

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

# Wurreker

Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group

Newsletter No. 129

June 2001

## Treaty Presentation

### Let's Get on With It — Report of The Hunter Peoples' Inquiry into a Treaty

The Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group launched 'Let's Get On With It': A Report on the Hunter People's Inquiry into A Treaty on Sunday 3 June 2001 (Mabo Day).

The Report is divided into sections based around common issues and themes. Within these sections we have grouped together all the views expressed on that particular issue. The bulk of the report consists of what people actually said. Some of this is represented in point form. In other instances we have included a section of the transcript because those people said it so much better themselves and we would have lost so much understanding by cutting it down or trying to summarise it. We have included a brief summary at the beginning of each section.

We have called the report "Let's Get On With It" because this was the prevailing view expressed. This sense of urgency was tempered with the concern about "getting it right". There was a strong desire to finalise the unfinished business, with the content and the outcomes of the document being far more important than what we call it. The main concern was about securing an agreement that would result in lasting justice for Aboriginal people. For example, by including it in the Constitution rather than being an Act of Parliament which can be changed by any subsequent Act of Parliament.

This sense of urgency was borne out of frustration over the lack of response to calls for a treaty over a lengthy period. There was the sense that we know what happened, we know what we need to do, **we have to get on with it**.

There was a strong desire to begin whatever actions are necessary at the local level to move the process along. The suggestions varied, including the idea of a local treaty, maybe building on Newcastle's Commitment to Reconciliation. There were also many practical suggestions for local action such as the recognition of local Aboriginal places of significance and the Aboriginal names being recognised as well as the English names, such as Muloobinba which is the name for this place we call Newcastle.

A major challenge that was raised was the need to reach out to people who are not already committed to reconciliation, and the need for this to be a personal commitment, that each of us need to be having discussions with people we encounter in our daily lives.

There was also a major emphasis on the need for widespread public education about the history of the colonisation of Australia and the effects of this on Aboriginal people.

Lyndall Coan launched the report by presenting all of those present with the challenge that was put forward at the inquiry, that is, to "get on with it, to start here and to start now".

John Maynard, who has been one of the working group which organised the inquiry and prepared the report, presented copies of the report to representatives of the three tiers of government: the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Cr John Tate, the State Member for Newcastle, Bryce Gaudry MLA and the Federal Member for Newcastle, Allan Morris MHR. The report was also presented to ATSI Regional Councillor Ms Zelma Moran, Mrs Norah Doolan of the Banjeeri Elders Community Group, and Laurel Williams the chair of the Guraki Committee, who received it on behalf of their respective organisations. The Federal Member for Shortland, Jill Hall MHR and the State Member for Wallsend, John Mills MLA were also present and were presented with a copy of the report.

John Tate promised to give copies of the report to all Councillors and to discuss the report in Council, and look at ways of putting the suggestions into action.

Bryce Gaudry and Allan Morris both promised to take the report to their respective parliaments and Allan Morris proposed setting up a working group to follow up on the report and maybe get a local treaty organised. This working group would include himself, Bryce Gaudry and John Tate, members of the working group who have been involved with preparing the report, and representatives of the Aboriginal community.

We are very pleased with the response and are hopeful of some positive outcomes from the report. Copies of the report are available. Please contact Lyndall Coan on 49653682 or send to the secretary, Deirdre Howard, PO Box 79, Broadmeadow to ask for a copy to be sent. Donations towards the costs will be appreciated.

*Lyndall Coan*



## Youth Reconciliation Gathering

This gathering at the Palais Royale on 30 March was a great success. The quality, timing and variety of activities were a tribute to Nichole Pietsch and her team.

We received the blessing of the Lord Mayor, John Tate and Councillors Eade and McLeish, both of whom stayed with us for the day.

An example of the day's excellence was the high standard of the young Aboriginal dance groups. They were the Mooloobinbah Dancers, the Millibah from the Hunter School of Performing Arts and the Awabakal Dancers. All had variety and deftness of movement and a wonderful use of sound both recorded and live; and these were enhanced by the strikingly beautiful paint and dress. The performers were lively and intelligent, with clear enunciation and impressive choreography. I especially commend Ray Kelly junior and his group, Awabakal, for their vigour, discipline, and humour.

One hopes that all these dance groups will be seen by much wider audiences in the future.

What were the outstanding features of the day? Carol Ridgeway-Bissett's dignified and sincere welcome; Olivier's presentation of the Hunter School of the Performing Arts; and the extraordinary variety of consultation, discussion, art, drama, and music presented and described by two students of the Callaghan College, Waratah — an amazing effort of inter-racial learning and working together.

