



Elimatta

Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER READERS ARE ADVISED THAT THIS NEWSLETTER CONTAIN NAMES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED
ASG ACKNOWLEDGES THE GURINGAI PEOPLE, THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LANDS AND THE WATERS OF THIS AREA

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue

1932 - 2024



Lowitja O'Donoghue was told as a child she would never make anything of her life, but the Yankunytjatjara leader went on to change the course of history through her advocacy for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Taken from her mother and her culture at two years old as one of the stolen generations, she said the harsh discipline she experienced growing up in a loveless mission home ignited her appetite for social justice and equality for First Nations communities.

The life of O'Donoghue, who has died on Kurna Country in South Australia aged 91, was shaped by the prejudice she experienced as a woman born between two cultures – Aboriginal and white – and by her refusal to be defined by it. Her formidable capacity for activism was triggered by her battle to become the first Aboriginal nurse at the Royal Adelaide hospital, despite the matron repeatedly telling her to “go nurse your own people in Alice Springs”.

I asked Lowitja O'Donoghue why she'd lived the life she had. She replied, ‘Because I loved my people’.

At the time, O'Donoghue had no idea where she came from, but she knew it was not Alice Springs/Mparntwe.

From a working life that began as a 16-year-old servant, O'Donoghue went on to become the first Aboriginal person named a Companion of the Order of Australia, the first to address the UN general assembly and the first chair of the now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, overseeing its most successful years.

She was a lead negotiator alongside then prime minister Paul Keating in the drafting of the Native Title Act that arose from the high court's

1992 Mabo decision. It was Keating who shortlisted O'Donoghue for a vice-regal position, one that ultimately went to Sir William Deane.

In his 2018 oration named in her honour, Noel Pearson called O'Donoghue “our greatest leader of the modern era”.

“Resolute, scolding, warm and generous – courageous, steely, gracious and fair. She held the hardest leadership brief in the nation and performed it bravely and with distinction,” he said of her guidance during native title negotiations.

O'Donoghue was the fifth child of Lily, a Yankunytjatjara woman, and Tom O'Donoghue, an Irish stockman. She was born on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands at Granite Downs station in South Australia in 1932. While never certain of her birthdate, O'Donoghue celebrated it on 1 August, the date given to her by white missionaries.

“All I know about my birth is that I was actually born in the bush, like all Aboriginal children at those times. It was a traditional birth attended by the grandmothers as, of course, is the traditional way. And the only other thing I know, of course, is that I never had a birth certificate. And, of course, I still don't have a birth certificate,” she told the Australian Biography project in 1994.

She never knew her father, and when she was two, she and two of her sisters were taken from their mother by missionaries acting on behalf of the Aborigines Protection Board. The girls were sent to live at what was known as the Colebrook Home for Half-Caste Children, where they were forbidden to speak their language or ask about the whereabouts of their

parents. O'Donoghue did not see or hear from her mother again for more than 30 years. In a 2011 interview, she recalled the grief of her childhood, saying she did not remember ever “being kissed or touched or loved or anything like that”.

Limitlessness of hope and the strength of patience Lowitja O'Donoghue on reuniting with her mother. In a 2006 interview, she said: “I didn't like it of course, particularly when we were told our culture was of the devil. And because I heard that too many times, I became quite rebellious because I was always asking the questions: Who am I? Where did I come from?”

O'Donoghue attended Unley general technical high school, but at 16 was sent to Victor Harbour as a servant for a large family. Two years later, she began basic nursing training before attempting to transfer to the Royal Adelaide hospital to continue her education. When the matron refused her because she was Aboriginal, O'Donoghue took her battle to the state premier and anyone else in government who would listen to her case.

“I'd resolved that one of the fights was to actually open the door for Aboriginal women to take up the nursing profession, and also for those young men to get into apprenticeships,” she said in 1994.

