

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

# Wurreker

Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group

Newsletter No. 128

April 2001

## Aborigines Qualify for Special Measures

I am bemused by recent claims of race-based selection at an Australian medical school. Allegations that non-indigenous students are missing out on places “because they are not black” are unfair and misguided.

The current controversy has been fuelled by a simplistic report on a current affairs programme that appears to have encouraged other disgruntled students to come forward with their stories.

Provision of places for disadvantaged students-including rural students-has been normal practice for years. Although I was pleased to see a story in *The Courier Mail* on Saturday giving universities and medical organisations an opportunity to explain the selection process, I would like to add a few observations.

The medical faculty of Newcastle University is known worldwide for its highly innovative and demonstrably successful approach to the teaching of medicine. Its students are selected not only on their marks but also on the basis of interviews, which involve psychological and aptitude assessment.

Once selected, students undertake a problem-based approach to learning during a highly rigorous course. No one passes the course unless they have earned that pass. Like all good faculties in all good universities, Newcastle jealously guards its reputation, a reputation based on the quality of its graduates, not on its intake.

This medical programme is very popular and only a small proportion of those who apply gain admittance. Sixty-nine places are available each year and of these 31 are for secondary school students, 20 for university graduates, 10 for rural students and eight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This allocation in no way disadvantages non-Aboriginal applicants and is perfectly legitimate.

The Federal Racial Discrimination Act makes it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of race. This Act, like the

international law on which it is based, also acknowledges that some groups of people suffer disadvantage because they have been subjected to racial discrimination in the past. In these cases it is legitimate to adopt special measures to enable these disadvantaged groups to “catch up” with the rest of society.

Clearly, Aboriginal people qualify for special measures. Across every socio-economic indicator, be it health, housing, education, employment or most profoundly life expectancy, Aboriginal people are grossly disadvantaged in Australian society. The need for catch-up policies is recognised, for example, by the Commonwealth Government’s employment strategy that subsidises employers who hire Aborigines and by special health programmes for Aborigines.

Newcastle University’s programme for training Aboriginal doctors also constitutes a special measure. It acknowledges the need for Aboriginal doctors to help overcome the historically poor health of Aborigines. No white student suffers or is disadvantaged because this programme exists.

But Aboriginal students are given the opportunity to study medicine, an opportunity which past racism, and the present effects of this racism, would deny them. When they are given this opportunity to study, the Aboriginal students then have to reach the same level of proficiency as all other students before they are allowed to graduate.

For many centuries, wise people have been saying that if we are to achieve real equality in society then we must be able to treat equal things equally and to treat unequal things unequally. The medical programme is an excellent example of this and while no white student has been disadvantaged by this programme Australia now has the benefit of 22 first-rate Aboriginal doctors.

*Bill Jonas*  
continues page 7

### Change of Date

Next meeting is held on **Thursday, 26 April 2001**, because of Anzac Day on Wednesday 25 April.

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# Indigenous Peoples and Racism Conference

A Regional Meeting for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance - hosted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission - was held at Sydney University from 20-22 February 2001

The promotion and protection of human rights among nation states and the United Nations has become largely focused on individual rights. Yet, the most important demands of Indigenous peoples worldwide relate to collective rights including the right to: land and resources; self-determination and autonomy; and, developing and practicing culture. Thus, the growing focus on individual rights in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States is a major obstacle to the full realisation of equality and inclusion by Indigenous peoples of these countries.

The upcoming United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will provide a forum for Indigenous peoples to raise international awareness about the obstacles to progressing the rights of Indigenous peoples. The World Conference is intended to be action oriented.

A preparatory regional meeting held in Sydney generated a report to be submitted to the World Conference that highlights the seriousness of discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the need for concerted international action.

The preparatory regional meeting also provided an opportunity for Indigenous peoples from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and the United States to get together to talk about the issue of racism against Indigenous peoples. Representatives from these and other countries spoke at, and participated in, the conference. Presenters included Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia, such as Mick Dodson, Bill Jonas, Aden Ridgeway, Marcia Langton, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Sir Ronald Wilson and Margaret Reynolds. Speakers and participants shared their experiences of racism and detailed the disastrous impacts racism has had on the world's Indigenous peoples. It was also an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to listen and talk with Indigenous people about racism.

