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# Elimatta

Autumn 2016

## Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

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

### RACISM IS DESTROYING THE AUSTRALIAN DREAM

**The veteran journalist and Wiradjuri man, Stan Grant, has told a Sydney audience that racism is “at the heart of the Australian dream,” as he delivered a sobering speech about the impact of colonisation and discrimination on Indigenous people and their ancestors.**

It has provoked a powerful reaction from Australians, going viral on Facebook with 850,000 views and 28,000 shares, and had been watched more than 50,000 times on YouTube.

As part of the IQ2 debate series held by the Ethics Centre, Grant joined immigration lawyer Pallavi Sinha, Herald Sun columnist Rita Panahi and Australian actor Jack Thompson to argue for or against the topic “Racism is destroying the Australian dream”. The event was held last year, but the Ethics Centre only released the video online on Friday.

#### Stan Grant’s speech in full

In his opening address, Grant, who is also Guardian Australia’s Indigenous affairs editor, argued that racism was at “the foundation of the Australian dream”.

“The Australian dream,” Grant said. “We sing of it and we recite it in verse; ‘Australians all let us rejoice for we are young and free’.

“My people die young in this country. We die 10 years younger than the average Australian, and we are far from free. We are fewer than 3% of the Australian population and yet we are 25% – one quarter – of those Australians locked up in our prisons. And if you’re a juvenile it is worse, it is 50%. An Indigenous child is more likely to be locked up in prison than they are to finish high school.”

He spoke of his Indigenous ancestors, including his grandmother and great-grandmother, who were among those institutionalised in missions, where Indigenous people were forced into unpaid labour and abused.

He referenced the “war of extermination” against his ancestors.

“I love a sunburned country, a land of sweeping plains, of rugged mountain ranges,” Grant said, referencing the famous poem, *My Country*, by the Australian writer Dorothea Mackellar.

“It reminds me that my people were killed on those plains. We were shot on those plains, diseases ravaged us on those plains.

“Our rights were extinguished because we were not here according to British law, and when British people looked at us, they saw something subhuman. We were fly-blown, Stone-Age savages, and that was the language that was used. Captain Arthur Phillip, a man of enlightenment ... was sending out raiding parties

with the instruction; ‘bring back the severed heads of the black trouble-makers’.

“By 1901 when we became a nation, we were nowhere, we were not in the constitution. Save for race provisions which allowed for laws to be made which would take our children that would invade our privacy, that would tell us who we could marry and where we could live. The Australian dream.”

The media commentator and writer, Mike Carlton, described Grant’s address as Australia’s “Martin Luther King moment”.

Grant won a prestigious Walkley Award for journalism in December for his columns covering Indigenous affairs for Guardian Australia.

Guardian Australia Indigenous affairs editor tells debate audience racism ‘is at the heart of the Australian dream’, provoking a powerful reaction online.

Melissa Davey



## INDIGENOUS PHD GRADUATE BLENDS TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND MODERN SCIENCE

**Thanks to knowledge from his elders, La Perouse community's first indigenous PhD graduate in microbiology, Dr Shane Ingrey, is using modern science to shine a spotlight on the medicinal potential of local plants.**

The Dharawal people of southern Sydney have known about the medicinal benefits of the local flora for millennia, but thanks to knowledge passed down the generations, the local community's first indigenous PhD graduate in microbiology is using modern science to shine a new spotlight on the plants' potential.

Dr Shane Ingrey has become the fourth Indigenous student to graduate from UNSW with a PhD in 2015, receiving his doctorate in microbiology during a ceremony on the Kensington campus last week.

As he told *The Australian* newspaper, his study, which put traditional knowledge under the blowtorch of modern microbiology, has found a scientific explanation for some of the plants' medicinal qualities — and could yield new treatments for antibiotic-resistant bacteria, viral infections or even cancer.

"When I was talking to my grandmother about these plants, she would say which ones to use and which ones not to use. She'd say: 'Use these plants for your study but keep these other ones to yourself'".

Dr Ingrey isolated endophytes — bacteria and fungi that live in plant tissue — and screened their DNA for genes that produce antibiotic proteins.

When the tests came back positive, he cultivated the natural products of these organisms and tested them again for antibacterial and antifungal activity.

The project identified five natural substances already known to have antibiotic qualities, as well as a previously unknown polyketide — a compound produced by the same class of enzymes that generates many modern pharmaceuticals and insecticides.

Transforming traditional knowledge into modern drugs is nothing new. Youyou Tu, co-winner of this year's Nobel prize for medicine, developed malaria therapies from herbal traditions rooted in the discoveries of a 4th-century Chinese alchemist.

But unlike Chinese traditions, Aboriginal medicinal insights were never written down.

"Our knowledge was all passed down by word of mouth," Dr Ingrey says.