John Maynard and Sylvie Ellsmore (the new State Council of Reconciliation) presented material which the Support Group has been privileged to hear at its meetings. Then there was what this geriatric calls 'pop singspiel' to conclude. Twelve awards for books, songs, art with one unanimous \$500 prize, were presented by Ray Kelly, Barbara Gaudry and Councillor Peter McLiesh.

Meanwhile there had been time for two rounds of no less than 22 workshops! What work went into organising these! There was a variety of bush-tucker with wonderful local berries and nuts, fruit drinks and scones, and a great bush barbie for everyone!

How fortunate were the High School pupils whose teachers brought them there. And the day appeared to delight both Koori students and non-indigenous students.

The most enjoyable features for the not-so-young writer of this rave account were the clarity and incisiveness of the speakers, singers and performers. I could hear them all. This in itself is a lesson to young and old.

**Rodney Knock**



### Acknowledgment

To all those who have helped in the production of this newsletter, especially Anna Kaemmerling. To our friends at the Yamuloong Resource Centre, Daryn McKenny and John Hancock, many thanks for your support. Thankyou to Elizabeth McEntyre, congratulations and sincere good wishes in your future career.



**Anne Too for the NASG**

## Cultural Stomp 2001

Once a year Novocastrians gather in Civic Park for a festival of cultural diversity. Cultural stomp affirms the positives of such cultural diversity, and came about in response to Pauline Hanson's first visit to the Newcastle region five years ago.

This years Cultural Stomp theme was 'Local Action, Global Perspective'. The aim, to explore the effect of global events and their relevance to issues at home. Hheld on 26 May – National Journey of Healing Day, the theme of reconciliation was woven into Cultural Stomp in two ways.

First, a Cultural Forum on reconciliation was held in the Think Tent. Paul Walsh chaired the forum at which Donna Meehan spoke about being a member of the stolen generation. Donna reminded us that there are many members of the stolen generation in Newcastle but not all are ready to speak about their experiences. Following this Sr Carmel Hanson spoke about her experiences as a volunteer in East Timor and introduced two young women from East Timor, Sara Periera and Guida Correia, who have scholarships to study at the University of Newcastle. Sara spoke about the horror and destruction that happened in East Timor and her desire to get an education and return to help her country. Guida spoke about the challenges ahead in reconciliation for the East Timorese people who are not yet ready to forgive those who were part of the killing and destruction but yet they have to find a way to move on together and build their new nation.

Secondly, the symbolic lighting of candles was a moving and touching event that took place at the end of the official ceremony.

I would like to thank the eleven volunteers that helped make Stomp a success, including Greg Boxsell, Paul Carey, Kitty Winning, Serena Thiam, Georgia Koumoundourou, Adam Schilli, Michael McGinty, Michelle Ottara, Gary Hyndes, Marika and Angela. Thanks to the Cultures in Action Committee who worked behind the scenes, especially this years Cultural Stomp Coordinator, Dan Flanagan.

The essence of Cultural Stomp is encapsulated in the following quote from Lou Smith, 'Stomp is such an amazing event. Its uniqueness is unquestionable, as it has developed beyond its political catalyst to exist within it own right as an inclusive, relaxed and empowering festival of cultural diversity'.

**Deirdre Howard**

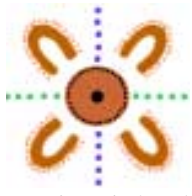
### The Governor General at Yallarwah

Many will remember the initiation of the Currawong Project in King Edward Park on Australia Day 2001, when we all planted seeds. At the beginning of May, the Governor General was asked to plant a tree at Yallarwah Place.

'I'll do it next Saturday,' said Sir William. Many phones rang and about a hundred indigenous and white people gathered at the Serpent's Head. In simplicity and humility, this great man scattered soil from Yarralumla over the bronze book and the Circle of Reflection. Then he said: 'We plant this tree in the spirit of the Currawong; black feather white feather lifting me. We call on all Australians to replant a shared future together.'

We ask you all to make an effort to attend another tree planting ceremony at Yallarwah on Tuesday, 21 August, at 11:00 am. Dr Marie Bashir, the State Governor will be doing the honours this time.

**Rodney Knock**



## I've got a Story to Tell

Daryn McKenny invited us to the Yamuloong Community Computer Centre to show us the technology available there and to discuss the projects in hand, including putting *Wurreker* on his web page. 'I've got a story to tell' he said, 'about the work being done to make this computer centre an Aboriginal Archive starting with the publication of *Wurreker* and the *Awabakal Newsletter* on its web-site, so that the Aboriginal Community, and all interested people world-wide, could find out what is happening in the Hunter area.'