For Phillip Ruddock, who opened the conference, it was another missed opportunity. Starting off on a strong note the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs declared that "racism was something that cannot be tolerated". Ruddock proceeded to give the same tired old bureaucratic formula speech that contained no substance: a speech that details government programs and spending - the "practical steps" - without actually engaging in a discussion about the reality of the situation facing Indigenous Australians. Within a short time his speech turned to the issue of the Howard Government's new agenda of multiculturalism - prompting the audience to call for the Minister to focus on racism against Indigenous peoples or they would leave. Ruddock's eyes remained averted from the audience - provoking a protest walk out.

In a speech that followed Dr Bill Jonas (the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner) eloquently restored some depth and substance to the conference stating what Minister Ruddock had failed to. He talked about the systemic challenges facing Indigenous peoples in Australia, as well as what was needed to overcome such challenges. Other inspiring speakers presented papers throughout the three day conference.

Discussions highlighted the difficulties facing Indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and the United States in overcoming the multiple social ill-effects of colonisation. Discussions also highlighted the exceptional work that many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have been doing to work towards overcoming these effects. Like many others, Dalee Sambo Dorrough, Director of the Alaskan Indian Law Resource Centre, has been active in the promotion and protection of Indigenous human rights standards at the United Nations, the International Labor Organisation and other international forums.

The program involved plenary sessions, papers and workshops to examine five themes from the perspective of the experience of Indigenous peoples of participating countries. These themes have been officially adopted for the World Conference against racism. They are:

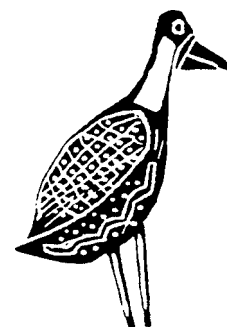
1. causes – Explore the sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
2. victims – Identify victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
3. prevention – Determine measures of prevention, education, and protection
4. remedies – Advocate effective remedies, recourse, redress, [compensatory] and other measures
5. strategies – Commit to strategies to achieve full and effective equality.

During workshops participants formulated recommendations for a Report of the Regional Meeting of Indigenous Peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and the United States to be submitted for consideration at the forthcoming preparatory Committee Second session for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in Geneva shortly.

The conference was one of a number of preparatory meetings and activities at international, regional and national level taking place in the lead up to the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in South Africa from 31 August to 7 September this year.

The Report of the Regional Meeting of Indigenous Peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii and the United States is available online through ATSIC's website - <http://www.atsic.gov.au>.

*Deirdre Howard*



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## Mixed Mobs

On Friday, 23 March, Aden Ridgeway opened the 'Mixed Mobs' exhibition at the Newcastle Regional Museum.

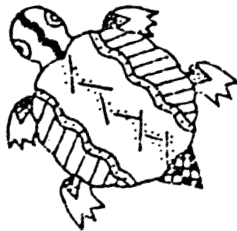
After an appropriate laudatory introduction by Mayor John Tate, Aden expressed delight at the audience of several hundred (where we whites happily observed that we were in a minority) which contained four generations. He said Australia had to move from a monocultural stance to embrace Indigenous people, having given the example of the harm done when the first Aboriginal medical student was described in the media as reverse discrimination. The pace of change is so great that people quickly forget. Such an exhibition as this one would counteract this.

Les Saxby and his young men had begun the proceedings by dancing for us, to allow energy to flow, to welcome us and to re-enact the creation story. Ray Kelly had welcomed us to the land on behalf of the Awabakal people, and said a united voice was being reclaimed.

Museum director Gavin Fry returned to describe how exhibitions are not just objects but people's lives; and to mention the deliberate spaces left in this permanent exhibition for further contributions. He thanked people such as Laurel Williams, Craig Aspinall and Les Saxby. Symbolic gifts were presented by several land councils, as well as three poems by Koori children from Mayfield East Primary.

Don't miss 'Mixed Mobs'. The Museum (corner of Hunter and Wood Streets) is free.