O'Donoghue was eventually accepted and spent 10 years at the hospital, including as a charge nurse. She travelled to India to nurse, an experience that honed her determination to secure the rights of Indigenous peoples in her later senior leadership positions within various agencies of Aboriginal af-

fairs and the public service.

While nursing at Coober Pedy in the late 1960s, O'Donoghue was recognised by a group of Aboriginal people. From them, she learned that her birth name was Lowitja, and that her mother was a heartbroken woman living in appalling conditions in Oodnadatta. When mother and daughter eventually reunited, there was tension and a language barrier. Her biographer, Stuart Rintoul, writes that she would later talk of their reunion as a lesson in the “limitlessness of hope and the strength of patience”.

O'Donoghue told the Australian Biography project that reconnecting with her Aboriginal family brought “new meaning and a whole new dimension” to her life, moving her to devote herself entirely to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 1979, O'Donoghue married Gordon Smart, a hospital orderly she had met in the late 1960s. He died in 1991. The couple did not have children together, as O'Donoghue chose to dedicate her life to her work.

O'Donoghue was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1977, invested as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1983 and made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1999. In 1984, she was named Australian of the Year and in 2005 a Dame of the Order of St Gregory the Great, a papal award. She holds multiple honorary doctorates and fellowships and was patron of the Lowitja Institute.

Lowitja O'Donoghue, advocate for Aboriginal Australians: born 1932; died on 4 February 2024 aged 91.

NSW GOVERNMENT BOOSTS BUSHFIRE RESILIENCE WITH TRADITIONAL PRACTICES



A new program to boost the bushfire resilience of critical transport corridors by supporting Aboriginal cultural landscape management has been launched at 4 sites across regional NSW.

The \$4.5 million Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes Project is a land management pilot created in response to recommendations from the NSW Bushfire Inquiry which followed the Black Summer disaster.

The outcome-driven project supports local Aboriginal communities to use traditional land management methods, including cultural burning, to reduce the risk of bushfires impacting key NSW roads.

Pilot sites are located:

- near the Bruxner Highway northwest of Grafton on Bundjalung Country
- near the Oxley and Newell Highways at Coonabarabran on Gomeroi Country
- along the Princes Highway at Bega and Batemans Bay on the South Coast on Yuin Country.

A joint TfNSW and La Trobe University research project will accompany the pilots and explore how traditional and cultural land and water management can be used to build resilience to natural

disasters into the transport network.

The Department of Regional NSW Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program will support Aboriginal groups within a culturally safe environment to ensure their business models can deliver landscape management services to landowners and Government once the pilots conclude in mid-2025.

The pilot is part of the NSW Government's \$28 million Network Resilience Program being delivered by TfNSW over 4 years to improve the State Road network's resilience to bushfires.

Find out more about the Network Resilience Program.

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Corporation of NSW, NSW Local Land Services, local councils, and Local Emergency Management Committees are working on the pilots with TfNSW.

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib said:

"Hazard reduction and mitigation play a key role in managing fire risk, and we know from the Bushfire Inquiry that there are many different approaches we can take

to this to prepare as much as possible for bushfires.

"This project will support Aboriginal communities to carry out and expand cultural landscape management, making our road network more resilient and promoting the use of local traditional knowledge to better prepare our landscape for natural disasters." Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris said:

"Aboriginal people have been caring for Country as custodians and knowledge holders for tens of thousands of years.

"It makes sense for Aboriginal people to manage the landscape at these sites now and into the future.

"Through this initiative, we are Closing the Gap by creating jobs and empowering Aboriginal people and communities to be decision-makers.

"The project will strengthen Aboriginal communities and build knowledge and cultural heritage across the generations."

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

"Having travelled extensively through Bega during the 2019/20 bushfires, I know the first-hand trauma and devastation they caused.

"It's a win-win situation that could pave the way for this

important work to expand after the pilot. It will contribute to a model of closer working with Aboriginal people to build the framework for future land management partnerships with Transport for NSW, other Government agencies, and private landholders.

