

Bunbilla yarnteen ngurra-yelleeke (Listen everyone and take note)

# Wurreker

Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group

Newsletter No. 110

April 1998

## Bonita Mabo in Newcastle

**B**onita Mabo is not only a wonderful spokeswoman for the Indigenous people but a shining example to all who seek justice and reconciliation. Her visit to Newcastle was a triumph and the organisers must be congratulated.

She was met at the Workers Club on Thursday night by three young Aboriginal dancers who performed the ritual Welcome Dance and escorted her party into the venue. Mallcom Smith explained the significance of this ceremony and introduced Bob Smith, the Awabakal Elder who formally welcomed the visitors to Awabakal land. Michelle Smith represented the Indigenous women with a beautiful Welcome Song and the lady Mayoress spoke on behalf of the Council and all the citizens of Newcastle.

Bonita began with a short account of her own family history. Her South Sea Islander great grand-parents were 'black-birded', kidnapped to work as slaves on the North Queensland plantations and then abandoned to fend for themselves. This infamous part of our history was rarely mentioned and the South Sea Islanders were not recognised as an ethnic group till 1994. Another reason for us to sign that Sorry Book.

She then went over the Mabo Case, the process by which Eddie Mabo and other land owners from Murray Island took

legal action proving the validity of their ownership of the land. This famous Mabo Case gave hope to all claimants for Native Title and is a true landmark in the long fight for justice. Bonita wished us to see the human being, Eddie, behind the much quoted word 'Mabo' and the toll taken by the struggle. She urged us to keep on with the Reconciliation process, to work together to make something of this country.

The other speakers, Louise Campbell of the Catholic Education Office in Newcastle, Cheryl Kitchener from the New England Tablelands, and Matilda House from the ACT spoke of the involvement of their Indigenous Communities in the Native Title campaign. Their wit and erudition and their devotion to the cause inspired us all.

Space precludes a detailed account of the night but it was heartening to see that there was not even standing room for late comers, showing that many in Newcastle stand firm in their opposition to the overturning of the High Court Wik decision and the Government's attempt to deliver; 'bucket loads of Extinguishment'.

On Friday morning school children and many adults filled the City Hall to hear the same messages from our visitors. At the end of the proceedings two young students spoke of

*continues page 7*

## A Personal Message to the Newcastle Support Group from Bonita Mabo

I met Bonita briefly and passed on messages from mutual friends in Townsville. She overwhelmed me with a spontaneous warm embrace, a reaction that we always get from our Koori friends but rarely meet in the more reserved white community.

Heartened by this I asked her about the future directions of groups such as ours. She insisted that there is still a need for Support Groups, the forces of prejudice are still strong. She agreed that our main function is to educate the wider so-called European community, to act as a medium through which opinions can be passed and to be a vehicle for telling the world about the wonderful progress in the Aboriginal Community. Most of them are overloaded with work and if we can take a few burdens from them they can accomplish even more.

She thinks that changing the name is irrelevant, it's the spirit that matters. "If you don't like the name by all means change it, but don't forget the feelings for each other."

She loves to come to Sydney and Newcastle, even though the journey and the public appearances take their toll. "I wouldn't have got all this in Townsville; maybe fifty would be a good crowd there. I've got some good white friends but there's a lot of others."

"Red-neck country," I impolitely suggested, and she laughed. "You said that, not me," she whispered.

Her parting words were, "You all keep going on with your work. Everyone will be all right, if we work together."

*Pat Keating*

# Australia Day 26 January 1938

It was a day of triumphant celebration of 150 years of white settlement. For dispossessed Aboriginals it was a 'Day of Mourning and Protest'. On that same day over one hundred men and women from Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland came together. They assembled in the Australian Hall, Sydney, "at great personal risk to draw up their manifesto for Aboriginal Civil Rights. Those who could not afford the trip sent messages of solidarity from all over Australia."

They charted a policy of 'Ten Points'. On 31 January they met with the Prime Minister, Mr J. A. Lyons, who was accompanied by Dame Enid Lyons and Mr J. McEwan, Minister for the Interior. The deputation of twenty men and women included J. T. Patten, T. Foster of La Perouse, William Ferguson of Dubbo and Doug Nicholls of Melbourne.

