurie Bimson** – \$50pp (max 30)  
Come and taste some Aboriginal food and culture; be quick! Maximum 30 persons. At the site you will have explanations as to how the rock carvings were made and be told stories of times long gone by. Bring your camera for the view from West Head. Amazing! West Head Rd, Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park. Includes BBQ lunch! Booking Essential: [GuringaiTours.com.au](http://GuringaiTours.com.au)



## \$53M for 800 Roebourne Aboriginals

More than \$53.6 million was spent last financial year on services for about 800 Aboriginal residents of Roebourne in the Pilbara, according to a State Government report.

There were 206 services and projects delivered by more than 60 providers, some running short-term, uncoordinated programs.

The expenditure review by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which included the provision of most general services such as police, health care, education and welfare, details a failure to improve outcomes for a community with entrenched social and health issues.

The report found “a scattergun approach to funding, fragmented service delivery, inadequate co-ordination and significant wasted effort”.

“It is likely that the review findings are applicable in other regional, remote and urban locations across WA,” it said.

Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council chairman Michael Hayden said the report proved the need for the Auditor-General to investigate the \$4.9 billion spent by the Commonwealth and State governments on Aboriginal West Australians each year.

“It exposes the dysfunction of bureaucratic processes and why we need accountability,” Mr Hayden said.

Roebourne has been subject of many studies, including one by the Department of Indigenous Affairs’ Pilbara office in 2009 that outlined similar issues.

It is believed the DPC report has been an impetus for the Barnett Government’s move to overhaul Aboriginal services amid the Commonwealth’s intention to withdraw funding for municipal funding to remote communities.

It compared Roebourne with the community of Jigalong, east of Newman, and a sample of smaller Martu settlements.

All had substandard housing, education and employment.

The report says that almost \$68,000 is spent on services per Aboriginal person in Roebourne (calculated on the 2011 census figure of 789), almost \$55,000 in Jigalong and almost \$48,500 in the smaller communities.

Those figures appear to indicate that less is spent in the communities than the town.

However, they are skewed because residents of Jigalong and other Martu communities go to Newman for health care and other expensive services.

A figure for non-Aboriginal residents was not available.

The report identified improvements in service delivery and potential gaps, including minuscule spending on early childhood.

The percentage of Federal funding increased as the population got more remote, partly because of higher welfare dependency.

*Colleen Egan*

*The Australian, April 25, 2015*

## COOEE to indigenous students a community based announcement



For Students currently studying in years 10-12 the annual Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School scholarships are now open for applications. This is a program my brother Todd (pictured left) who went through and is now an electrical Engineer with Ausgrid.

The summer school is an excellent opportunity to discover what engineering and science are all about by visiting current engineering sites around the Sydney. In the past, visits have included QANTAS, the water treatment facility at North Head, Barrangaroo, the Harbour Bridge climb and the Opera House!

The summer school also provides a gentle introduction to university life as participants stay in one of the colleges at Sydney University as well as visiting facilities at nearby campuses such as UNSW and UTS. A number of interesting activities are arranged in the laboratories of these universities.

Last year’s favourite was driving a mine truck simulator at UNSW!

There are also numerous networking functions at which you can learn about the type of work available by talking with current engineers from a variety of disciplines.

For further information and applications forms please see the following links:

<http://sydney.edu.au/engineering/iaess/>  
<http://sydney.edu.au/engineering/iaess/docs/iaess-application-2015.pdf>

For any student who is currently enrolled or has already completed a degree, the Aurora International Study Tour will be open for applications between the 1st of May and 1st of June 2015 and is due to run for six weeks beginning in early November.

See *Elimatta* Autumn 2015 [http://www.asgmwp.net/media/elimatta/Elimatta\\_2015\\_Autumn.pdf](http://www.asgmwp.net/media/elimatta/Elimatta_2015_Autumn.pdf)

[http://www.auroraproject.com.au/Aurora\\_Indigenous\\_Scholars\\_International\\_Study\\_Tour](http://www.auroraproject.com.au/Aurora_Indigenous_Scholars_International_Study_Tour)

Good Luck!