That knowledge was passed down from Dr Ingrey's great-grandmother who was born in an Aboriginal camp on La Perouse beach in the late 1800s.

"Most of the stuff for the study came from my grandmother. When I was talking to her about these



plants, she would say which ones to use and which ones not to use. The plants were used for infected wounds, sore throats, upset stomachs, fungal infections. She'd say: 'Use these plants for your study but keep these other ones to yourself'," he says.

Dr Ingrey plans to apply for an Australian Research Council grant to continue the research.

In the meantime he teaches biology and maths to indigenous years 11 and 12 students at nearby Matraville Sports High School.

Some of them think they don't have the talent to make it to uni, which couldn't be further from the truth. They just need the right support.

Dr Ingrey was nurtured through UNSW's Nura Gili program, a pathway scheme that embraces indigenous knowledge and culture.

"We are very proud of Dr Ingrey's achievements, particularly given the nature of his PhD research topic," says Dr Reuben Bolt, Acting Director and Academic Coordinator at UNSW's Nura Gili Indigenous Programs Unit. The knowledge of traditional medicine passed down from his elders played a significant in shaping the science for the study. Dr Ingrey's research will no doubt help raise awareness about the significance and wisdom of Indigenous knowledge, and the ways in which it can further assist in the development of new science."

*Dan Wheelahan, 18 November 2015*

## CLOSING THE GAP between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health



Newly graduated student Gningla Taylor recently graduated with a Bachelor of Nursing from the University of Notre Dame's Fremantle Campus. After a number of clinical placements in remote parts of Australia, she is ready to embark on her nursing career.



## AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

### Leonora Aboriginal leader receives award for child health and language work

An Aboriginal leader from Leonora has received a Member of the Order of Australia for her work in child ear health and language preservation.

Geraldine Hogarth is a Kuwarra Pini Tjalkatarra woman and has lived and worked around the northern Goldfields town her whole life.

When she started her career working in community health, she immediately saw the connection between hearing, learning and culture.

“I think with learning you have to have good hearing to learn,” Ms Hogarth said.



Geraldine Hogarth (left) and her mother Luxie

She said now more than ever Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people needed to be able to listen and learn from one another, so they could live in what she saw as a new, bicultural Australia.

With her mother Luxie Hogarth and other members of her family, Ms Hogarth has also spent many years working with her community and a linguist to preserve their language.

“We call it Kuwarra or old Darlot language, and what we’re doing is talking and trying to teach our kids that, not only Aboriginal people, but all nationalities, that that’s your foundation to go on and learn,” she said.

But Ms Hogarth is also determined not to have the focus of the award settle on her.

“I don’t know what this award means, but I’m grateful to the person that nominated me. I think it will let children and young people know that if you want something and you want to have a job and you love something, you can do it no matter who you are.”

Ms Hogarth said people simply needed support and encouragement to allow their own strengths and skills to shine. “Others in the community all have their own special talents. They just need people to find that and nurture it, because that’s what I believe happened to me.”

Nathan Morris, ABC Goldfields



### Allgrid’s Indigenous Australian 10kWh battery system set to launch – cheaper than Tesla

Allgrid’s core mission is based on the fundamental Aboriginal approach of stewardship of the earth and its resources, and this means a move away from a reliance on fossil fuels for energy. Oh, and it offers a 10kWh solar energy storage system costing 30 per cent less than the *Tesla Powerwall*.

AllGrid Energy’s \$11,999 *WattGrid* system allows households to store power produced by their solar panels during the day for use in the evening. In combination with a 3kw solar panel array the *WattGrid* can offer an average of 12kwh per day, or half of the average daily household average, but it can be combined with an array of up to 7kw to provide even more.

*WattGrid* works by utilising all stored energy before it takes from the grid, but with a larger solar array this may not even be necessary.

AllGrid is expected to start deliveries of the *WattGrid* in the next two to three months.

The *PortaGrid* is another product being produced by AllGrid, and as the name suggests it is a portable solar power solution. Designed for emergencies or remote locations off the grid, it comes with the lot — panels, inverter and battery storage.

National Parks are currently looking at the *PortaGrid* as a replacement for its diesel generators.

Commercial-scale systems that can power an entire remote Aboriginal community are also on the horizon.

“This would create energy wealth and energy autonomy for those remote Aboriginal communities,” A spokesperson from AllGrid said.

AllGrid manufactures its products out of Brisbane with a predominately Aboriginal workforce.

A joint effort between the Indigenous owned and operated electrical contracting firm DICE Australia and AllGrid (which is an accredited Indigenous corporation), the company has committed to directing a percentage of all company profits into creating and supporting training and employment programs for Indigenous Australian young people.