In a discussion of two hours, the 'Ten Points' endorsed by the conference were presented. (See separate box on page 3.) They emphasised, "this policy is the only policy which has the support of the Aborigines themselves".

This historic document and meeting was reported in the April 1938 issue of *Abo Call, The Voice of the Aborigines*, campaigned vigorously for full citizenship rights for Aboriginal people. Edited by J. T. Patten the paper stated:

"This paper has nothing to do with missionaries, or anthropologists, or with anybody who looks down on Aborigines as an 'inferior' race.

We are **not** an inferior race, we have merely been refused the chance of education that whites receive. *Abo Call* will show

showgrounds. Dressed in green and gold satin, they swayed and bent to lyrical, rousing music as they mimed the wind rippling over vast fields of wheat.

History and time marched on! The two strands of our history, official and hidden, gradually opened to reveal more of our true past.

In October 1994 the Aboriginal History Committee arose. A small group of students met to express their concern 'for the fate of a contemporary Aboriginal urban heritage site in Sydney, threatened with demolition by development plans'. This site was venue of the Day of Mourning conference, the Australian Hall, 150-152 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. (Now known as the Mandolin Cinema and Cyprus-Hellene Club).

The committee evolved into the national Aboriginal and History Council (NAHHC). When in November 1996, the NSW Minister for Planning, Mr Craig Knowles, placed a Permanent Conservation Order (PCO) on the building, he granted the owners an exemption order Allowing Development. The NAHHC initiated proceedings in the Land and Environment Court to have the exemption order declared void.

In support of the conservation request a second procession from Sydney Town Hall on the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Day of Mourning and Protest Conference, began on 26 January 1998. A large crowd, in a silent walk, carrying banners, followed the original route to Elizabeth Street. An inspiring re-enactment included readings of historic documents, speeches by original activists. Their descendants read out "Our Ten Points" from the banners they carried.

Mrs Jenny Munro, Chairwoman of the NAHHC, and others, in their rousing speeches, met their aim of 'rekindling the spirit of 1938'.

In February 1998 victory came! The Minister announced revocation of the controversial order. Jubilation! This is the first PCO ever placed on a site of Aboriginal Heritage. June Barker, granddaughter of William Ferguson, one of the original 1938 organisers expresses it well: "I'm really happy... a long fight, but it hasn't been in vain... this victory is a light... All the brave people who fought so hard to advance our rights will have a place to be remembered."

The NAHHC confirms that negotiation are in progress to purchase the Australian Hall: "Now, we are

simply glad our 5 year battle is over... **real celebrations will come when we own this place.** We plan to establish a museum dedicated to our heroes one day — we have to focus our energies on that dream, now!"

**Play your part in the dream...** Become a NAHHC member! Just fill in the form. Together, Black and White can carry the struggle on for **justice and the museum.**

(By Vera Deacon with acknowledgements to NAHHC documents, staff and newspaper reports and personal participation in the 1996 and 1998 re-enactment.)

*Vera Deacon*



Australia Day 1998, Ray Peckham and Hal Alexander in Sydney

that we do not want to go back to the stone age... we raise our voice... for education, equal opportunity and full citizen rights."

Many older readers will have their own memories of Australia Day 1938. As a child of eleven at Mayfield West Primary School I knew only of white Australia's celebration. I recall a special edition of the school magazine was issued. It showed Governor Arthur Phillips' pictorial representation of Red Coat soldiers being hanged if they killed an Aboriginal; likewise an Aboriginal was hanged if he speared a white person. We practised eurythmic dancing. Some lucky children, to us, were chosen to dance with thousands of others at

## Today's Tasks — Ten Point Justice

### NAHHC

#### National Aboriginal History & Heritage Council

In preparation for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary re-enactment of the Day of Mourning and Protest (held in Australian Hall, Elizabeth St, Sydney, 26 January 1938), the following update of the original "Our Ten Points" ("A long-Range Policy for Aborigines", recorded in *The Australian Abo Call*, no. 1 April 1938, after presentation to Prime Minister Lyons on 31 January 1938) was agreed at the AGM of the National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council on 24 January 1998.