"This won't just help reduce the risk of catastrophic fires impacting our transport links, it will also help the Aboriginal communities strengthen their cultural connection with Country."

Member for Bega Dr Michael Holland said:

"The long-term tragedy and trauma that catastrophic fires bring is fresh in the memory of people who live, work and visit the South Coast. Connectivity is key during times of natural disaster, and I welcome any initiative that will help build the resilience of our key road network.

"The great thing about the pilot is that it has the potential to build future business and employment opportunities for local communities, while uplifting our collective ability to care for Country.

"This will help encourage knowledge of the land to be passed on by Elders and benefit local communities as well as everyone who relies on the road network."

IT'S OVER: FIVE-YEAR HUNT FOR RAMBO THE FERAL FOX PAVES WAY FOR GREATER BILBY TO ROAM FREE



He was the fantastic fox that derailed a multimillion-dollar plan to reintroduce endangered native species into one of Australia's largest forests. But after a five-year hunt that involved 10,400 traps, 3,500 baits, 73 stakeouts, 55 days of scent-tracking dogs and 97 infrared cameras filming 40 hours a week, the red fox nicknamed Rambo is officially "no longer".

It's over: five-year hunt for Rambo the feral fox paves way for greater bilby to roam free.

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It means, for the first time in a century, greater bilbies are running wild in north-west New South Wales.

The bilbies – of which there are believed fewer than 10,000 nationwide – are the first of six locally extinct or vulnerable species that the Australian Wildlife Conservancy with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will reintroduce to the sprawling wilderness between Narrabri and Coonabarabran known as the Pilliga Scrub.

Next in line are bridled nailtail wallabies and brush-tailed bettong, with the vulnerable plains mouse and western barred bandicoot to be reintroduced in June and September.

But it's been a long time coming. AWC operates the largest private and donor-funded sanctuaries in Australia, with safe havens for endangered-species in Scotia and Mallee Cliffs (NSW),

Yookamurra (SA) and Mt Gibson (WA). But none have faced the unique challenge that beset the 5,800-hectare conservation area in the Pilliga: a feral that couldn't be caught.

"We see it occasionally in large-brained placental carnivores," says Dr Tim Flannery, who followed Rambo's story. "They don't become smarter than their human hunters but they're better evolved than their brethren. Waiting them out siege-style becomes the only option."

Pilliga operations manager Wayne Sparrow has managed the hunt for Rambo for five years. "When we started fencing the enclosure in 2018, Rambo was just a kit and we reckon he lost his mother to a trap and a sibling to 1080-bait soon after," Sparrow says. "That was his education, and it made him this reclusive, shy, intuitive animal. But he was no typical fox." Sparrow says Rambo –

named for Sylvester Stallone's unkillable action hero – didn't move with the cycles of the moon or use the same path twice. Nor could he be lured with baits like most foxes or trapped using snares like other ferals. "I came to respect him," Sparrow says. "I knew I had to bring my A-game to ever catch him."

Smuggled into Australia in 1835 to be hunted, the red fox's adaptability and intelligence allowed it to spread quickly across the nation. Today, Melbourne is estimated to have 20 foxes per square kilometre and Sydney 10. Last March, it was estimated that Australia's 1.7m foxes kill in the vicinity of 367m mammals and 111m birds every year.

In the Pilliga, as the hunt for Rambo stretched into years, Sparrow became increasingly desperate. He brought in Indigenous trackers, ex-military assassins, soft-jaw trap specialists, even a

hunting-dog breeder who claimed to have bred a "beagle-kelpie fox-finder" hybrid.

"At first every shooter and trapper wanted Rambo as a trophy," Sparrow says. "But every one of them came, tried and left empty-handed." Sparrow himself spent countless nights on a perch in the Pilliga with lure boxes laid and a thermal rifle at the ready. But to no avail.

Now, despite Sparrow's best efforts, Mother Nature appears to have done what he and a long line of hunters, scientists and rangers couldn't, and outfoxed Rambo at last.