The *PortaGrid* system



## ABORIGINAL PEOPLE – HOW TO MISUNDERSTAND THEIR SCIENCE

**Just one generation ago Australian school kids were taught that Aboriginal people couldn't count beyond five, wandered the desert scavenging for food, had no civilisation, couldn't navigate and peacefully acquiesced when Western Civilisation rescued them in 1788.**

### How did we get it so wrong?

Australian historian Bill Gammage and others have shown that for many years land was carefully managed by Aboriginal people to maximise productivity. This resulted in fantastically fertile soils, now exploited and almost destroyed by intensive agriculture.

In some cases, Aboriginal people had sophisticated number systems, knew bush medicine, and navigated using stars and oral maps to support flourishing trade routes across the country.

They mounted fierce resistance to the British invaders, and sometimes won significant military victories such as the raids by Aboriginal warrior Pemulwuy.

Only now are we starting to understand Aboriginal intellectual and scientific achievements.

The Yolngu people, in north eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, long recognised how the tides are linked to the phases of the moon.

Back in the early 17th century, Italian scientist Galileo Galilei was still proclaiming, incorrectly, that the moon had nothing to do with tides.

Some Aboriginal people had figured out how eclipses work, and knew how the planets moved differently from the stars. They used this knowledge to regulate the cycles of travel from one place to another, maximising the availability of seasonal foods.

### Why are we only finding this out now?

We owe much of our knowledge about pre-European contact Aboriginal culture to the great anthropologists of the 20th century. Their massive tomes tell us much about Aboriginal art, songs and spirituality, but are strangely silent about intellectual achievements.

They say very little about Aboriginal understanding of how the world works, or how they navigated.

In anthropologist Adolphus Elkin's 1938 book *The Australian Aborigines: How to understand them* he appears to have heard at least one song line (an oral map) without noting its significance.

*[...] its cycle of the hero's experiences as he journeyed from the north coast south and then back again north [...] now in that country, then in another place, and so on, ever coming nearer until at last it was just where we were making the recording.*

How could these giants of anthropology not recognise the significance of what they had been told?

The answer dawned on me when I gave a talk on Aboriginal navigation at the National Library of Australia, and posed this same question to the audience.

Afterwards, one of Elkin's PhD students told me that Elkin worked within fixed ideas about what constituted Aboriginal culture. I realised she was describing what the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn referred to when he coined the term "paradigm".

### The paradigm problem

According to Kuhn, all of us (even scientists and anthropologists) are fallible. We grow up with a paradigm (such as "Aboriginal culture is primitive") which we accept as true. Anything that doesn't fit into that paradigm is dismissed as irrelevant or aberrant.

Only 200 years ago, people discussed whether

Aboriginal people were "sub-human". Ideas change slowly, and the underlying message lingers on, long after it has been falsified.

As late as 1923 Aboriginal Australians were described as "a very primitive race of people".

*Continued on Page 5*



*Australian aborigines knew more about tides than Galileo Galilei  
Iryna1 / Shutterstock.com*

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## ABORIGINAL PEOPLE – HOW TO MISUNDERSTAND THEIR SCIENCE

### Not so primitive

The prevailing paradigm in Elkin's time was that Aboriginal culture was primitive, and Aboriginal people couldn't possibly say anything useful about how to manage the land, or how to navigate.

So an anthropologist might study the Aboriginal people as objects, just as a biologist might study insects under a microscope, but would learn nothing from Aboriginal people themselves.

Even now, the paradigm lives on. In my experience, well-educated white Australians, trying so hard to be politically correct, often still seem to find it difficult to escape their childhood image of "primitive" Aboriginal people.

*Aboriginal culture is more than just cave painting and artwork.*  
Image: Kitch Bain

We must overcome the intellectual inertia that keeps us in that old paradigm, stopping us from recognising the enormous contribution that Aboriginal culture can make to our understanding of the world, and to our attempts to manage it.

As Thomas Kuhn said:

*[...] when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them.*

### Still to learn

In recent years, it has become clear that traditional Aboriginal people knew a great deal about the sky, knew the cycles of movements of the stars and the complex motions of the sun, moon and planets.

There is even found a sort of "Aboriginal Stonehenge" that points to the sunset on midsummer's day and midwinter's day. And I suspect that this is only the tip of the iceberg of Aboriginal astronomy.

So in the debate about whether our schools should include Aboriginal perspectives in their lessons, I argue that kids studying science today could also learn much from the way that pre-contact Aboriginal people used observation to build a picture of the world around them.

This "ethno-science" is similar to modern science in many ways, but is couched in appropriate cultural terms, without expensive telescopes and particle accelerators.

So if you want to learn about the essence of how science works, how people learn to solve practical problems, the answer may be clearer in an Aboriginal community than in a high-tech laboratory.