1. **Aboriginal Representatives in Control Policy**  
*Commonwealth Responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs (1938 Original)*
2. **Aboriginal Minister in Commonwealth Cabinet**  
*Commonwealth Minister with Full Cabinet Rank*
3. **Administrative Accountability to Aboriginal Communities**  
*Aboriginal Advisory Board Nominated From the Grassroots*
4. **Equal Access to Employment and Long Life for Aged Pension**  
*Full Citizen Rights and Equality Without Delay*
5. **Respect for Traditional marriage and Kinship in Family Law**  
*Free Choice in Marriage Without Mission Approval*
6. **Equality of Housing and Access to Clean Water**  
*Equal Access to Housing Privileges*
7. **Recognise Sovereign Land Rights of Each Aboriginal Nation**  
*Special Land Settlements for Aborigines to be Self-Supporting*
8. **Genuine Elimination of Racism with Whites training Whites**  
*Genuine Aboriginal Protection with Aborigines training Aborigines*
9. **Full and Free Health Care Available to Every Child**  
*Free and Equal Maternity and Child Care*
10. **Compensation to Overcome Genocide and Stop Oppression**  
*Freedom from Oppression*

These demands were displayed on placards during the re-enactment, and read out in reflection of J. Howard's 10-point torture by NAHHC Chairperson Jenny Munro who stated that no. 7 should really be no. 1 and adapted the full 1938 wording of no. 8.

"In regard to uncivilised and semi-civilised Whites, we suggest that patrol officers, nurses and teachers, both men and women, of White blood, should be specially trained by the Commonwealth Government as White Officers, to bring the wild White people into contact with civilisation."

## ESSIE COFFEY — IN REMEMBRANCE

Recently I attended the funeral of Essie Coffey held in the community hall at Brewarrina. This was a fitting place for people to farewell Essie. It was the community who celebrated her life that day as well as giving expression to their own loss and grief. The Aboriginal communities who were represented came from all areas of New South Wales, and from other parts of Australia, the NT, Queensland, South Australia. But other groups were also present, non-Aboriginal people who had counted Essie as friend, meeting her in one of the many areas of life in which she participated. It is as one of these own tributes to Essie.

My first memory of her is of her belly-dancing at Bourke in the Talent Quest, an annual event which marked National Aborigines Day. A big young woman who radiated life and fun. Later I knew her better through her singing and her support for women. She was always ready to give immediate and practical help. I remember her on International Women's Day singing with Dawn Edwards, June Smith, Linda McKellar, Eva Ellwood, songs the women used to sing, often the old Victorian frontier songs which expressed the loneliness and hardship that bush women experienced, and which is still part of many Aboriginal lives. The loss of a child, of a husband, loss of remembered traditions. Essie brought these together in her own songs but also brought to them the conviction that they could change things.

This was one of her gifts I think, she did not compartmentalise her life. Traditional culture and contemporary politics, the needs of men and women, the practical and the spiritual, which to her was the bush, all were of importance. As she became more politically involved my personal contact was small, but enlivened by the stories of her indomitable participation in the politics of Health, Legal Aid, housing, any area where Aboriginal access to equality was at issue.

At her funeral wide expression of this was given through personal testimony and story, and many memories were revived. But for many perhaps one of the most lasting memories is of the great encompassing hug, with which Essie greeted those whom she counted as friend. A big person has gone from us. We need time to grieve as well as to remember and celebrate her life.

*Pat Cameron*

### Jack Doherty Scholarships

A disappointingly small number of applications had been received by the original closing date for the Scholarships, 27 March. Louise Hermann from the University's Scholarships and Prizes division therefore suggested the date be extended until 9 April. She has also been sending out reminder notices to eligible students. We hope this will bring in a greater number of responses.

The awards ceremony will, as usual, be held at Wollotuka on the day of the Arts Graduation, this year on Friday, 1 May. As the Diploma of Aboriginal Studies students will be graduating in the afternoon, the celebration lunch followed by the Jack Doherty Award ceremony will begin at 11.30 am. Professor John Lester, Director of the projected Umulliko centre for post-graduate Aboriginal Studies, has kindly agreed to present the awards.