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# Wiradjuri a language transforming a town

The town of Parkes is famous for the annual Elvis Festival and for its role in the moon landing (as seen in the movie *The Dish*). Something you may not know about this town is that each week over 1,000 people learn the Wiradjuri language – around 10% of the population. It's taught in every primary school as well as in high schools and at TAFE. As you drive into Parkes and neighbouring Forbes, you'll pass prominent *Welcome to Wiradjuri country* road signs. As you walk into the main building at Parkes Public Primary school, you're greeted with a bright wall filled with Wiradjuri nouns and verbs. In the prep classroom, the colours of the rainbow are plastered around the room in language.

A few years back, Forbes North primary school won an award at the Eisteddfod music competition for their rendition of *Waltzing Mathilda* – in Wiradjuri.

Last week, a student bounded up to Wiradjuri teacher Ron Wardrop, exclaiming, "Mr Ron, I wish I was Aboriginal! Even for just for one day!" For a man who spent most of his own childhood and adolescence being made to feel ashamed of his Indigenous heritage, Ron was at a loss for words.

Parkes hasn't always been like this. "My mother told me when she was a child at school the teachers said to her, 'Go home and wash the dirt off your skin'. But she couldn't wash it off, that was just her natural colour," recalled Ron. His own memories of school are of deep divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. "You had the Aboriginal kids sitting up the back and the gubbas sitting up the front. The Indigenous kids just weren't acknowledged at all."

When Kerry Gilbert was at school, there was no Aboriginal language or culture on the curriculum. Racial taunts were part of life. "Working in the classroom, I don't see it now. It blows me away. I think the language lessons have completely changed people's views on Aboriginal people," she said.

It seems that attitudinal change is spilling out of the classrooms and onto the streets. Former principal Bill Cox was astounded at the changes he's seen over the years at NAIDOC. "Last year's NAIDOC march attracted over 400 people, more than half of whom were non-Indigenous." Previous NAIDOC marches had been attended by less than 100, with very few non-Indigenous people among the crowd.

Bill believes that the Wiradjuri language classes are helping to engender within Indigenous kids a strong sense of identity and self-respect, and the results are clear to see. "By bringing forward their self-esteem and their self-respect, it's made them feel as though they can compete on a level playing field with children from other backgrounds," he observed. "Many children who've gone through the program are achieving well in literacy and numeracy." All the Wiradjuri teachers have noticed that truancy and behavioural issues amongst Indigenous students have decreased since the program began.

Like any great social movement in history, this story was knitted by a small group of dedicated people working hard at a grassroots level, including Wiradjuri elder Stan Grant Senior who worked with linguist Dr John Rudder to document the Wiradjuri language and create a dictionary. In 2005 Grant and Rudder ran a four day language course for the community.

Teachers Geoff Anderson and Michele Herbert both found themselves learning Wiradjuri nouns, verbs and greetings, and it changed the course of their lives.

Michele was so inspired that she introduced the Wiradjuri language at her school in Forbes. She then developed units of work for the Board of Studies as part of the newly introduced Aboriginal Languages Curriculum and organised training and employment for four Indigenous tutors to run the classes.

Meanwhile, Bill Cox and Geoff Anderson worked together to consult with the community and build support for the Wiradjuri language program across schools in Parkes. Geoff now coordinates the Wiradjuri program, mentors teachers throughout the region and is an advisor on the board of First Languages Australia.

Bill Cox is pragmatic about his reasons for getting Wiradjuri into the classroom. He'd trialled Indonesian and Japanese at his school but they hadn't caught on. They didn't have any Asian students at the school. In contrast, Michele's school had 30% Aboriginal enrolments at the time she introduced Wiradjuri. It seemed like a *no brainer*. "If the whole community of Parkes learned Indonesian, very few people would ever use it," explained Bill, "but if you learn Wiradjuri, you're re-gaining esteem, an understanding of local culture and a removal of racism."

Ron Wardrop was quiet for a while when I asked him why language mattered to him. "We need to keep the languages strong," he said. "Like a river, the water tells a story, it just keeps flowing, like generations of people telling stories. If that river dries up, then that knowledge and that flow of language and culture – which gives people a strong sense of connection to self and country – is going to die away. And that would be a sad thing."

It is difficult to describe what it feels like to witness a school principal addressing an assembly in Wiradjuri language, or a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids belting out a song in a 40,000 year old language at the top of their lungs. "It really touches a chord being able to speak what my mum couldn't speak," said Kerry, her eyes welling a little. "It was taken away from us and now we're getting it back."