*Rodney Knock*



## ATSIC speaks on Welfare

Indigenous leaders yesterday threw down an election year challenge to white Australia, demanding more control over the \$2 billion annual expenditure on their people.

They said it was time 'to make a clean break with the welfare approach to indigenous community development.'

'In all cases the (welfare) policies and their avowed benefits were determined by non-indigenous authorities. No agreement was negotiated with indigenous people.'

Urging a fundamental change to the nation's 'authoritarian' indigenous policies, it says the top priority is the settlement of native title cases, several of which the Howard Government is contesting.

The ATSIC paper argues that it is not possible for government to "give" indigenous people power to control their lives.

"The very concept is one of authoritarian tutelage and, no matter how comfortable and popular it is for the migrant society and its institutions, it has a proven history of failure and wastage."

But the Government and funding agencies could help indigenous people to assert their rights, it said. Budget initiatives could support "slow realisation of their rights" and help "rebuild healthy and vibrant communities."

*From The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 March 2001*

## Charles Perkins

An extract from the address by Justice Spigelman at the State Funeral 25 October 2000.

Speaking of the Freedom Ride, he said: "These were dramatic incidents which had a permanent effect on the nature and intensity of the debate about injustices to Aborigines in this country. One of the most significant of the long term effects was, however, the emergence for the first time in our history of an Aborigine in a clear leadership role. There was no doubt at the time that Charlie Perkins was the leader of the entire group of white students. In this, as in so much else, he was a pioneer for his people and a role model of considerable significance.

The contribution Charlie made during this period was to confront Australia with issues which it would have preferred to ignore. Pamphlets and articles we prepared for the freedom ride quoted a particular statement by Martin Luther King in his letter from Birmingham Gaol."

Non violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension, that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatise the issue that it can no longer be ignored.

"This text retained its influence on Charlie. Throughout his life, Charlie sought to dramatise the injustices of his people in a way that could no longer be ignored. He remained a proponent of creative tension throughout his life.

There is no shortage of people with whom Charlie had arguments. Many are in this hall. Today, however, all stand united in recognition of his contribution to the Aboriginal people and to Australia. In doing so we take a further step, as a community, towards the achievement of the goals to which he dedicated his life."

*Rodney Knock*



## Past – Present – Future

We have just attended the opening of Mixed Mobs, Indigenous Australians and the Hunter (reported elsewhere in this newsletter). This outstanding event was the first of a series to be presented during Past Present Future Youth Reconciliation Week. Unfortunately for our readers this news letter will be too late to give you notice of these events. But we will hope to report as many as we can in the next paper. In the meantime Nicole Pietsch (youth coordinator) or a member of her committee are always available at the centre at the Palais Royale, 692 Hunter Street or at (02) 4974 2093. Support for this group is always welcome, and for those of us who are no longer young it is frequently inspiring to see the enthusiasm and achievement of youth.

*Pat Cameron*

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# Media Release

Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue

Friday, 23 February 2001

The Murdoch press coverage of my lengthy interview with journalist Andrew Bolt has been simplistic, sensationalist, misleading and mischievous.

This is both personally distressing and, more importantly, potentially very damaging to the causes I have devoted my life to working for.

Let me make the following points absolutely clear:

1. Significant numbers of Aboriginal children were removed, or stolen, from their families. And such practices were enshrined in the policies of the time and endorsed by government.
2. The legacy of these policies and practices has been devastating for my people. This legacy continues to impact on each successive generation, causing immeasurable grief and trauma and loss of culture.
3. The term 'stolen children' covers a wide range of different circumstances. In all cases there was compulsion, duress or undue influence.
4. Whether children were forcibly removed by the authorities or whether parents were encouraged by force of circumstances to surrender their children is largely irrelevant. The consequences have been equally tragic.
5. For my own personal circumstances, in which my white father appears (as far as I know) to have relinquished his five children, I now prefer to use the term 'removed'. I have always tried to represent this situation accurately to the public, to the best of my limited knowledge, for I was only two years of age at the time. I absolutely understand and respect that for many others the term 'stolen' more accurately describes their circumstances.
6. I know that my Aboriginal mother would have had no legal recourse, nor any moral support, in resisting our removal. I also know that her grief was unbearable. Our removal would have been seen as consistent with the policies of the time, which effectively sought to erase or assimilate the Aboriginal population.
7. I do not caution others against using the word 'stolen'. For many it is the most accurate description of what happened. I absolutely respect their right to use the term and I acknowledge that the term has come to have a broad meaning that encompasses a variety of circumstances of removal.
8. I still believe that Aboriginal people are owed a formal apology. In no way should my comments about my personal circumstances be used to imply that the past should not be acknowledged and apologised for.
9. Similarly, my comments should not be constructed to discredit legitimate claims for compensation. I have always said, and I reiterate, that I believe that a reparation tribunal is preferable to the adversarial court process. But I respect the right of others to seek redress through the courts.
10. Finally, I am very angry and upset at the selective way in which some of my comments have been reported. I deeply