Ray Norris

Chief Research Scientist, CSIRO Astronomy & Space Science, & Adjunct Prof., Dept of Indigenous Studies (Warawara), Macquarie Uni, CSIRO

Disclosure statement: Ray Norris does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

## AUSTRALIA'S 20,000-YEAR- OLD HUMAN FOOTPRINTS



About 20,000 years ago, five human hunters sprinted across the soft clay on the edge of a wetland in what is now New South Wales, Australia.

Others also wandered across the muddy landscape, including a family of five, a small child, and a one-legged man who hopped without a crutch.

These early Aboriginal ancestors have long since vanished. But a record of their passage can be seen today in Mungo National Park, about 315 kilometres from Broken Hill.

Woven among the sand dunes of the now arid Willandra Lakes World Heritage area are some 700 fossil footprints, 400 of them grouped in a set of 23 tracks.

First spotted in 2003 by a young Mutthi Mutthi Aboriginal woman named Mary Pappen, Jr., the tracks are the oldest fossil human footprints ever found in Australia and the largest collection of such prints in the world.

### "Still Here"

Mary Pappen, Sr., a Mutthi Mutthi tribal elder and Pappen Jr.'s mother, says the age of the footprints highlights just how clever and adaptable Aboriginal ancestors were.

"We did not die 60,000 years ago. We didn't dry up and die away 26,000 years ago when the lakes were last full," she said.

"We are a people that nurtured and looked after our landscape and walked across it, and we are still here today."

### Olympic Sprinter

Steve Webb, a biological archaeologist with Bond University in Queensland has yielded some intriguing conclusions, particularly for the prints left by a group he calls the Five Hunters.

The archaeologist used data from 17,000-year-old human remains excavated nearby and details from the tracks themselves, such as foot size and stride length.

The bones suggest the people were tall, in good health, and very athletic.

What's more, Webb calculates that one hunter was running at 37 kilometres an hour, or as fast as an Olympic sprinter.

Sean Markey



# AUSTRALIA'S STONEHENGE: the History of an Ancient Stone Arrangement 40 kilometres from Mullumbimby



According to Frederic Slater, who was the President of the Australian Archaeological and Education Research Society, an Original stone arrangement he and a colleague were investigating throughout 1939 is “the Stonehenge of Australia.” Assumed to be lost for the last 63 years, this impressive and complex sandstone arrangement is much more than a collection of rocks, signs and symbols positioned on a mound. According to Slater, “the mound is one of the oldest; I should say the oldest, forms of temples in the world, and dates back to the... advent of first man.”

Not only was the mound the first temple, the narrative and wisdom it chronicles is as profound as it is sublime, so much so that Slater claimed it formed “the basis of all knowledge, all science, all history and all forms of writing.”

These are extremely bold claims to make; to suggest that the very first language was spoken and recorded in stone in Australia carries with it many inconvenient historical implications. Modern humanity is assumed to have had its genesis in Africa. We are told a few restless inquisitive souls set foot outside African soil some 60,000 years ago and spread their culture and genes. In this theoretical construct, there is no room for Australia to be anything other than an afterthought and merely an African colony peopled by mariners who surely spoke before setting sail to Australia.

## **Bulldozing Australia's History**

Despite the unpopular stance advocated by Slater, his research was meticulous and the methodology sound. More to the point, such was the strength of the case he made on behalf of this arrangement being the First Language, in 1940 representatives of the Australian Government approached the farmer and threatened to confiscate his land because of these rocks. The landholder under threat was openly sympathetic to the archaeology being done, but realised while the stones stood he would lose his land, income and livelihood.

Within days of the threat by Government, the stones were reluctantly bulldozed and the land was left alone. Slater had lost his proof and not another supporting public statement was made. The whole unpleasant episode was expunged from the public arena and Slater's correspondence was apparently lost or destroyed.

And so this historical vacuum remained... until about three months ago when local teacher Richard Patterson was rummaging through some discarded files in the back room of the local Historical Society. Amongst the accumulation of papers and documents were Slater's letters to his on-field colleague. Soon after, Richard contacted our research team, and so the unraveling began.

## **Rudimentary Language?**

The First Sacred Language that Slater claimed to have deciphered is very complex, multi-layered and at his last count of “28,000 words,” far more diverse and complicated than what could be assumed in relation to the very first language spoken on Earth. We are of the belief this complex language spread throughout most of the coastal regions of Australia unified under Southern Law.

While historical and linguistic texts propose that the first tongue was crude and limited to the most basic emotions and objects, which then slowly increased in number and sophistication, here a symbol can have four different meanings. This formalised method of communication was made up of numbers, hand signs, stone arrangements, elements, trees, letter sounds, animal shapes, etc. The intricate combination of all manner of apparently unrelated themes and disciplines creating a seamless blend into one formal script, is in contradiction to the expected rudimentary linguistic starting point, and calls into question many assumptions relating to human ascension and development.