Camera-trap footage last caught sight of Rambo on 9 October 2022. Since then, despite intensive monitoring and tracking, no evidence of the wily fox has been found. It is suspected Rambo died during one of two flooding events that hit the Pilliga in October last year.

"I am 100% confident he is gone," Sparrow told the Guardian. "After a huge volume of work and a lot of stress, it's over. Rambo will always be in my thoughts, but he's finally left my dreams."

In the years Rambo delayed a full-scale reintroduction, AWC released 60 bilbies into a temporary breeding area of 680 hectares in 2018. Ecologists now estimate the population to be 335. Bridled nailtail wallabies have flourished similarly with 42 originals now a mob of 148.

This month, after adhering to eradication monitoring periods which require a fenced area to be clear of feral predators for a minimum of three months, AWC officially declared the enclosure "feral-free" and moved these pioneering colonies into the wider Pilliga.

"Bilbies have lived in Australia for 15m years," said AWC ecologist Dr Vicki Stokes. "The timing [for their reintroduction] is perfect. Good conditions in the forest over the last few years have meant that both populations of bilbies and bridled nailtail wallabies are doing exceptionally well and it's good to get them out into the wider area so they can flourish."

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NEW SCULPTURE HONOURS ABORIGINAL EXPLORER



A new sculpture that pays tribute to the first known Aboriginal person to circumnavigate Australia and contribute to the mapping of the Australian coastline has been unveiled outside the Bribie Island Seaside Museum.

The sculpture pays tribute to Bongaree (also known as Bungaree), an Indigenous Garigal man from the Broken Bay area in Sydney who explored Moreton Bay and Bribie Island with British navigator Matthew Flinders.

Aboard the boat *Norfolk*, the pair landed near the beach at Bongaree, which is named in his honour, on July 16, 1799.

The sculpture depicts Bongaree, Matthew Flinders and his cat Trim staring out on the Pumicestone Passage, with Bongaree pointing into the distance describing the view and Matthew Flinders in the process of lifting his telescope. There is also a metal frame of Australia behind them.

To celebrate the unveiling on November 28, Bribie Island Historical Society president Barry Clark and other members of the not-for-profit group invited local elders from the Kabi Kabi and Joondoburri people, members of the Bongaree family descendants' group, local politicians and members of the public to witness the momentous occasion, which Barry described as a "very proud moment".

"This is a very special event, not just for Bribie Island, but in the whole history of Australia," Barry said.

"As president of the Bribie

Island Historical Society I have written many articles about Bongaree the man, and I have long held this view that more needed to be done to recognise him, especially when there is so much on Matthew Flinders and how he was hailed as a hero around the world.

"But in this place called Bongaree, there were no images or sculptures of him. Along the waterfront we have installed many interesting heritage plaques and signage, but nothing representing Bongaree.

"The Bribie Island Historical Society, a not-for-profit organisation, donated its funding into this wonderful creation.

"This is a very big step forward, and what you have here (the sculpture) has been totally and fully accepted by all the Indigenous people, and I think it is a wonderful legacy."

During his speech, Barry also spoke about how Bongaree and Flinders "were good mates" who both achieved incredible things in their lifetime.

Bongaree's life

Born circa 1775, Bongaree was a man with sharp intellect.

By 1798, he was employed on a 60-day round trip to Norfolk Island on the HMS *Reliance*, where he met British explorer Matthew Flinders.

Flinders was so impressed by Bongaree that the following year he took him on a coastal survey voyage to Bribie Island and Hervey Bay on the 25-tonne longboat *Norfolk*.

Bongaree was known as a brilliant diplomat and despite language barriers could quickly communicate with coastal Aboriginal groups they encountered.

Bongaree travelled with Matthew Flinders again on his most exploratory voyage from 1802 to 1803, the circumnavigation of Australia on the HMS *Investigator*. It was on this expedition that much of Australia's unknown coastline was mapped.