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# "Stolen or removed, it was a shameful thing"

"The Right has unfairly twisted Lowitja O'Donoghue's story of how she was taken from her mother, writes Robert Manne."

Perhaps it should have been predictable that John Howard would respond in the way that he did to Andrew Bolt's article in Melbourne's *Herald-Sun*. It was still a shock to hear the prime minister speak in such a belittling way. Who is belittled? Surely it is the prime minister himself and our nation! The following extracts are from the 'Opinion & Comment' page of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Monday, 5 March 2001 by Robert Manne.

"...For the past three years there has been a concerted political campaign against the findings of the Bringing Them Home report of the inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal children from their families. It has been mounted by Quadrant, by right-wing think tanks, by former administrators of the removal policy and by half a dozen senior journalists of the mainstream press. The major purpose of this campaign has been to deny that in the separation of thousands of Aboriginal children from their mothers, families and communities a terrible injustice occurred. A subsidiary objective has been to discredit the term the Aborigines have embraced for their collective tragedy, the stolen generations.

This campaign has been rather successful, not least because it has had the behind-the-scenes encouragement of the Howard Government. While in Canberra the Government shed some crocodile tears concerning Aboriginal child removal, in Darwin the counsel it briefed to defend the Commonwealth against the claims for damages brought by two members of the stolen generations, Lorna Cubillo, and Peter Gunner, argued, without the slightest ambiguity, that the separation of mixed descent Aboriginal children from their mothers was not merely well-intentioned but straightforwardly "meritorious" and in the best interests of the child.

One of the journalists most deeply involved in this campaign is Andrew Bolt of Melbourne's *Herald-Sun*. In column after column Bolt has argued that this country is in the grip of a politically correct "moral mafia", who so hate Australia that they are determined to force ordinary, decent folk to believe that past governments had stolen Aboriginal children from their mothers and families who loved them. In one of his columns Bolt suggested that what we really needed was not a Sorry Day but a Gratitude Day. Bolt was, of course, the author of the "I wasn't Stolen" story of February 23. In an interview, Lowitja O'Donoghue had told him that she preferred to describe herself as removed rather than stolen. This "shock admission", Bolt implied, revealed that the whole idea of the stolen generations was a myth.

Bolt's inference was, of course, absurd. Between 1900 and 1970 about 10 per cent of all Aboriginal children were separated from their mothers and families. Although the circumstances of these separations varied, across the decades and the States, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Aboriginal children in most Australian States could be lawfully removed by governments without the consent of parents or the need to prove neglect before a court. Aboriginal parents frequently resisted, by darkening the skin of their "half-caste" children with charcoal or by disappearing, on news of the

approach of a policeman or patrol officer, into the bush. In such cases of removal- and there were thousands of them — the term ‘stolen generations’ is precise.

The missing moral element in this equation was the Aboriginal woman and her child.

Lowitja’s mother’s surrender of her children was not the expression of abandonment, as has been maliciously suggested, but of the fact she was, in the deepest sense imaginable, a powerless person, powerless as a young woman in a patriarchal society, but powerless even more as a member of a dispossessed and despised race. After she lost all her children, as Lowitja discovered, her mother experienced throughout her life an ‘unbearable grief’.”