Leaving aside that reports from the Original Elders of Lore are in accord with the integrity of Slater's claims, the logistics, technology and labour involved in creating this mound was unparalleled in this country... and deserving of further archaeology on site. By our estimation, the hundreds of tonnes of sand, clay and sandstone that make up one mound deposited on top of this flat swampy plain is not part of the local geology. According to Slater and his co-worker, the closest deposit of sandstone was more than 20 kilometers (12 miles) away. The problem is, until the arrival of British settlers in Australia, no-one in this country had a wheel, pulley, wheelbarrow or metal chisel to cut and move the rocks 20 kilometres, and nor is there any other example in Australia of a mound or stone arrangement weighing over a tonne.

Quite simply, this Original construction doesn't fit into any academic book or curriculum.

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## **AUSTRALIA'S STONEHENGE: the History of an Ancient Stone Arrangement 40 kilometres from Mullumbimby**

### **The Mystery of Life**

What only unsettles the academic climate further is the content of the narrative contained within this stone arrangement called "The Mystery of Life." The opening placement of stones on the southern edge, which looks very much like a medicine wheel, was interpreted by Slater to read as "guided by truth, man came to Earth through darkness from light of life that shines far off." This extra-terrestrial theme of somebody or being coming to this planet from "far off" is repeated throughout these constructions, extolling that the "truth was brought out on wings to Earth" and "the Divine Light from afar to the Earth brings the soul to man."

It is a site without parallel on the east coast of Australia at so many levels. The means of construction, significance, content, sacredness and real possibility that this arrangement chronicles the first time modern humans devised a formal means of expressing words and thoughts, are but some of issues that need to be investigated.

In what only adds to the intrigue, Slater is not only adamant that the ancient Egyptians were not only present (and most probably assisting in the transport of sandstone and fill) but they came in homage and reverence. He asserted that "there is no mistaking the fact that the Aborigines... gave not only to the Egyptians their knowledge and their foundation of hieroglyphics and their philosophy, but formulated the basis of all knowledge in the beginning, now and to come."

### **Initial Observations**

The archaeology conducted on site is still in the process of being compiled and analysed, however a few simple observations can be already offered. The chances are extremely high that this stone arrangement is an actual account of the First Sacred Language and conveys both historical details and a prophecy of times soon to come. The first mound is definitely artificial, its shape is too symmetrical, the placement on a flat swampy plain is dramatically at odds with the surrounding topography, and the sand, clay and sandstone that makes up this construction is in contradiction with its immediate geology. Throw into this mix confirmation from Original Elders and Custodians versed in Original Lore and history that this is one of, if not the, most sacred site in Australia, and we begin to see why Slater was so adamant that this is "Australia's Stonehenge."

Frederic Slater was an Egyptologist. He was the President of the Australian Archaeological Research and Education Society. Australian Government officials approached the landholder in 1940 and threatened to confiscate their freehold land simply because of these standing stones. These are facts. Slater's opinions and our research of them is obviously up for debate

and alternative explanations. But with the bounty of archaeology found on site and Elders confirming Slater's translation, this stone arrangement is potentially the most sacred archaeological site in Australia.

There is no other explanation on offer.



*A pyramid capstone from the site*

### **About the authors:**

Steven Strong is an Australian-based researcher, author and former high school teacher. Together with his son Evan, his work is to explore the ancient story of the Original people, a narrative that was almost lost to aggressive European colonisation.

Andy Whiteley is a former corporate manager turned writer, editor and co-founder of Wake Up World. An advocate of peaceful (r)evolution, Andy believes we are on a necessary path (albeit bumpy) to a renewed social model grounded in love, transparency, individuality, sustainability and spirit.

*Steven Strong and Andy Whiteley  
Wake Up World*

Connect with Andy at:

[Facebook.com/JoinWakeUpWorld](https://www.facebook.com/JoinWakeUpWorld)



## ULURU PROTEST: Man who cut climbing chains a 'hero'

**Senior Aboriginal people in Central Australia are praising the actions of a man who cut a climbing chain on Uluru to try and stop tourists going up the rock, with one saying it could be an opportunity to stop the practice for good.**

A man who wished to be known only as "John" claimed responsibility for cutting climbing chains on Uluru and said he felt a close connection to the sacred site and wanted to set off debate on whether people should walk on it.

The man called up 774 ABC Melbourne and said he visited Uluru to soak up the atmosphere and was there for the 30th anniversary of the hand back of the site to the Anangu people, held on the weekend and Monday.

He said he wanted to meet with the Anangu people while he was there but did not seek permission from the traditional owners of Uluru before he went up the rock late on Sunday night and cut the climbing chains.