Bongaree was later given a military uniform by the governor of NSW and would greet new arrivals into Sydney.

He died November 1830.

Bongaree's descendants thank the Historical Society

Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, a descendant of Bongaree, was one of the many guests of honour at the unveiling ceremony.

"I would like to thank Barry and the Bribie Island Historical Society for what you see here," Sharlene said.

"It has taken just over a year to get to this point, so it has been a long journey, but there was lots of consultation with the Bribie Island Historical Society along the way.

"It's wonderful to see Bongaree, I say Bungaree, acknowledged in this way because he was a great man. He did what he had to do to survive for him and his family, and in doing that, he did great things.

"Not only did he circumnavigate Australia, but he also took many trips on many voyages with several different people.

"Also, he was a great per-

son in Sydney when he used to come and greet ships. Any passing ships or ships that were coming into the harbour, the first person that greeted them was Bungaree."

Months of hard work

The sculpture was made with the support and endorsement of Bongaree family descendants and local representatives, with the assistance of Busy Fingers and City of Moreton Bay.

There are multiple memorials around the world dedicated to Matthew Flinders, but this is the first public recognition of his Aboriginal guide and friend Bongaree.

The sculpture was made by Bribie Island artist Derek Patey and his wife, who spent more than 450 hours making it.

"It was a huge learning curve and a great honour to be involved in the creation of the sculpture of Bongaree, Matthew Flinders and his cat famous Trim," Derek said.

"This sculpture took approximately five months of work, which was roughly around 450 hours.

"There's 300m of bird wire in the sculpture which is 20 layers thick.

"It has been out in the weather for three months to take the shine off it.

"We also went through eight pairs of gloves, three pliers, two snippers and two tubes of Dettol cream after being scratched to death."

The sculpture is now on display outside the Bribie Island Seaside Museum, located at 1 S Esplanade, Bongaree.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2024

27 MAY – 3 JUNE

#NRW2024

RECONCILIATION.ORG.AU



WHAT IS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK?

The dates for NRW remain the same each year; 27 May to 3 June. These dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey— the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision respectively.

Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We all have a role to play when it comes to reconciliation, and in playing our part we collectively build relationships and communities that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, and futures.

A BRIEF HISTORY

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) started as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993 (the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples) and was supported by Australia's major faith communities.

In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launched Australia's first National Reconciliation Week.

In 2001, Reconciliation Australia was established to continue to provide national leadership on reconciliation.

In the same year, approximately 300,000 people walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week—and subsequently across bridges in cities and towns—to show their support for reconciliation.

Today, National Reconciliation Week is celebrated in workplaces, schools and early learning services, community organisations and groups, and by individuals Australia-wide.

WHY SAYING 'ABORIGINE' ISN'T OK

8 facts about Indigenous people in Australia

Is it OK to call someone an 'Aboriginal person'? And why are so many Indigenous kids in Australia – some as young as 10 – being locked up? Here is your chance to find out.

1. Who are the world's Indigenous Peoples?

More than 370 million people across 70 countries worldwide identify as Indigenous. They belong to more than 5,000 different groups and speak more than 4,000 languages. 'Indigenous Peoples' is the accepted way of referring to them all as a collective group – the equivalent of saying 'the British', or 'Australians'.

In international law, 'Indigenous' acknowledges that a person's ancestors lived on particular lands, before new people arrived and became dominant. Indigenous Peoples have their own unique customs and cultures, and often face difficult realities such as having their land taken away and being treated as second-class citizens.

2. Who are the Indigenous Peoples of Australia?

They are the proud keepers of arguably the oldest continuous culture on the planet. Their heritage spans many different communities, each with its own unique mixture of cultures, customs, and languages. Before the European invasion in 1788 there were more than 250 Indigenous nations, each with several clans.

Torres Strait Islanders, from the islands between north-eastern Queensland and Papua New Guinea, originate from Melanesia in the western Pacific, and have their own distinct culture.