A new film *Our Mother Tongue: Wiradjuri* was made as part of an Indigenous languages project for ABC Local Radio and Multiplatform that is being piloted in partnership with *First Languages Australia*.

View also the Woiwurrung story from Healesville and the Gunai-Kurnai story from East Gippsland.

Suzi Taylor







## TIME TO FIX A SILENCE AT THE HEART OF AUSTRALIA'S CONSTITUTION

**One Point of View** by Ian Viner AO QC



**Northern Land Council**

With the Commonwealth Government's push for 99-year leases, the Forrest Report call for Aboriginal land to be privatised so as to be bought and sold, and attacks upon the

Northern Land Council in particular over their defence of traditional ownership and their responsibilities under the Land Rights Act ... the iconic 1976 Land Rights Act is under threat like never before.

The whole framework and security of traditional Aboriginal land, protected by the Land Rights Act, is in danger of being subverted by Governments, bureaucracies and people who have no real understanding or sympathy for traditional communal land ownership.

99-year town leases turn Traditional Ownership upside down.

In reality they put the Commonwealth back into ownership and control of Traditional Aboriginal land like it was before the Land Rights Act was passed – as if

Aboriginal land had returned to reserve status under Commonwealth control. No one can really imagine that in 99 years' time the Commonwealth will, or could, return to the people absolute ownership of traditional land which had been alienated by these 99-year leases.

A Commonwealth Head Lease is a device by the Commonwealth to take control of Aboriginal land away from Traditional Owners. It is thoroughly misleading for the Commonwealth to suggest giving the Office of Township Leasing a 99-year lease of Aboriginal land is the same as 99-year leases in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

The ACT leases Crown land to people instead of granting freehold ownership. Aboriginal Traditional Owners already have freehold title, the best form of ownership in Australia.

There is good reason to think the Commonwealth devised 99-year leases and the Office of Township Leasing as the head lessee as a way to avoid having to compensate Aboriginal people on just terms under the Constitution for taking control of their traditional lands.

The Commonwealth objective is the permanent alienation of traditional land from Land Trusts.

While no-one knows what the future of Australia will be in 99 years, we can all be sure that Northern Territory Aboriginal people will not have the power at the end of a 99-year head lease to demand the return of the land to them, like China demanding that colonial Hong Kong be returned to the Chinese.

The bureaucratic regime of the Office of Township Leasing is really a Canberra-controlled bureaucracy of public housing. Aboriginal people will have lost control of their own land once it gets into the hands of the Office of Township Leasing. Land Trusts will become token names only on the title deed.

The real legal authority will be the Commonwealth as Head Lessee forever.

The Forrest Report recommendations make it plain that the objective of Commonwealth land tenure reform policies in the Northern Territory should be to smash traditional ownership by making Aboriginal land *tradeable and fungible* as it says in Chapter 8.

History tells us that land grabbers will quickly move in and Aboriginal land will be traded away forever and Aboriginal people left on the fringe once again.

The real objective of Commonwealth policy should be to put the Aboriginal people in control of their own destiny for the next 99 years. Keeping Aboriginal land firmly under Aboriginal control is the only way for that to happen.

Northern Territory Aboriginal people should learn from Maori history in New Zealand.

Although the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi was supposed to protect Maori traditional land, New Zealand governments quickly and systematically started breaking up communal title and Maori control of their traditional lands by *individualising* land titles into private ownership until there was no traditional Maori ownership or control left over their historic lands.

Maori suffered more than 150 years of social degradation and discrimination as a result. I invite people to read the Waitangi Tribunal Report 1996 entitled *The Taranaki Report, Kaupapa Tuatahi*.

It is a sad story and a still sadder indictment of government and an indication of what could happen to traditional ownership in the Northern Territory.

There is much talk of communities being consulted about leases before a 99-year Head Lease is taken by the Commonwealth. Experience tells us that such consultation is an empty gesture.

Government and the bureaucracy go ahead doing so many things when all there has been is fly-in-fly-out so-called consultation with a minority of a community. That was rampant under the *Intervention* and *Stronger Futures*.