However, he said, since cutting the chains he had spoken to Anangu elders and they were in full support of his actions.

It was just about raising awareness about it for Aboriginal people, as it [climbing Uluru] breaks many of their laws.

On Wednesday, Central Land Council chairman David Ross praised John's actions.

"Whoever John is, God knows, but God bless him," Mr Ross said. "He has done something to I think bring attention and in order to get people to listen properly. I imagine this is something that has got people's attention and we can start dealing with things I think, well hopefully, much more seriously," he said.

Mr Ross said it may be a chance for the joint management committee of Anangu people and Parks Australia to have the chain completely removed from Uluru. It is an opportunity here and now to remove it completely or whether they put it back together again," he said. "I guess that is a decision that they need to deal with and I imagine the board of management, which is a joint board, will deal with these issues and I would hope that they get on with it quickly and bring it to a head sooner rather than later."

Parks Australia says incident could result in penalties. In a statement to the ABC, Parks Australia, who co-manage the park with traditional owners, said due to safety considerations the climbing track would remain closed for the time being.

Parks Australia also said the damage was being assessed, and options were being reviewed.

"We'll discuss the way forward with the park's board of management," the statement said.

"We're investigating the incident. There are potential breaches of Commonwealth law and a range of penalties could apply. He is a hero if you ask me"



*Uluru tour guide Keith Aitken (inset) has praised the actions of a man who cut the climbing rail on Uluru (pictured). [ABC News and Facebook (inset)]*

Keith Aitken, who is an Aboriginal elder from the Mutijulu community that is located at the base of Uluru, also welcomed the actions of John.

"He is actually a hero if you ask me. He is a hero," Mr Aitken said. "I wanted to do it myself but it meant that I would have to climb something that is sacred to Anangu people, and Anangu people are my people," he said.

John said he took bolt cutters to Uluru intending to cut the chain, and hid in bush for about four hours on Sunday evening after crowds had left.

"Once it hit about 11 o'clock at night I had all my equipment there with me and up I went. I started from the 10th pole and worked my way down. I only got four done, but it wasn't about how many I was trying to cut. It was just about raising awareness about it for Aboriginal people, as it [climbing Uluru] breaks many of their laws as well as other United Nations declarations on the rights of Indigenous people as well."

The ABC revealed on Tuesday that some of the chains were cut on Uluru in what was thought to have been a political statement.

John defended accusations he himself had climbed Uluru, to protest against others doing the same thing.

"I performed my own ceremonies if you want to call them that," he said. "I do understand Aboriginal culture, I grew up around it and with it deeply ingrained in my life. I was never going to climb to the top."

Mr Ross agreed that John's decision to climb Uluru was disrespectful to Anangu people. "I imagine people would forgive him for doing such a thing," Mr Ross said.

Aboriginal man and Uluru local Vince Forrester on Tuesday said traditional owners were aware the chains had been cut.

He said any repairs to the safety chain would require approval by Uluru's Board of Management, who could decide against it, and potentially halt climbing.

*Xavier La Canna and Lucy Carter*





# TENT EMBASSY GARDEN WILL HELP NOURISH COMMUNITIES

**Piles of wooden pallets, a wheelbarrow and potted plants hint at a welcome change that is set to take place at the Aboriginal Embassy Site on the Old Parliament House lawns.**

For three days, from January 24 to 26, a young green-thumb entrepreneur will show people how to create and set up about 30 self-watering planter boxes.

“It’s about unity as well as growing.”

Daniel Koch of GrowSPACE is happy to be running the free series of information-rich sessions and sharing his practical knowledge of sustainable urban gardening with others. He has built his business on his desire to “teach Australians how to transform any unused space”. The approach is in keeping with Canberra’s emerging trend towards an increase in communal areas and shared nature strips.

“On a day with so much history, we will unite culture, race, genders and generations through something that unites us all: Mother Nature and her life-providing plants, Mr Koch said. We are all about helping people grow.”

“This is like the Garden of Eden,” said one of the elders at the site, Uncle Chris Tomlins, adding he would be keen to sow some bush tucker seeds from Alice Springs.

Roxley Foley, the caretaker at the tent embassy, envisaged that the community garden would help to establish “a permanent presence” and bring visitors to the place. “We’ll be talking designs and layouts, according to what nature is providing,” Mr Foley said, adopting a seasonal approach to the initiative.

He described the proposed community garden as one of several steps in “the positive development” that was happening at the site. “We have been generously gifted an unlimited supply of pallets to use and are raising money to pay for the remaining materials,” Mr Koch said.



*Daniel Koch, who is setting up community gardens at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, with Uncle Chris Tomlins. 20 Jan 2015  
Photo: Rohan Thomson The Canberra Times*

He added the community garden would benefit from a three-phase composting scheme and any excess funds would be used for upkeep and maintenance.