“...It was one of the most terrible racial prejudices of those who removed the “half-caste” children that, as one protector once put it, despite their ‘momentary grief’ the Aboriginal mothers ‘soon forget their offspring’. Lowitja’s mother had mourned the loss of her children for more than 30 years.

In its latest move, the Right has sought to use the case of Lowitja O’Donoghue to advance its anti-stolen generations campaign. When Andrew Bolt’s story was published, true form, John Howard described it as ‘highly significant’. In fact the significance of her story is precisely the opposite of what the Prime Minister had in mind. What it reveals is the cruelty of Aboriginal child removal and the infamy of the anti-stolen generations campaign.”

Robert Manne’s *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right* will be published by Quarterly Essay (Black Inc.) later this month.

**Robert Manne**

### Quoting Victoria’s Attorney-General Rob Hulls

Hulls on Lois O’Donoghue’s statement: “Whether a person was stolen, or removed, or taken away ... it’s all the same thing.”

“...whether a young Aboriginal child was stolen or taken away or removed from their family, the trauma and pain the family suffered should never, ever be under-estimated by our community.”

**The Koori Mail, 7 March 2001**

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### Newsletter Production

A recent visit to Newcastle University to discuss the production of our newsletter with students enrolled in the ‘Aboriginal Studies’ course, proved valuable to us, giving some feedback. Our presence, followed on a visit made last year, at the request of the faculty lecturer Heather Clay. This time we were very fortunate to have Anna Kaemmerling with us to explain the more technical requirements for such an undertaking. In her professional capacity as a teacher of Computing Studies, Anna’s contribution was greatly appreciated by all present, particularly the NASG members.

**Anne Too**

## Keep saying stolen — Ridgeway urges

The term ‘stolen generation’ should not be ditched because, like ‘the spirit of the Anzac’, it captures an experience other Australians can share in, Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway said yesterday.

After addressing about 150 members of the stolen generation attending a national conference in Adelaide, Senator Ridgeway said he believed Aborigines removed from their families should not get caught up in the semantics of recent debates about the meaning of the term.

“This is the term that is used to describe that experience and story and the spirit of what people are saying... It’s no different to the spirit of the Anzac,” he said.

“The spirit of Gallipoli was shared by all Australians and was not ‘written off’ as a remote historical event whose significance was confined to those who participated, he said. “It’s about the human qualities which are captured in the term.”

Aborigines who had been taken from their families needed to ‘be the voice rather than the echo’ of commentators such as the historian Henry Reynolds or the anthropologist Ron Brunton.

Senator Ridgeway said members of the stolen generation were suffering discriminatory treatment over their attempts to seek compensation because their grievances had been politicised.

“The Government’s approach is one of forcing people to the courts as the first option and the last option.”

However, he told the 2001 national stolen generations conference that Australian law had set different standards for settling compensation claims, and these provided precedents for establishing a reparations tribunal.

**Debra Jopson, The Sydney Morning Herald,  
14 March 2001**

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### Meeting at the Foreshore

The heavens opened up for our barbecue at the foreshore railway shed,(we were entirely grateful for its covering shelter). Despite the initial light and sound show, those who were able to make it had an enjoyable experience. Five members of the “Guraki” Council Advisory committee, Koori and non Koori were present, also Laurel Williams brought along members of her Tafe class to join us. We were also very pleased that an Elder from the Mindaribba Land Council, Tom Miller together with his wife, were able to join us.

The food was plentiful, the company enjoyable and the mood celebratory. We owe particular thanks to Kath and Kevin Claydon, also Denis Grimshaw, who managed the barbecue, also Kath, Sharon, Lyndall and Rodney for food organisation. Thanks also to members who brought along salads.

**Anne Too**

### Wurreker Newsletter via E-mail

If you are able to help us save costs by receiving Wurreker via e-mail please forward your e-mail address to:

**L.Coan@telstra.easymail.com.au**

# Report – Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council

Ray Jackson, presents the report of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council's overall assessment of the implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This Report principally assesses the latest Government report on this matter, which covers 1998.

A particular criticism which the AJAC makes is that a significant number of important issues are ignored in the recommendations. The Commission failed to adequately address women's issues, either as victims or as offenders, and its Recommendations about juvenile and children's issues are limited.