When it comes to giving up your ownership of traditional land it is consent which is required, not consultation. Consent can only be given when what is proposed is really understood and real consent is given. Unless there is real consent, agreeing to a 99-year lease is not voluntary.

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## TIME TO FIX A SILENCE AT THE HEART OF AUSTRALIA'S CONSTITUTION

Consultation becomes coercion. So-called consent becomes deception.

Land Trusts and communities, as a group, have a right to be independently legally advised what the granting of a Head Lease to the Commonwealth really means. Land Rights is complicated. Land ownership anywhere in Australia is complicated for any citizen.

Land Trusts and communities have a right to be fully funded to receive all the independent legal and social advice they want before being called upon to consent to give up ownership of historic lands.

Land Councils have strict legal obligations under the Land Rights Act and every right to be extremely careful to ensure the Act is being thoroughly complied with before a lease is granted. The Commonwealth cannot complain if a Land Council is performing its statutory obligation to the highest degree necessary.

Indeed, there is a powerful argument that the Land Rights Act imposes a fiduciary duty upon the Commonwealth and Land Councils to act in complete good faith toward Land Trusts, traditional owners and communities living on traditional land before the Commonwealth takes any lease from them, 99 years, 40 years or any other lease period.

It is easy to foresee that with the strict requirements of the Land Rights Act and the duty upon the Commonwealth and Land Councils to act in complete good faith there will be years of litigation challenging the legality of 99-year leases like another Mabo case if the Commonwealth tries to force their policies upon reluctant Aboriginal communities.

The truth of the matter is that the grant of 99-year leases to the Commonwealth is not necessary.

The Land Rights Act expressly has provision for the grant of leasehold interests in traditional lands under conditions which preserve the traditional ownership of the Land Trusts and the in-built protections of the Act.

The Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments can fund public housing, facilities and infrastructure without demanding 99-year leases.

It is wrong of the Commonwealth to promise funding for community infrastructure, including public buildings and housing, only on condition of the handing over of 99-year leases.

That is coercion or bribery no better than the exchange, colonial-style, of *beads and bangles* by which Indigenous people around the world were deprived of their traditional lands.

Those days should have long passed out of Government thinking and policies.

The situation is worse when it is understood that the money the Commonwealth promises to spend if a community agrees to a 99-year lease will be the

Aboriginal people's own trust money taken from the Aboriginal Benefit Account (ABA).

That really is a *smoke and mirrors* promise.

In fact, the time has come, with the 40th anniversary of the Land Rights Act only two years away, for the Land Rights Act and the ABA to be put completely in Aboriginal hands with authority and accountability under common and statute law like all other citizens and corporations.

Get rid of the discrimination of Ministerial and bureaucratic control over Aboriginal lands and money paid for the exploitation of those lands.

Only in that way will the Northern Territory Aboriginal people, the Traditional Owners of their historic lands, and the communities which live on them, have some hope of stopping the Commonwealth constantly altering the Land Rights Act, eating away at the protections originally designed in the Act to prevent exploitation and alienation.

The Commonwealth needs to take a step back from present policy in the Northern Territory.

Governments of all political colours should start treating Aboriginal people, their lives and their lands with dignity and respect for the capacity to know what they want for their own futures.

Land Councils, Traditional Owners and communities need to come together to protect the legacy of the Land Rights Act, stand firm under their own leadership, and decide for themselves the way forward.

### Another Point of View by Noel Pearson



**“ it's got to be symbolic as well as substantive and practical and real ”**

Indigenous leader Noel Pearson has expressed his support for a separate declaration of recognition as a symbolic statement to run alongside any amendments to the Australian Constitution to recognise Indigenous Australians.

One of the architects of recognising Indigenous Australians in the Constitution is making a dramatic new proposal.

Noel Pearson is asking for less controversial changes to Australia's founding document and a new "Statement of Recognition" written by the people to complement the Constitution.

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## TIME TO FIX A SILENCE AT THE HEART OF AUSTRALIA'S CONSTITUTION

“Recognition has to have two parts, it’s got to be symbolic as well as substantive and practical and real,” Mr Pearson told NITV News at the launch of the book *The Australian Declaration of Recognition: Capturing the Nation’s Aspirations by Recognising Indigenous Australians* by lawyers and constitutional conservatives Damien Freeman and Julian Leaser.