People can contribute at:

<https://www.gofundme.com/tentembassy>

Mr Foley said the first day of the workshops will focus on pulling the pallets apart and cutting the wood as required.

Day two is devoted to building the planters and setting up the self-watering system in each box, using weed mats on top of porous stones.

The final day, January 26, will see participants painting the containers and planting the produce.

Mr Koch hoped people would stay overnight and enjoy communal meals.

“It’s about unity as well as growing,” he said. We have to share, to come together.”

*Mary Lynn Mather, 23 January 2016  
Canberra Times and Chronicle reporter*

## BUSHTOBEACH

On the weekend of 30th January South Narrabeen Surf Club hosted their 11th annual Bree to the Beach weekend. The members bring down from Brewarrina to Narrabeen 40-50 people, mostly kids, to spend the weekend at the beach, including a surf lesson from the crew at Manly Surf School.

The project, run by Jack Cannons, of Collaroy, is a reward for indigenous youngsters aged 6 to 15 years with a trip to the northern beaches if they have behaved and worked hard at school.

South Narrabeen SLSC lifesaver Andy Cross said he was not surprised how quickly the kids took to the water yesterday. “You can see them now, they’re absolutely having a ball in the water and it has been 30 minutes to 45 minutes,” he said.



*Photo courtesy Manly Daily*



# Compensation offered to underpaid Indigenous workers in Queensland a ‘slap in the face’

**Pauline Hannam says she was put to work as a child by the Queensland Government, cleaning the dormitory where she was *incarcerated* while growing up.**

The compensation now being offered for those years of unpaid labour was “*just a slap in the face*, I worked for the Government on the Aboriginal settlements, in the girls’ dormitory where I grew up, where I was *incarcerated*,” said the 69-year-old Brisbane resident, who lived in Cherbourg as a child. That’s what they said. It’s all on the records in the early 1950s, where they slaved us. I suffered since I was 10 years old, and today that’s why I suffer with ache. I can’t kneel on the floor because of my knees — they ache. I worked in the girls’ dormitory and the boys’ dormitory as a domestic and a cook. I was only getting a couple bob — well, they took our pay, the rest of the money.”

Ms Hannam is among a group of Indigenous people whose wages and savings were mostly controlled by Australian governments and agencies until the 1970s.

Those workers were either not paid any wages or paid substantially less than their counterparts, and were prevented from claiming social security benefits that other Australians received.

The Queensland Government has begun processing compensation claims for Indigenous workers who had their wages *stolen*.

Those who were underpaid or not paid at all decades ago can individually apply for thousands of dollars in state funding from a \$21 million reparations fund.

Ms Hannam said the payments on offer did not go anywhere near far enough.

“Really in my honest opinion is, it stinks, because you know all the years and this money was blatantly stolen, and all the added interest to it, it would be millions, she said. I speak on behalf of my family, as well as other friends and that. They wouldn’t be too happy with this. The *fat cat* politicians, they would be crying if somebody *stole* their wages, because I was taught, and I taught my kids, if you want anything in this world you’ve got to work for it. Nothing is free, and yet they committed a crime. *Thou shall not steal* — they should be in prison.”

## Stolen wages reparations scheme ‘a laugh’

Under Queensland’s stolen wages reparations scheme new claimants can receive up to \$9,200.

Those who have previously received some compensation, like Ms Hannam, can get a top-up payment of up to \$2,200.

Ms Hannam described that as *a joke*.

“Really, it’s a laugh — a lot of people are struggling now to bury their old, their elderly,” she said.

We wanted money for our own funeral expenses, the money that we earned, payments from that, and it’s just a slap in the face, really. Who can be buried for \$2,200? I didn’t want to be a burden to my family. My children have got kids of their own now, they’ve got their own families, their own mortgages to pay.”

North Queensland Indigenous elder David Smallwood agreed.

“Just about every one of our people will tell you the same thing, he said. It’s just a slap in the face, kick in the guts — whatever you want to call it. They *stole* money for years from our people.”

For 50 years, his father Archie Smallwood worked as a porter at a railway station in Townsville, but was barely paid any money.

“

**They can send millions of dollars overseas to help people in need overseas and they can’t help the first people here in Australia, with the right money**

David Smallwood,  
North Queensland Indigenous elder

”

“For the State Government just to turn around and give a figure like that, to a lot of our people, it doesn’t mean anything, David Smallwood said. But they think by throwing a couple of dollars here and there to our people that they’ll shut their mouths and they’re satisfied with that and whatever. They can send millions of dollars overseas to help people in need overseas, and they can’t help the first people here in Australia, with the right money.”