3. Is it OK to call Indigenous Australians 'Aborigines'?

'Aborigine' is generally perceived as insensitive, because it has racist con-

notations from Australia's colonial past, and lumps people with diverse backgrounds into a single group. You're more likely to make friends by saying 'Aboriginal person', 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander'.

If you can, try using the person's clan or tribe name. And if you are talking about both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it's best to say either 'Indigenous Australians' or 'Indigenous people'.

Without a capital "a", "aboriginal" can refer to an Indigenous person from anywhere in the world. The word means "original inhabitant" in Latin.

4. How did Indigenous Australians live before Europeans arrived?

They were great storytellers, passing on their culture through songlines – an animist belief system expressed through songs, stories, paintings and dance. They were also expert hunters and gatherers and had sophisticated ways of taking care of the land. As semi-nomadic people, they moved around with the seasons, returning every season to permanent homes where they grew crops.

5. What happened when the Europeans came?

When European colonization started in 1788, it was devastating for Australia's Indigenous communities. Their numbers fell from around 750,000 to just 93,000 by 1900.

Thousands died as British settlers drove people off their lands, and brought killer diseases such as measles, smallpox and tuberculosis. Indigenous Australians were segregated from the rest of society, forced to adopt British customs and abandon their own culture. Many even had their children taken away.

The population began to re-



cover in the early 1900s and by 2011 there were an estimated 669,900 Indigenous people in Australia – making up around three per cent of the country's total inhabitants.

6. What's the situation like now?

Racial discrimination became illegal in Australia in 1976, but that hasn't protected Indigenous people from still being much worse off, including in terms of health, education, and unemployment. Many end up trapped by poverty and crime. Today, Australia's Indigenous kids are 24 times more likely to be locked up than their non-Indigenous classmates.

New generations have inherited their relatives' deep trauma and anger from losing their lands, cultures and families. To make things worse, the Australian Government has trotted out policies that effectively take away Indigenous Peoples' basic rights – such as the Northern Territory Intervention – and forced Indigenous people to abandon their homes and communities.

7. How do Indigenous Australians respond to this discrimination?

Indigenous people in Australia continue to protest relentlessly and pushing for things to change – including on every Australia Day, 26 January. In 1938, while most

other Australians were celebrating, they declared it a Day of Mourning to mark 150 years since colonization.

On the same day in 1972, they set up the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Australia's Parliament House, using slogans like "We want land rights, not handouts". It attracted unprecedented national support and still stands today. In 2000, more than 300,000 people – from all kinds of backgrounds – walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge calling for national reconciliation. And in 2015, huge rallies were held all across Australia to support remote Aboriginal communities' right to live on their traditional lands.

8. What can I do?

Amnesty continues to campaign for Indigenous Peoples' rights in Australia. Right now, we want to stop disproportionate numbers of Indigenous kids being locked up in Australia's detention system, through our 'Community is Everything' campaign.

We want to make sure these children – some as young as 10 – can grow up in environments that nurture their potential. Indigenous Australians know what's best for their own communities and kids; now they need our support to make it happen.

9 August is International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The Albanese Government is pleased to announce the opening of \$1.7 million in grants to support local communities and organisations to celebrate 2024 NAIDOC Week and the rich and diverse cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Held across the country from 7-14 July 2024, NAIDOC Week will celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year's theme chosen by the National NAIDOC Committee, is Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud.

The theme honours the enduring strength and vitality of First Nations culture – with fire a symbol of connection to Country, to each other, and to the rich tapestry of traditions that define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

First Nations communities, registered businesses, schools and local governments are all encouraged to apply for funding to run an activity or event that directly relates to the 2024 NAIDOC theme including.

- arts based activities, including painting, dancing, crafts and storytelling.
- family fun days and community activities.
- cultural and Elders activities.
- NAIDOC themed sporting activities or competitions, or
- activities that actively promote Reconciliation.