Freeman and Leaser propose that Australia recognise *Australia’s First Peoples* in the form of a declaration, which has no legal effects.

Pearson says a recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution would inevitably be constrained by the lawyers.

“Now the problem which Freeman and Leaser argue, is when you try and put the poetry in the Constitution, you then get all the lawyers involved and they’re chopping the whole thing down, ‘You can’t use that word’ because it might be interpreted like this and so on, but you end up with a very miserable recognition”.

But he says a separate declaration, acknowledging the history, heritage and contribution of Indigenous people, could be Australia’s version of the Gettysburg Address. The Gettysburg Address was delivered by US President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 early in the American civil war.

“I’ve come to understand this issue of how a poetic and symbolic recognition outside of the Constitution can in fact be much more generous and handsome than the lawyers’ approach of putting two or three sentences in a preamble to the Constitution, because everyone is worrying about the legal meaning of each and every word.”

But he says the declaration could only work as part of a package.

“The important message is that this Declaration can only ever be one part of the package. It won’t float by itself. No one will simply accept simply a poetic declaration sitting outside of the Constitution,” Mr Pearson said. “It has to work hand in glove with substantive reforms within the constitution as well.”

“I believe this declaration can be the Gettysburg Address for Australia where any Australian child will be able to recite the words,” he said.

“It will have moral and spiritual meaning for every young Australian in the future and will just become such an integral part of our national fabric.”

Mr Pearson has been a member of *The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* since its formation in 2010.

Andrea Booth and Myles Morgan  
NITV News, 13 Apr 2015



## Stolen Wages breakthrough as Queensland Labor party moves to set up fund

The Queensland Government has committed to paying outstanding *Stolen Wages*<sup>7</sup> to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander claimants from a \$21 million compensation fund it will create. Around 7500 Indigenous Queenslanders still have *Stolen Wages* money owing from when they worked as virtual slaves.

Some have been paid a part of their *Stolen Wages* claims but all are now elderly and many frail, fearing they may die before the remainder is forthcoming. Before the recent State Election Labor candidates pledged to pay the money.

On April 16, the *Koori Mail* received a message from Curtis Pitt, Queensland Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, promising to honour their pre-election commitment.

<sup>7</sup> From the late 1800s until the 1970s Aboriginal workers were for all intents and purposes enslaved. They were denied access to their wages which in many cases were simply *stolen* by corrupt officials and employers. It locked them into a cycle of poverty. Governments and churches have made it difficult to access records and there is a general reluctance to pay the monies withheld.



## New AIATSIS website

[www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au)



take a look at the new online exhibitions and our new explore section



This new site presents AIATSIS’ collection, research and organization in a fresh, clear and engaging way, and has been primarily designed as Australia’s authoritative gateway to Indigenous Australia. It fills a gaping hole in the government online (and traditional information) environment by providing a comprehensive platform upon which to build and share knowledge with the wider Australian population about the history, diversity, hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Australians, and indeed the hopes and aspirations of many Australians from all backgrounds.

If you have any feedback or comments, please don’t hesitate to contact us online.

Jeana Bajic

EO – Council & Membership Executive



## Meet the Aboriginal unit Prince Harry will train with in Australia

In a remote stretch of bushland in outback Australia, a force of camouflaged Aboriginal soldiers rely on their unique hunting and survival skills as they keep watch over a vast swath of territory that includes harsh desert, rugged coastline and crocodile-infested marshes.

Entrusted with surveillance and reconnaissance across much of the nation's northern border, the mostly Aboriginal troops of Norforce, or the North-West Mobile Force, conduct patrols across a 700,000 square-mile section of northern Australia that marks the largest area of operations of any military unit in the world.

This unit, based in the northern city of Darwin, will soon be joined by its latest recruit, Prince Harry, who is expected to go on patrols with the force in the coming weeks. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has revealed that the patrols will form part of the prince's month-long secondment with the nation's military.

Officials hope the engagement with Norforce will provide a rare opportunity for the 30-year-old to confront the vastness of the Australian continent and to experience the cultural depth and variety of local Aboriginal peoples.

"It will help him [Prince Harry] to understand Australia," Peter Leahy, a former head of the Australian army, told *The Telegraph*. "It will help him to understand the Aboriginal people and their hopes and aspirations.