*Jean Talbot*

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# Yamuloong '97

“Them’s Deadly Ay!”\*

\*Langwij for: “They are inspiring, aren’t they.”

We regret the delay in printing the proposed book. Despite detailed preparation entailing the posting of background information sheets to all schools we were disappointed with the number of entries. The format chosen, an interview with an Aboriginal person, involved certain protocol and this may have added to the difficulty of the task. As well 1997 might be seen to have been a troublesome year, due to certain politicians agendas.

We intend now to launch the book during NAIDOC week. We will keep you informed.

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## WIK

We must continue to work zealously to prevent the Government overturning all reconciliation efforts by destroying Native Title. As Mick Dodson said “This would be the last poisoned waterhole!”

Sir William Deane said “If we allow the most disadvantaged people in the country to be dispossessed, we are diminished as a nation.”

### ANTaR’s Major Concerns

With the proposed changes are that they do extinguish Native Title in the following ways:

- 1. Validation.** Retrospective validation of unlawful Government Acts in the period January 1994 and December 1996, including (Category A) grants extinguishing native title and hundreds of mining licenses and leases (developments in relation to which Native Title claimants were denied any say).
- 2. Confirmation.** Outright extinguishment through ‘confirmation’ of purported former extinguishment of Native Title rights – on ‘exclusive possession’ land tenures listed in the Schedule and on pastoral leases, to the extent of any inconsistency.
- 3. Upgrades.** *De facto* extinguishment of inconsistent Native Title rights on non-exclusive pastoral leases upgraded to ‘full primary production’.
- 4. The right to negotiate.** Dramatic reductions in the right to negotiate, curtailing indigenous claimants’ access to the right, restricting the acts in relation to which the right will be available anyway and permitting States and Territories to introduce lower standard, potentially inconsistent, right to negotiate regimes on pastoral leases, national parks and reserves.
- 5. Claims.** New rules for Native Title claims which include a registration test which is too onerous and is based on physical connection; a six year sunset clause on the making of claims; racially discriminatory changes to the rules of evidence; and the introduction of a statutory access right which is dependent on physical connection.
- 6. Compensation.** Compensation provisions which do not involve just terms.
- 7. Waterrights.** *De facto* extinguishment of indigenous fishing rights.

*Previously published in The Reality an ANTaR newsletter.*

# What Australia needs to do

Co-existence is the clear alternative to the Government’s Ten Point ‘Extinguishment’ Plan.

Co-existence will not give rise to endless court cases or constitutional challenges. It will bring Australians together, not divide us. It is built on respect for everybody’s rights. It is not racially discriminatory. Unlike the Government’s Plan, co-existence is workable, fair and will provide certainty.

For this reason, Australia should reject all discriminatory aspects of the Government’s Bill and turn its eyes instead to the steps it needs to take to create a future based on co-existence...

## Six Steps to Co-existence

- 1. Abide by the High Court’s Mabo and Wik decisions.**  
Reject all discriminatory aspects of the Government’s Native Title amendments and start genuine negotiations with all the parties.
- 2. Confirm all valid property rights.**  
Guarantee pastoralists’ existing rights and give full protection to Native Title rights.
- 3. Respect indigenous cultural and spiritual attachment to traditional lands.**  
Provide indigenous access to Native title land by reasonable and proper arrangement.
- 4. Establish a system for negotiating binding agreements.**  
Aboriginal people, pastoralists, miners, governments and other stakeholders need to be able to negotiate agreements about land use, in a system which is expeditious, fully supported by governments, and under which the agreements are backed up by statute.
- 5. Address the genuine problems which have been identified with the existing *Native Title Act* in a constructive and non-discriminatory way.**  
Modest changes are required to improve the Native Title claims process.
- 6. Fully support the reconciliation process.**  
Reconciliation is the matrix for co-existence in Australia.

ANTaR



## A Sorry Day Workshop

On Saturday, 9 May at 10 am to 4 pm

The workshop is particularly for church members who wish to understand the issues, before the Sorry Day Service.

The workshop will be held at Mindaribba, Local Aboriginal Land Council, Chelmsford Drive, Metford.