The attention of the Recommendations is on the type and manner of procedural reform rather than on the intended outcome of that reform.

The specific focus on procedural reform ignores structural deficiencies in the criminal justice system in dealing with Aboriginal people and communities. In particular it does not address methods of empowering Aboriginal people, in a meaningful way, within the operations of the criminal system. For example only two recommendations specifically address improving police/ Aboriginal relations (R 60/61 R>J>) and only one, Recommendation 214, focuses on the important aspect of community policing, and empowering Aboriginal people on policing decisions. However, the recommendation is so broad that the effectiveness of the implementation is limited.

There is also the fact that the implementation of Recommendations is counteracted by other Government policies or legislation. For example Recommendation 62 states: 'That Governments and Aboriginal organisations recognise that the problems affecting Aboriginal juveniles are so widespread and have such potentially disastrous repercussions for the future that there is an urgent need for governments and Aboriginal organisations to negotiate together to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities, whether by being declared in need of care, detained, imprisoned or otherwise.'

"Yet the children (Protection and Parental Responsibility Act 1997) and the recent amendments to the Summary Offences Act, both increase police powers to deal with young people in public places, and increase the likelihood of contact of young aboriginal people with the justice system."

From Djadi-Dugarang, Newsletter of the Indigenous Social Justice Association, February 2001.

*Rodney Knock*



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regret that some subtle distinctions I made in a lengthy and manipulative interview have been taken out of context and distorted by Andrew Bolt and the Murdoch press. That this report will be used by some as a 'divide and rule' strategy to hurt my people and undermine the legitimacy of the claims of the stolen generations is doubly distressing.

# The Cherry Pickers

A recent theatrical production at Sydney's Wharf 2, which was widely acclaimed was the Kevin Gilbert play 'The Cherry Pickers'. The play had an Aboriginal Director, Wesley Enoch, as well as an all Aboriginal cast.

Of his work Enoch says: "I have a bit of a fascination with the past and history. A lot of the work that I do is about providing not just a written record but an emotional record of history so we can understand the past not just as words on paper but at a human level. So the broader community understands more on an emotional level what these political statements mean—they are not just Aboriginal fists in the air trying to get a political message across, they're human beings feeling and reacting.

It's a story of survival in the face of oppression. You could go to working class England of the time to see similar stories. It is that universality that is appealing. I went to see 'Billy Elliott' recently and I cried during it because you make connections—here are people facing amazing hardship and trying to be artists. I personally feel the same pressure and think 'why am I working in theatre? Why aren't I working in housing, providing good quality water to communities? Why aren't I looking at health issues? In the end, I have to come full circle and think there's dealing with the symptoms and there's dealing with the disease. Part of the disease is a lack of confidence, lack of role models. So I guess I help provide cultural images and representations in our terms.

The Sea of Hands, the Bridge Walks, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics have all relied on elements of theatre... You build up a vocabulary to change the world. You feel it's not just me.

Theatre has that ability to make you feel part of a community, part of something larger than the individual. Beyond the 'bread and circuses', theatre provides a more critical, insightful engagement of idea and spirit."

From an interview with Wesley Enoch by Currents, 1 February 2001.



*Pat Cameron*

## 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.

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# Merging Spirits

This exhibition of contemporary Aboriginal art was opened at the Gibson Street Gallery on 23 February 2001. It featured the work of two well-known artists, Carole Hartwig, and Mini Heath, and a newcomer to the Hunter, John Rivers. John came from Darwin for a time to live in Maitland. His work reflects the northern landscapes and the stories of his people there.

The title *Merging Spirits* reflects the spiritual and intercultural connection that has grown between Carole and John, Carole and Mini are siblings and are thus naturally close in outlook and interpretation. Those who visited the gallery, both at the opening and during the following three weeks, had a wonderful insight into Aboriginal culture through the vitality and relevance of these art works with their swirling colour' intricate designs and the stories that inspired them. Vicki Heath spoke of the significance of the happenings of the recent past, the Stolen Children Tribunal, the Walk across the Bridge and how this living culture is now reflected in the work of the people.