He has served in Afghanistan and areas that are remote, but he won't have been on the ground travelling across such huge areas in the way he will be able to up there."

Unlike the rest of the military, which has few Aboriginal soldiers, about 60 per cent of Norforce's troops are Aboriginal, and was formed in 1981 to help protect Australia's northern borders.

The force, made up of about 640 regular soldiers and reservists, covers some 100 Aboriginal language groups and some of its soldiers only speak English as a third or fourth tongue. During peacetime, much of its work is aimed at detecting illegal fishermen and drug runners and preventing entry along the isolated coastline by unauthorised boats or migrants.

The force conducts remote armed patrols which can last several weeks and the troops often supplement their rations with food found in the bush, sometimes using spear to hunt wild animals and fish.

Mr Leahy, a retired lieutenant general, now a professor at the University of Canberra, said Prince Harry is likely to go on bush patrols with Norforce and will learn "how the army is able to make connections with Aboriginal

communities and individual Aborigines".

"He will see Aboriginal soldiers in a leadership role and understand the skills they bring and learn some of the hunting and tracking skills they have, which is one of the attributes that make them such great soldiers," he said.

"Norforce is of great value for the army and it also allows us to have closer ties to the Aboriginal communities and what is happening in the north." The unit, which operates across the Northern Territory and the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, is one of three surveillance units which act as Australia's "eyes and ears" of the north.

It arose from a force known as the *nackeroos*, which was formed to protect the northern border against the Japanese in World War II. The *nackeroos* operated mainly on horseback and were commanded by Major William Stanner, an Australian-born, London-educated

anthropologist who studied Aboriginal culture and realised the crucial role that local Aborigines could play in reconnaissance.

Norforce is recognised as a vital way for the military to not only draw on Aboriginal expertise but to foster ties with local communities and help to promote Aboriginal employment and leadership.

Mr Leahy said the Aboriginal soldiers "know their land" and can spot subtle differences in the terrain indicating intrusions or



L/Cpl Shaun Evans and a Norforce colleague on exercise Gunn Pt, east of Darwin. Photo: Nick Squires

the presence of strangers.

"We know the links that Aborigines have with their land and the sense of purpose it gives them," he said.

"Who better to monitor what is happening and conduct surveillance and reconnaissance than those who know the land? They are able to live off the land and understand what happens to it and detect any changes and to report back if anything is untoward." Prince Harry is set to complete a month of service in Australia before ending his active military service in June.

His Australian itinerary was released this week by the ADF which said the secondment would be engaging, challenging and *authentic*.

According to a statement on the itinerary, Captain Wales, as he is known in the Armed Forces, will live and train alongside Australian colleagues and take part in training exercises with Australia's elite SAS forces, as well as flight simulation and aviation activities, pack marches and joint fire exercises.

Jonathan Pearlman, *The Telegraph* 6 April 6 2015





# WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT CLOSING REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES?



If you haven't been part of them, you've most likely at least heard of the recent protests against the closure of remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia.

You may have seen #SOSBlakAustralia trending on Facebook last week. Or maybe you follow Hugh Jackman on Instagram.

Maybe you heard Tony Abbott say the government couldn't subsidise *lifestyle choices* and the collective horrified gasp that followed. But chances are you're asking — what the hell is going on? Today, we're here to explain.

## Why is the government closing Aboriginal communities?

The federal government ceased funding for remote communities in WA, leading to the state planning to close some small towns.

Last year, the Federal government announced it would stop funding essential services in remote Australian communities – essentially transferring this responsibility to the states.

Last week, WA Premier Colin Barnett said his state would have to close between 100 to 150 Indigenous communities, as a result.

Previously, the Federal government provided funding for two thirds of WA's remote Aboriginal communities, and without that support, the state claims it cannot afford to maintain funding on its own.

The WA government believes the closure of communities is for the safety of the children who reside there.

In Parliament, Premier Barnett said "They [the smaller remote communities] are not viable and the social outcomes, the abuse and neglect of young children, is a disgrace to this state ... this is the biggest social issue this state faces. Those communities, 273 of them, are not sustainable into the future. They cannot look anyone in the face and guarantee the safety of little boys and girls."