There will be a service at Christ Church Cathedral. Further details, when finalised, will be sent to Support Group Members through the ANTaR mailing list.

For further information ring Di Langham on 4934 2996. The price is \$15, lunch and refreshments are included.



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# Spirituality and the Land, or the Dollar?

Sample letter to be used as a guideline for your own letters to be sent to the Prime Minister, and other members of the Government: eg Ministers for Mining and Development; Aboriginal Affairs: Environment.

Dear John Howard,

We, the undersigned citizens of Newcastle, wish to express our deep concern about and opposition to your government's decision to allow ERA to develop the uranium mine at Jabiluka. Your decision is highly regrettable on a number of grounds.

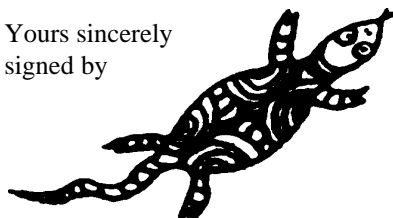
Firstly, the Mirrar people, though confirmed two years ago to be traditional owners of the area to be mined, have not themselves given consent for the development. While those acting on their behalf see the exploitation of the mineral resources as being of direct financial benefit to the people, there is no evidence that this has happened with the Ranger mine. The Aboriginal people in the area are still living in Third World conditions, and are generally in a very poor state of health compared with the average in Australia. This lack of respect for the wishes of the indigenous inhabitants exposes your government's total lack of commitment to justice on this issue.

Secondly, the idea of opening even one mine in an area of such outstanding natural beauty and cultural significance as Kakadu National Park was highly questionable. There is evidence of ongoing seepage problems and routine release of mine-site contaminants into this World Heritage-listed park from the existing Ranger mine, evidence ignored in the ERA's self-funded environmental assessment. To open a second mine in this highly sensitive area would be to risk the radioactive contamination of the whole eco-system for many thousands of years.

Thirdly, there is the economic argument. Since the world market for uranium is declining, it would seem that the decision to develop this mine (at the possible expense of the proven tourist potential of the Kakadu National Park) is already redundant. Countries such as France which use nuclear energy are finding it increasingly difficult to dispose of their radio-active wastes. There is also the near-impossibility of ensuring that the uranium will not be used for the making of weapons (a massive issue in itself).

As the year 2000 approaches, the holding of the Olympic Games in Sydney will ensure that the eyes of the world will once again be on Australia as they were in the Bicentennial year, ten years ago. This government would surely wish to show that Australia's treatment of its indigenous people had improved since that time, when the images of appalling living-conditions were so shocking to world viewers. They would surely also be proud to be remembered for preserving a World Heritage Park rather than for presiding over its destruction.

Yours sincerely  
signed by



# Letter to *The Newcastle Herald*

Dear Editor

Not all readers may think the Blockade against the opening of the Jabiluka uranium mine adjacent to Kakadu National Park is anything to do with them. However, there are issues here that are crucial to all Australians.

Firstly, the Mirrar people on whose land the mine is to be situated do not themselves want it. The adjacent Ranger mine has not brought the promised improvements in their living standards, so why should this? The potential danger to their health can hardly be calculated.

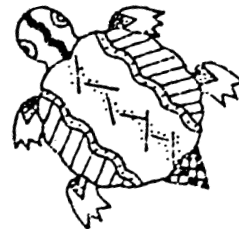
Secondly, this mine-site abuts on a World Heritage listed National Park which world travellers come to see. The environmental reports on the Ranger mine are hardly reassuring enough for us to believe the area could be unaffected by radioactive run-off if there were a second mine there.

Thirdly, there is the massive issue of whether uranium should be mined at all, given the intractable problems of disposing of the wastes, and ensuring its use for peaceful purposes. It might bring in large amounts of money if there were a demand, but at what colossal cost to both people and environment.

To highlight these issues, there will be a National Day of Action held on 5 April. From Newcastle, letters about Jabiluka have been written to John Howard, including one from the Anglican Bishop. There will be a march and rally here on the day, from Pacific Park to Civic Park, beginning at 2pm. While we can't all go to Kakadu, we can take a walk for Peace on Palm Sunday.