Carole and Wendy provided a delicious supper on the balcony and the talk and laughter went on for hours. We all know the talented Heath family so I will give you a brief introduction to our newcomer John Rivers. He has been painting all his life, but only applied himself seriously over

the last five years. His mentors were his father and grandfather, who told him the stories of the Larrikia people of the Northern Territory. His grandfather chastised him for not asking permission to paint the dramatic *Grandfather's Story* but thankfully relented and gave it his blessing allowing it to remain in the collection. He told me of his family background, his Celtic ancestor responsible for those red streaks in his beard, his uncle who fought on the Kokoda trail and the rich collection of characters who influenced his thinking and his art.

He has sold in India and Japan and his work now can be purchased from Anoushka's Cafe, 9 Day Street, East Maitland. We look forward to more exhibitions from these three artists.

*Pat Keating*



*continued from page 1*

Dr Bill Jonas is the Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner and Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner. He was director of Aboriginal Education and a senior lecturer in Geography at Newcastle University during the 1980s. *The Brisbane Courier Mail*, Wednesday, 17 January 2001

We are indebted to John Mills, M.P. State Member for Wallsend, for sending us this excellent article by Bill Jonas. Thank you.

Our next meeting: 7.30 pm Thursday 26 April 2001 at Wollotuka

## This is our AGM.

Besides the election of office bearers we urgently require a strong attendance of members to help decide future directions for our group. This centenary year of Federation and of the Federal election, gives our group the opportunity to lobby politicians, to follow up and further discuss proposals arising from the 'Inquiry into a Treaty'.

Please help us in our resolve to plan a course of action!

**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 \$25 - \$30 for waged, \$8 - \$10 for unwaged, organisations \$35 - \$55. Bulk orders: 5 copies for \$35 per annum, 10 copies for \$55 per annum. Non-member subscription: \$30.

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# Bits and Pieces

## Aboriginal Heroes of the Resistance

A new course entitled "Aboriginal Heroes of the Resistance" based on the book published by AWD, will be held some time during this year (Date to be confirmed) Please ring Lilyana at AWD (02) 9212 5275 for details)

Action For World Development, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, 8-24 Kippax St, Surry Hills 2010 Australia

## Trust Truth and Treaty

Tuesday 29 May 2001, 7pm-10pm

Trust, Truth and Treaty – a public information night at Marrickville Town Hall- story telling interspersed with entertainment, climaxed with a panel on the complex topic of Treaty Process.

## Hunter People's Inquiry into a Treaty

The completed compilation of submissions from the Hunter People's Inquiry into a Treaty are nearing completion thanks to the efforts of Lyndall Coan and Sharon Claydon, who took on the huge task of collating the material. We will be forwarding the summaries of proceedings in the near future.

*Anne Too*



## Awabakal Dreaming Stories

Welcome to the Awabakal Dreaming Stories CD-ROM kit.

This resource was developed especially for schools, libraries, colleges and universities to satisfy the need for resources in Aboriginal Studies and related subjects.

The kit contains the following:

CD-ROM featuring a selection of Aboriginal Dreaming Stories of the Awabakal people.

Printed books for each Dreaming Story featuring illustrations by an Aboriginal artist.

Teacher notes to ensure effective use of the resource. Includes ideas and activities for various levels of study.

### *The Dreaming Stories*

Kangaroo that lives inside Nobbys.

How coal was made.

Mulloong-bula: The petrified women of Swansea Heads.

When the moon cried and formed Belmont Lagoon.

The monster of Mount Sugarloaf.

All these stories have been researched, compiled and interpreted by Aboriginal people of the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region.

The CD-ROM and kit are available at a special introductory price of \$390.00 until 30 April 2001, from the 100% Aboriginal owned and operated producers.

Aboriginal Multimedia Productions, PO Box 465, The Junction NSW 2291, Phone: +61 2 4927 5570, Email: [caspinal@hunterlink.net.au](mailto:caspinal@hunterlink.net.au)

*Pat Cameron*

## Acknowledgement

Our thanks to all those who have contributed to this newsletter, particularly Anna Kaemmerling.

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