Realising that Aboriginal people had few venues where they could use computers and access the Internet, the team from Yamuloong – including Daryn the Coordinator, John Hancock the IT resource trainee, and Leah Armstrong the General Manager of Yarnteen – worked to set up five Community Computer Centres in the Hunter Valley, all equipped with the latest technology. Three others are also up and running, Barkuma Neighbourhood Centre at Kurri Kurri, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council at Tanilba Bay, and Yulawirri Nurai Indigenous Council at Morisset, while the fifth is nearing completion at Muswellbrook. These Centres can be used by anyone, not only the Indigenous Community. People of all ages and backgrounds and skills are welcome. Help is at hand to guide users through the intricacies of computing, surfing the net, and accessing the

web pages. This resource will not only help to preserve Aboriginal culture but can also promote Aboriginal projects and businesses.

'My goal and my challenge is to bring the oldest culture in the world into contact with the latest technology in the world' Daryn said. He hopes that there will eventually be a net-work of similar centres all around Australia, and the proud heritage of Indigenous culture will consequently be known and understood.

Daryn talked of his new project, Wiyelli-ko: a web page that allows a meeting place, a forum, a message centre so that the whole world can talk directly to our Indigenous people.

'This is the first web-site in Australia to act as an Aboriginal meeting place' he believes. Wiyelli-ko is soon to be launched and its success is practically assured. Through the Internet and by e-mail messages from more than twenty countries have been received by Yamuloong., such is the world -wide interest in Australia's Indigenous culture. For example, contacts have been made by two students from the Swiss/ French border interested in Aboriginal culture, a Belgian citizen has already decided to come out here to visit Yamuloong in person.

The web site can be accessed at [www.aboriginalhunter.com](http://www.aboriginalhunter.com), *Wurreker* is available on line from now on.

Thank you Daryn for a great and informative session, the first of many we hope.

*Pat, Rodney, Anne, Pat*

## Reconciliation Week Ball 2001

On 2 June 2001 the inaugural Reconciliation Week Scholarship Ball was held at the University of Newcastle. The ball was organised by John Lester and the staff of Wollotuka, and was attended by university staff and students as well as members of the wider community (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). \$6,000 was raised for the establishment of a scholarship fund which has a target of one million dollars in ten years. The annual ball will be a significant part of this fund raising but other money will be raised by donations, optional salary deductions for university staff, and from bequests. Several members of the NASG committee attended the ball as guests of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Brian English.

This scholarship fund once established will provide perpetual scholarships for about four or five Aboriginal students and will exist alongside the Jack Doherty Scholarships. Donors will have the option of which type of scholarship they wish to support. The full-time scholarships

are designed for those students who are not eligible for Abstudy because their parents income is slightly above the thresh hold, but their parents would not be able to financially support them through a university degree. These scholarships would be available for study in all faculties of the university.

At the ball the Vice-Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes read out the draft of the University of Newcastle Reconciliation Statement which commits the university to wide-reaching changes in its practices, including education in Aboriginal history for all students, changing signs at the university entrances, and a commitment to self-determination for the Aboriginal programs.

It was a wonderful night, great food, good music and a fun way to participate in reconciliation. With twelve months notice it would be good to see a large representation from the NASG at next years ball.

*Lyndall Coan*

### WE NEED YOU

NASG members are currently forming a group which will organise social events to promote Reconciliation.

We need your ideas, your enthusiasm and your help. Be involved and have some fun.

Phone Julie: 4954 0717

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# Seeking a Shared Spirit

An Aboriginal Social Justice Paper released by the St Vincent de Paul Society

## Summary

The St Vincent de Paul Society has released Seeking a Shared Spirit for three reasons. Firstly, as spirituality is at the centre of St Vincent de Paul's mission and spirituality is intrinsic to the lives of Aboriginal people, we feel a strong empathy with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters as we deepen our own faith.

Secondly, we wish to voice our concern that, from all available information, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders still emerge as the most disadvantaged and oppressed groups in the Australian community. Our mission states: We work with the poor in development by respecting their dignity.

Finally, the St Vincent de Paul Society has a strong commitment to social justice. We seek to co-operate in shaping a more just and compassionate Australian community.

The St Vincent de Paul Society, along with other charitable institutions, has at times fallen into the trap of treating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as welfare cases rather than as brothers and sisters with whom we share a spiritual bond. We are sorry for any pain or hardship we have caused. However, there are also positive initiatives that we have undertaken and we will endeavour to build on these.