These grants and the application process are managed by the National Indigenous Australians Agency with two

tiers available in 2024: small scale grants for up to \$10,000 and large scale grants for between \$10,001 and \$50,000.

NAIDOC Week, which first began in 1975, provides an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and histories and participate in celebrations of the oldest, continuous living cultures on earth.

For more information and to apply for a NAIDOC Local Grant, visit Grant Connect and submit an application before closing at 3pm AEDT on Thursday 22 February 2024.

For more information on the history of NAIDOC Week and to learn more about this year's theme, visit our National NAIDOC theme page.

Attributable to Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney

"I'm pleased to announce the Commonwealth is investing \$1.7 million to support NAIDOC Week activities that bring Australians together to celebrate the oldest living culture in the world.

"I encourage organisations to apply for a grant to support NAIDOC Week celebrations in your local communities."

Attributable to National NAIDOC Committee Co-Chair, Aunty Lynette (Dr) Riley

"The resilience of mob, our shared experiences, collective memories and kinship is a source of tremendous pride.

"We honour the flame of the fire, kindling the sparks of pride and unity, igniting a renewed commitment to acknowledging, preserving, and sharing the cultural heritage that enriches our



KEEP THE FIRE BURNING! BLAK, LOUD AND PROUD

7-14 JULY 2024

nation.

"This year's theme is a clarion call to continued unity and solidarity for all Australians to come together and celebrate."

Attributable to National NAIDOC Committee Co-Chair, Steven Satour

"Blak, Loud, and Proud" encapsulates the un-

apologetic celebration of Indigenous identity, empowering us to stand tall in our heritage and assert our place in the modern world.

"This theme calls for a reclamation of our narratives, an amplification of our voices, and an unwavering commitment to justice and equality."



At the June 2021 census, there were 984,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, representing 3.8 per cent of Australia's population. A small number are considered to be full-blood Aborigines, mostly living in isolated northern regions of the Northern Territory, Western Australia, and Queensland.

How many identify as Indigenous?

Based on 2021 Census counts of First Nations population (around 812,700 people): 91.4% identified as being of Aboriginal origin. 4.2% identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin. 4.4% identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ABS 2022a).

What is the oldest race on earth?

Aboriginal Australians are Earth's oldest civilization: DNA ...

A new genomic study has revealed that Aboriginal Australians are the oldest known civilization on Earth, with ancestries stretching back roughly 75,000 years.

Who were the original owners of Australia?

Australia is made up of many different and distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, each with their own culture, language, beliefs, and practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first peoples of Australia, meaning they were here for thousands of years prior to colonisation.

Were Aboriginals ever used as slaves?

Many Aboriginal Australians were also forced into various forms of slavery and unfree labour from colonisation. Some Indigenous Australians performed unpaid labour until the 1970s. Pacific Islanders were kidnapped or coerced to come to Australia and work, in a practice known as blackbirding.

THE ABSURD 26 JANUARY DEBATE OVERLOOKS THAT MANY ON BOTH SIDES WANT THE SAME THING: A DAY OF UNITY

Dean Parkin

The contrast between the depth of the Indigenous recognition movement and attempts to ignite culture wars could not be starker.

It has been a little over 100 days since the Australian people voted against recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of our nation through the establishment of a voice to parliament.

While the yes case achieved more than 6.2 million votes of support, it was not enough to secure a successful result. As many supporters continue to feel the pain of the result, the norm of Indigenous issues resting at the bottom of the national consciousness has been reasserted at a devastating but unsurprising speed.

Unsurprising because, throughout the campaign, even a historic referendum on an Indigenous issue struggled to cut through other priorities on voters' minds. We were acutely aware of the impact that cost-of-living pressures had on voters' capacity to deeply consider the case for a voice.

Of course, that is not the only reason why we did not achieve the result we wanted but it is a sad irony that those Australians most deeply impacted by cost-of-living pressures and those who stood to benefit most from a successful vote – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote areas – were the strongest yes voters at the ballot box.