## What did Tony Abbott say that ticked everybody off?

Tony Abbott said living in remote communities is a *lifestyle choice*.

Upon the WA Premier's announcement, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said "What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices."

The *lifestyle choice* he was referring to, is the *choice* to live in a remote area.

## The 7 "lifestyle choices" the government is happy to pay for

Very few people, including members of Abbott's ministry, have seconded this idea that living in a remote community is a *lifestyle choice*.

Even the PM's own regular adviser on indigenous issues, Warren Mundine, was not happy with the Prime Minister's comments, stating "that is a complete misconception of what it is and he's wrong in that regard. It is not about a lifestyle, it is not like retiring and moving for a sea change.

It is about thousands of years' connection, their religious beliefs and the essence of who they are."

## What's wrong with closing down remote communities?

Labor's Indigenous Affairs spokesperson, Ben Wyatt, said "There are serious concerns from both the communities and the shires about where people will go if the communities are shut down. They will move to places like Broome, Kununurra and Fitzroy Crossing – places that are not equipped with adequate investment in housing and services to cope."

"The forced removal of people from lands also draws depressing parallels to the paternalistic habits of white Australians and their invasion of Australia, the takeover of land, the Stolen Generations... need I go on?" – Noel Pearson.

Apart from the injustice that is the cruel forced removal of people from their homes – sadly, something Australia has been doing to its Indigenous people for generations – there are also economic and social repercussions of this displacement.

Closing remote communities will put a strain on the towns where these populations will be *re-settled* – housing will need to be provided and services will need to be shared.

*Continued on Page 11*



## WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT CLOSING REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES?

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Furthermore, Amnesty International believes those displaced from their homes suffer significant trauma.

The primary issue is that the move undermines a central value of Indigenous culture: connection to their land.

CEO of Aboriginal Legal Services WA David Eggington put it rather nicely when he said “I want you to stop and think about this sacred land that has been home to our people for tens of thousands of years – our land that is central to our culture.

Every gumnut, every gumtree, every grain of sand on every shore, every insect and every animal in our holy land and in memory of our people. We are part of the earth and it is part of us.”

So how does one simply *close down* a community?

Premier Barnett has admitted that his government is yet to work out the fine print. However, there is a precedent. In 2010, the WA government closed the Oombulgurri community in the Kimberley.

### According to The Guardian

First, the government closed the services. It closed the shop, so people could not buy food and essentials. It closed the clinic, so the sick and the elderly had to move, and the school, so families with children had to leave, or face having their children taken away from them. The police station was the last service to close, then eventually the electricity and water were turned off.

While most had relocated by March 2011, the several that remained were forcibly evicted and moved to Wyndham, where they were housed in *dongas* or temporary housing at a government cost of \$1.6 million.

According to Kimberley Land Council’s Acting CEO, Anthony Watson, “They were just lumped at the town site and lived on the outskirts in the marsh. We had to provide swags for them and tents to accommodate them in the meantime.”

### What is an alternative to shutting down Aboriginal communities?

This year, an entire report of alternatives was offered to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians – and nowhere did it mention removing people from their homes and relocating them to urban centres.

Instead, the *Closing the Gap* report suggested putting more, not less, funding into improving access to health services in remote communities.

The *Closing the Gap* report encouraged improving health services in remote Australian communities.

Another common suggestion is to uncover new policy solutions through proper engagement with Indigenous people to involve them in the policy decisions that will directly affect them. (One NT cabinet minister suggests the Prime Minister needs *cross cultural training* in order to correct his misconceptions about what it means to live in a remote community.)

Aboriginal elders are recommending a program of cultural rejuvenation – returning Indigenous peoples to their traditional lands in order to reconnect them with

stolen heritage that has lead to somewhat of an identity crisis.

Amnesty International advocates for the government to focus on *prevention rather than punishment*, with initiatives such as this justice reinvestment program.

Amnesty International protests the closure of Indigenous communities, and proposes a tactic of *prevention not punishment*.

A 2012 report, *Fixing the Hole in Australia’s Heartland*, recommends an Outback Commission to better attend to the needs of remote Australians.

Poor life expectancy rates, and health and education standards, high rates of incarceration, alcohol and drug abuse, are just a few of the issues plaguing Australia’s Indigenous population – and many, many solutions to address these problems have been offered.