Yours sincerely

*Jean Talbot (For Jabiluka Action Group)*



# Report on Palm Sunday March and Rally

About two-hundred and fifty people walked in bright sunlight from Pacific Park, carrying colourful banners, to Pacific Park for the National Day of Action on Jabiluka, on Sunday, 5 April.

Speakers included Carol Ridgeway Bissett of the Worimi tribe from the Nelson Bay area, Greens Councillor John Sutton and Alison Dellit from Green Left Resistance. Carol covered issues concerning the rights of the Mirrar people, and John spoke on the government's policies on uranium mining and the conservation of Kakadu. Alison read out a message from the Newcastle participants in the Blockade at Jabiluka, and encouraged people to come to a follow-up meeting to be held at The Wilderness Society on Monday, 20 April to discuss what further actions will be needed.

*Jean Talbot (Jabiluka Action Group)*

# Jabiluka Campaign

On Friday, 13 February in Newcastle Workers Club, Jacqui Katona spoke on behalf of the Mirrar people of North Arnhemland and their strong opposition to the opening of a uranium mine at Jabiluka, in Kakadu National Park, on their traditional lands.

This well-attended event (organised by ANTaR) was part of a speaking tour Jacqui Katona, accompanied by an elder of the Mirrar people, is undertaking in major cities on the East Coast. Their purpose is to give the public up-to-date information about the situation at Jabiluka and to raise support for the cause, including the blockade which began there on 23 March. An appeal against the decision to begin mining has recently been overturned in the High Court. Other legal avenues are still being pursued.

In support of the talk, the powerful David Bradbury film on Jabiluka is being shown. This is unlikely to appear on ABC or SBS Television, since it shows the actions and propaganda of the government and the mining company in a particularly unflattering light.

Through both her live talk and the presentations on film, Jacqui Katona was able to counter what she knows to be misinformation put out by the popular media:

- Contrary to popular belief, the Mirrar people did **not** give consent to the development of the Ranger mine. This consent was given by the Northern Land Council, supposedly on their behalf.
- The traditional owners have **not** benefited financially from the development of the Ranger mine. The profits have been split three ways between the Northern Land Council, a Trust fund and the financial institutions who had given them loans to acquire some of the most basic community services that other people take for granted.

Those present were strongly urged to spread the word to their families and friends, to write letters to the newspapers, lobby their politicians, take part in the peaceful blockade (or at least to send money to support those going on it), in short do anything that will bring this information to a wider public.

The intention to open another mine in a World Heritage area, where there should not even be one mine, let alone two, has very serious implications. One has to ask what such a listing means. The world market for uranium is in decline, yet our government has 26 other such mines on the drawing-board. The Opposition's policy does not argue with this. How can we talk about reconciliation when the wishes of the traditional owners are being so blatantly ignored?

A National Day of Action on the issue was held on 5 April. A march and rally was organised in Newcastle by JAG (Jabiluka Action Group).

*Jean Talbot*



## Acknowledgement

Thankyou to Anna Kaemmerling for her generous help in publishing this edition. Without her help we could not have managed.

Thankyou also to Bryan Havenhand and Su Yun-Hill for their help and advice.

# Our February Meeting

Our speaker at this meeting was Professor John Lester, who is the director of Umulliko, the proposed centre for postgraduate Aboriginal studies. There are five of these Centres of Excellence to be set-up in different Australian states and Newcastle is fortunate to be chosen.

John began as a teacher and became the first Aboriginal principal of a TAFE college. He is now the Vice-President of the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group. He explained the reasons for the establishment of this Centre and its aims. There are 22 postgraduate students in the Newcastle Faculty, two of whom are studying for their Doctorates.

It is hoped to avoid duplication with other Centres and Newcastle has been allotted the areas of Law, Medicine and Health and Environmental Science. Besides these, there will be a programme to help students seeking qualifications in other faculties. There has been much research done on Aboriginal topics, but frequently by those outside the community. Umulliko will undertake and own the research, the impetus coming from the community, thus answering its needs and ensuring that the results are reported back to the community, not left to moulder in some academic library.