Maria Hatzakis

## RELATED STORIES:

- [Stolen wages taskforce aims to bring justice to Indigenous Queenslanders](#)
- [Compensation for stolen wages will fall short, relatives fear](#)
- [Gympie residents get say on Stolen Wages Reparations Scheme](#)



# SUICIDE OF NEPHEW WILL NEVER LEAVE ABORIGINAL ELDER TREVOR DONALDSON, WHO WANTS SAFE HOUSE

**Goldfields Aboriginal elder Trevor Donaldson will never be able to escape the memory of his unresponsive nephew as he tried desperately to revive him.**

It was too late - the boy had already taken his own life. "People are quite blasé about suicide until it impacts you personally," Mr Donaldson said.

"In my case I was trying to resuscitate my young nephew with CPR. When you're on your knees doing that, it haunts you for the rest of your days. Then you think - do I want that to happen to someone else? To somebody else's son, grandson, granddaughter, sister, brother? Hopefully through that tragedy we can reach out and get help for our youth, who are screaming out for assistance."

Mr Donaldson's teenage nephew was one of at least five people in the Goldfields-Esperance region who took their own lives in the two months leading up to Christmas.

In Western Australia, suicide was the third-most common cause of death in Aboriginal people in 2013, according to the latest available data.

This week the Federal Government pledged \$1 million to set up a critical response project to tackle Indigenous suicide in Western Australia.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion said the initiative would aim to better coordinate suicide services and deliver them in culturally appropriate ways.

But Mr Donaldson said he was sceptical of the project.

"I guess I was wondering whether it was a knee-jerk response to what was happening before Christmas," he said.

"All of a sudden it becomes the flavour of the month to address. It's more of a band-aid type solution."

## **Kalgoorlie-Boulder Aboriginal youth safe house needed**

Mr Donaldson, who is the Goldfields Land and Sea Council's native title cultural project manager, has proposed an Aboriginal youth safe house be established in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

"What they are suggesting [through the critical response project] seems to be targeting assistance after the tragedy," Mr Donaldson said.

"I believe what we are proposing is prevention, to help the youth before it gets to that stage. Aboriginal youth need to have a place that is safe, where family cannot access them until they have received aid. This centre will provide temporary residence during times of crisis, or when Aboriginal youth need a conduit to accessing mental health services appropriate to their immediate needs."



*Trevor Donaldson wants a safe house set up for troubled youth*



**We have men's refuges and women's refuges. But our Aboriginal young people [in the Goldfields] don't have a place to call their own**

Trevor Donaldson  
Goldfields Indigenous elder



Mr Donaldson said he was hopeful he could gain the support of local, state and federal governments to get the plan off the ground.

He said the safe house would be managed by the Goldfields Communities Services Aboriginal Corporation, currently operated by the GLSC.

"If we can prevent one suicide, that's not a bad start," he said.

Federal Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson said a drop-in centre would play an important role in suicide prevention.

Senator Scullion said he was open to the idea.

"I am happy to work with the WA Government and local community to try to facilitate this," he said.

*Rhiannon Shine*

RELATED STORY:

[\\$1m critical response program to tackle high WA Indigenous suicide rate](#)



**Feb 1 - 20**

**The Secret River** – the multi-award winning story of *first contact*, adapted by playwright Andrew Bovell from Kate Grenville's novel.  
Roslyn Packer Theatre, Walsh Bay, \$69 - \$96



**Monday Feb 8**

7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Business Meeting**

All ASG members are welcome  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale.

**Monday Feb 29**

7.00pm start

**Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment**  
**Live animals and threatened species.**

There will be presentation of live animals and also have a talk about threatened species in the catchment.  
Held at the Coastal Environment Centre  
Entrance Pelican Path, Narrabeen Lagoon, Lake Park Road,  
North Narrabeen NSW 2103 [narrabeenlagoon.org.au](http://narrabeenlagoon.org.au)



**Monday Mar 14**

7.30pm start

**ASG-MWP Information Night**

All welcome - Speaker TBA  
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale.

**Thursday May 26**

**Sorry Day**

National Sorry Day is an Australia-wide observance which gives people the chance to come together and share the steps towards healing for the *Stolen Generations*, their families and communities.

**May 27 - June 3**

**National Reconciliation Week**

National Reconciliation Week is celebrated across Australia each year. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court *Mabo* decision.

**July 3 - 10**

**NAIDOC Week**

The National theme for 2016 is *Songlines: The living narrative of our nation*

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



## An Invitation to join us

**Aboriginal Support Group  
Manly Warringah Pittwater**

Founded 1979

Membership is \$25 per year

**(02) 9982 1425**

P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

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

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

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

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

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

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



Editor: Neil Evers  
Proof Reader: Carol Gerrard  
Graphic Design: Mark Ansiewicz: (02) 9979-9112