Regardless of the alternative, recent protests would indicate that many people believe ceasing funding to essential services in remote areas and closing communities is not the answer.

### What is #SOSBlakAustralia?

SOS Blak Australia is a non-government affiliated support organisation to raise awareness of and support remote Indigenous communities.

According to their website, “The purpose of this site is to gain an understanding of what the communities need in order to thrive and what support is available to them in order to achieve this from the global community. We all have skills, we all matter and we are all in this together.”

It aims to consult with the threatened communities and discern the risks at stake.

The *hashtag* gained momentum on social media last week as a statement of support for Indigenous Australians, in protest of remote community closures.

*RebeccaMitchell@BeckKateMitch 24 March 2015*

[Read more at <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/closure-of-aboriginal-communities/#s7zAUZQEgQo7LE Cf.99>](http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/closure-of-aboriginal-communities/#s7zAUZQEgQo7LE Cf.99)

*Continued from Page 1*

When Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio Curti was tasered to death by NSW police in 2012, the Indigenous Social Justice Association (ISJA) that Ray founded in 1997 took up his cause. While Labor and Liberal governments tortured refugees, Ray organised ceremonies to present Aboriginal passports to them.

Most recently, Ray had thrown himself into the campaign against the closure of remote Aboriginal communities, only missing his place as a speaker at the last big rally on 10 April because he was hospitalised with pneumonia.

Condolences to Ray’s family, friends and comrades. He leaves a huge gap for us all.

*Diane Fieldes, Redflag Newspaper 24 April 2015*

More article about Ray’s death:  
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/58833>





**Monday May 11**  
7.30pm - 9.30pm

**ASG – MWP Information Night**  
**Screening the documentary BLACK MAN'S HOUSES**  
Winner Best Australian Film at the Melbourne Film Festival  
More than a hundred years after the Tasmanian Aboriginals were declared extinct, this documentary tells the story of black survival.  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale.  
Free Event – All Welcome

**Sunday May 24**  
3pm start

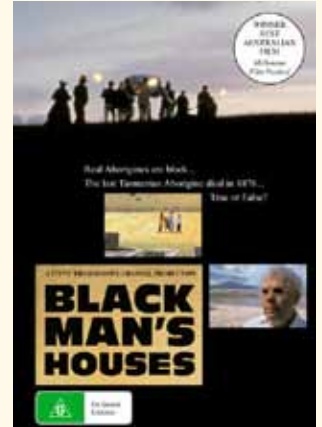
**ASG Remembrance Walk**  
**Commemorates National Sorry Day 2015**  
A Welcome to Country will be given, and brief talk, then a silent walk – a journey of healing to remember Stolen Generations, the children and their families.  
Meet at the Scout Hall Bilarong Reserve, Wakehurst Parkway Narrabeen.  
Free Event includes BBQ and refreshments, Indigenous entertainment, Kids activities and more– All Welcome. More details see page 3

**Sunday May 31**  
5pm - 7.30pm

**Singing Up Country**  
An evening of connecting to country and identity using song, language, dance and sharing supper over a campfire.  
Featuring performers: Dean Bell, Michael Birk, Corey Kirk and Bangali, Haley and James McAulie, Gerard McMinn and Dancers, Johnny Nicol, Nick Paton with MC Graham Merrit.  
St Anthony in the Fields Church, 46 Myoora Rd, Terrey Hills.  
Entry: Waged \$15; Unwaged, Students, Pensioners by donation

**Monday July 13**  
7.30pm start

**ASG – MWP Information Night – All ASG Members welcome**  
**NAIDOC: We All Stand on Sacred Ground:**  
**Learn, Respect and Celebrate**  
This is a free night including light supper.  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale.



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



**THANKS for renewing your membership!**

If your \$25 renewal and optional donation has slipped your mind please direct deposit to:

ASGMWP Commonwealth Bank Dee Why  
BSB: 062 155 Acc: 00 906 332

Please use your NAME as the reference in the transfer.

Send an email to [asgmwp.net](http://asgmwp.net) direct from your bank when transferring (Banks now have this facility on the bottom of your transfer) and a receipt will be emailed to your current email address.

**Alternatively post your cheque to:**  
P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

**With your contribution we can make a difference to Aboriginal Education**

*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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