A nation confident in its commitment to freedom would also accept that for some, it is too soon or not possible to celebrate national unity

This result, along with the massive yes volunteer movement and the significant uplift in awareness about the challenges facing Indigenous people, provide solid impetus for the ongoing movement for real justice for Indigenous people in our country.

The defeat of the moderate voice proposal only increases the urgency for change and will galvanise advocates to keep the pressure on. Those who proclaim the referendum result signals the stopping or unwinding of Indigenous progress gravely underestimate the resilience of this movement.

The contrast between the depth of this movement and the attempts to ignite plastic culture wars right now could not be starker. On one hand, the Uluru statement from the heart offered hope that "we believe this ancient [First Nations] sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood".

On the other, political and media elites have spent the last couple of weeks getting into a fabricated lather about whether cheap throw-away items should be stocked on supermarket shelves to mark Australia Day.

One of the most depressing aspects of the argument to keep Australia Day on 26 January is its smallness. The paucity of the notion that we have reached "peak pride" in our country.

Writing about 26 January, the former deputy prime

minister John Anderson this week demanded that legislators should "have the courage to stand up and fight for an education system premised on gratitude for Western civilisation and the historically unprecedented free and prosperous lives it has afforded all of us in this great land".

This is the problem. In 1788, 26 January was not a watershed moment of freedom and prosperity but the date six prison ships from a convoy of 11 arrived at Sydney Cove to create the penal colony of New South Wales.

To those who landed in shackles, it represented misery, estrangement from country, punishment, and brutality. To those on the land who watched them arrive, it heralded war, their systematic murder and estrangement and dispossession from their own country. This, and the subsequent policies of exclusion, removal, and incarceration, reverberate today and will continue for generations to come.

Other than as a monument to resentful jingoistic stubbornness, 26 January makes no sense as a date to celebrate our past, present and future sense of nationhood. Not only has the date

shifted over the years, the nationwide acceptance of the date as a national holiday has only been in place since 1994.

Thirty years is barely a historical pattern let alone a sacrosanct tradition.

Perhaps the ultimate absurdity of this debate is that many "keepers" and "changers" want the same thing: a day of unity that allows for considered reflection and celebration of the many versions of what it means to be Australian.

It is increasingly obvious that 26 January will not achieve this but the longer the resistance to change, the greater the likelihood that further wedges are driven among us.

A nation confident in its commitment to freedom would also accept that for some, it is too soon or not possible to celebrate national unity. If the choice is the chance to work towards genuine unity versus an arbitrary adherence to 26 January, surely we can choose unity.

Dean Parkin is from the Quandamooka peoples and was the campaign director for Yes23



18th April

WARATAH PARK BUSHCARE SUNDAY

Volunteers are invited to join in on bushcare activities Sunday at the old skippy Park. 13 Namba Road, Duffys Forest. 9am - 1pm Lunch and morning tea provided. Drive through the main gates and meet at the picnic area near Ranger's building to sign on. Protective clothing is a must. Long sleeved shirts and pants, protective footwear, sunhat, gardening gloves, water. For more info contact Jenny Harris on 0408512060 - DuffysForest.com

26th May

SORRY DAY

Join us at 1 Park Street, Mona Vale - Memorial Hall. 1.00pm - 4.30pm. A place where we can all come together. Weaving / Artefacts / Kids painting / Good Food.

27th - 3 June

RECONCILIATION WEEK

Theme: Now More Than Ever, no matter what, the fight for justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will and must continue.

3rd June

MABO DAY

It's on the same day every year, as it commemorates the Mabo Decision where 'terra nullius' was overturned.

7th July

SING UP COUNTRY

This is an Aboriginal run event in collaboration with the Frenchs Forest Parish Social Justice Group. In its 9th year.

15th July

ASG COMMUNITY MEETING

1 Park Street, Mona Vale - Memorial Hall

4th August

NATIONAL VOICE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

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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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