John remarked that the Indigenous peoples should take a lead from the Feminists, who broke away from main-stream traditional methods to research what they really needed, and the methodology needed to reflect the culture and needs of the Aboriginal peoples.

Research should be on topics that fill a need. John cited areas such as alienation felt by Kooris in the school system and youth suicides. The methodology should be comprehensive but focus on oral, genealogical and cultural as well as the more traditional methods. There must be adequate funding, ideally controlled by the Indigenous people. Research outcomes must also be owned and be accessible to the communities concerned. An ethics committee should be set up.

Umulliko will fulfil these aspirations. Professor John Lester is an impressive addition to the already excellent team of Aboriginal Studies professionals. We look forward to having many more discussions with him.

## Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group...

was formed in September 1980. It meets bi-monthly and sends out a newsletter shortly before each meeting. Membership of the Support Group is open to all who share its objectives:

- Promoting better understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Giving support to initiatives proposed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups both locally and nationally.

## Contacts for NASG

### Yamuloong

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### Jack Doherty Scholarships:

Jean 4957 5562 Vicki 4921 6541

### Visits In Prison (Maitland):

Marjorie 4954 8088 Paul 4955 8222

### NASG Finances:

Lyndall 4950 2545

### Koori History Awareness:

Pat 4928 2837

### Editing Wurreker:

Moya 4957 1098 Anne 4929 1123

# Visits in Prison

With the closing of Maitland gaol, our visits to Koori Prisoners have ceased for the foreseeable future. For several years, three of us, Rodney Knock, Marjorie Lambert and Barbara Lumley, have visited once a month. There were some useful contacts when we used to meet a significant number in the so-called 'chapel' area, especially when we were more numerous; and perhaps in the last year when we saw prisoners one-to-one in the cells. Nevertheless we did make good personal contacts and have been able to encourage individual prisoners by efforts made on their behalf.

We were warned by the Watch Committee when they motivated us many years ago at Wickham that we would not be welcome. Despite the successes Marjorie and Donna had two years ago in National Aborigines Week, there was no real co-operation and encouragement by the authorities, although we were known and welcomed at the gate in more recent times through the friendly attitude of the deputy governor. Barbara recently tried to visit a former prisoner in Lithgow gaol. She had to be put through a gruelling security process because after all these years the NASG and its visitors did not even appear on the computer screen.

We believe that to have any success we need to be accompanied by Kooris. This would make the work in prisons far more effective.

*Unfortunately, Barbara, Marjorie and I are unable to visit Cessnock as we are over-committed in other ways. So it is over to anyone who wishes to make a new start.*

**Rodney Knock 24.02.1998**

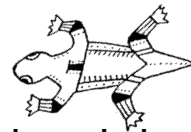
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their visions for a fairer Australia and presented Bonita with bouquets of flowers. A copy of the Awabakal translation of the bible, based on the work of Reverend Threlkeld, and a copy of the *Novocastrian Tales* were given as mementoes of her inspiring visit.

The assembly moved then to Civic Park to enjoy informal meetings and discussions, not only with Bonita, her daughter-in-law and her sister, but also with the hundreds from both the Indigenous and White communities who took the opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet with new. The 'Sea of Hands' formed a glowing background to this gathering, that epitomised the spirit of friendship and mutual regard that Bonita wished for when she said "Get on with Reconciliation. Reconcile in your own backyard. If all Australians do this, we can make something of this Country."

*Thank you to ANTaR, the Catholic Schools Office and the Catholic Social Justice Commission for a great occasion.*

**Pat Keating**



## Acknowledgement

We extend our deep sympathy to Debbie Doyle whose father has recently died. Debbie is the editor of the 'Wollatuka Page' for *Wurreker*. We look forward to Debbie's input in our June newsletter.

A grateful thankyou to 'Out of Workers' for the loan of a computer. Thankyou also to Newcastle Council for the use of a desk which was no longer needed.

## Our next meeting: 7.30 pm Wednesday 22 April 1998 at Wollotuka

Guest speaker will be **Kathy Balngayngu Marika**, Aritist from Yirrkala

Kathy is Aboriginal Senior of the Rirratingu Clan, North East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, but **now** residing in the Hunter Region.

Kathy is a Co-Author and Researcher of several books and her art and crafts are sold nationally and internationally.

This is our AGM and we wish to give notice of the discussion concerning the appropriateness of the name Aboriginal Support Group. **Everybody** is welcome and a cuppa is provided.

## Membership Subscription Form

**Members of the NASG receive the bi-monthly NASG newsletter, Wurreker, and agree to support the stated objectives of the NASG.**

**Membership:** what you can afford, eg \$20 - \$25 for waged, \$5 - \$10 for unwaged, organisations \$30 - \$50. Bulk orders: 5 copies for \$30 per annum, 10 copies for \$50 per annum. Non-member subscription: \$25.

**Non-member:** individuals or organisations may subscribe to *Wurreker* for \$25 per annum. Send renewals or non-member subscriptions to: NASG, PO Box 79, Broadmeadow 2292.

Name: ..... Date: .....

Street: ..... Phone: .....

Suburb: ..... Postcode: .....

Enclosed \$ ..... for NASG Membership  Bulk order  *Wurreker* Subscription only

# Bits and Pieces

## Signing of the Commitment

A ceremony for the signing of a commitment by the Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle will be held at the Newcastle City Hall from 6.30 pm - 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 14 April 1998. The ceremony will begin with a dance performance on the steps of the City Hall and will proceed to the Council Chamber.

## Congratulations Donna

Donna Meehan's article on the 'Stolen Children' first published in *Novocastrian Tales* has been selected for a book called, *Stolen Children - Their Stories* edited by Carmel Bird and published by Random House. Donna will take part in a special event at the 'Sydney Writers' Festival, called 'Stolen Children' at Sydney Town Hall, at 8.30 pm - 10 pm on Wednesday, 13 May. A special dance performance will take place at the public meeting.

## Scholarships granted

Two students were granted scholarships by The Aboriginal Education Council this year.

Troy Bundy from North Lakes Public School

Eva Nasihai from Gateshead Primary School

The scholarship of \$200 was awarded to Troy for academic and sporting achievements and for showing citizenship and leadership qualities.

Eva received hers for being an enthusiastic and interested student and for her work as a leading member of the Aboriginal Dance Troupe.

## Congratulations Troy and Eva



# Women's Business Retreat

Aboriginal senior woman, Maureen Smith, carrier of Wirradjiri traditional Aboriginal women's lore from Dunedoo to the Victorian border, gave us a weekend of discovery of the richness of Aboriginal traditional practice. The retreat took place in mid-March at Gunya Chiara, where we were wonderfully cared for by the Clare Community of Stroud.

Maureen talked to us about the spirit body each one of us carries, our *miwi*, our need to be true to that essence and to look after it. She explained how, in mythological terms, our *miwi* is the light of the creator in each of us, making us all one with each other and our creator. So if we mistreat another human being, we are in a real way mistreating ourselves. Maureen was very respectful of our many different ways of travelling, whether it be bus or train, Anglican, Catholic or Buddhist, emphasising that we are all heading for the same destination point.

Maureen spoke movingly of our relationship with Nungeena Tya, Mother Earth. Having taught us to "sing up" Nungeena Tya, Maureen walked us through the ritual of a birthing ceremony during which a baby's placenta is returned to Nungeena Tya. I was struck by the way the ceremony celebrated the commitment of all the members of a child's community to that child, each person promising to help or teach the child in certain ways. It must be lovely to be a parent with this strong community support for yourself and your children. Maureen showed us how to set up a traditional sacred circle, honouring all of creation.

Along with showing her deep respect for all our different traditions, Maureen was a wonderful story teller, very wicked and funny, which made for a very enjoyable experience.

Walking about in the Clare Community grounds Maureen instructed us on the healing properties of many plants which we have been accustomed to thinking of as weeds.

I asked Maureen which things she had told us we were free to talk about. She said it was fine to tell other women and men these things and she saw it as important for understanding to spread this way. In fact next year Maureen intends to run a weekend for men as well as women. Other dates for Maureen's Women's Business retreats this year are 22-24 May and 23-25 October.

*Moya*

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## Wurreker April 1998

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