We all need to listen to what Aboriginal people say about their relationship to the land so that true healing and reconciliation can take place.

"Through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of man's relationship with God, for the land was proof of the power in life greater than yourselves. You did not spoil the land, use it up, exhaust it, and then walk away from it. You realised that your land was related to the source of life."

**Pope John Paul II speaks to Aborigines**  
**Alice Springs, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1986**

The effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders of having to live in two cultures, with the one that is their birthright often demeaned and discredited, can be devastating.

Over the past 30 years, since Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were belatedly 'granted' citizen rights, much has improved in regards to the way Aboriginal people are presented in the media. However, these positive images tend to focus on those people who have been a success in non-Aboriginal terms, such as sporting heroes, and are displayed as the glittering exception rather than as the rule. There is widespread public acceptance of the 'good' Aborigine but prejudice and vilification for the one who is seen as 'bad'.

In recent years a mean-spirited campaign has been conducted in the media by the Howard Government, and other leaders in the community, that threatens to overturn the positive gains that had been previously made. Concepts such as 'practical reconciliation' and claims that Aboriginal people already enjoy more benefits than other Australians, should be refuted and organisations like the St Vincent de Paul Society need to be part of this process of truth-telling.

This statement has taken many months of preparation. During this time we have been asked why the St Vincent de Paul Society is involved in these issues at all?

We believe Seeking a Shared Spirit answers this question and affirms our good faith in participating in the great task of reconciliation.

In future newsletters we will print statements from the booklet, which is a Social Justice Statement from the St Vincent de Paul Society.

*We would like to thank Max McVie for this contribution to the newsletter. Max has been a NASG member for the past 20 years.*

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## A Week of Action Against Racism

'A Week of Action Against Racism' (AWAAR) is being planned for the Newcastle region from 31 August to 7 September 2001.

AWAAR was established by a group of voluntary Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal postgraduate students from the University of Newcastle in response to recommendations coming out of a Regional Meeting for the United Nations World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Sydney earlier this year. The postgraduates have formed a working group to coordinate and facilitate events for the Newcastle region to coincide with the World Conference that will be held in South Africa from 31 August to 7 September 2001.

AWAAR will be a community-wide event involving various activities focusing on the five themes of the World Conference. It will also focus on important national themes developed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) that are specific to Australia. So, AWAAR will have local, national and global characteristics.

Events will be held in the lead up to and during AWAAR. Upcoming events include the AWAAR Quiz and Auction night

to be held at South Newcastle Leagues Club on 19 July at 7pm. Items to be auctioned include a signed Newcastle Knights jersey. Quiz prizes will include free vouchers for meals, books and movies, as well as bottles of Hunter Valley wines. Tickets are being sold at \$10 per person with 8-10 people per table. For more information contact Deirdre Howard on 0414 608847 or email at nasgsec@yahoo.com.au

Another AWAAR event, that is being organised by the Newcastle Co-counselling Community to raise funds to send people to the World Conference, is the screening of '**A Long Nights Journey into Day**'. A moving film about the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa. Screening dates are Friday 22 and 29 June at 10 Wood Street, Newcastle West. The film will commence at 6.30pm. Donations can be made at the door. For more information contact Ross Brown on 4969 3223.

As part of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC's) domestic preparations for the World Conference, a series of community consultations are being undertaken in capital cities and regional centres around Australia throughout June and July. The Newcastle community

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# Changing Voices

Our Federation fathers, both ancient and modern, have spoken at length of our Australian ethos and our united egalitarian society. Let us examine those speeches and see what progress, if any, Australia has made in the past hundred years.

Alfred Deacon made perhaps the sole reference to Aborigines amongst the plethora of speeches that marked our foundation as a nation. He said: 'If they be a dying race, let us hope that in their last hours they will be able to recognise, not simply the justice, but the generosity of treatment which the white race, who are dispossessing them and entering into their heritage, are according them.'

This example of cold-blooded hypocrisy typified the attitudes that led to the era of dispossession, incarceration in missions, removal of children and deaths in custody were accepted as normal.

There were some signs in the sixties that attitudes were changing. The 'freedom riders' and the overwhelming success of the referendum to recognise Aborigines in the Census were two examples. The Whitlam Government passed comprehensive land-rights legislation in the seventies but as late as 1991, after the royal Commission into Deaths in Custody, the Commissioner Elliott Johnston spoke: 'Until I examined the files of the people who died (in police custody), I had no conception of the degree of pin-pricking domination, abuse of personal power, utter paternalism, open contempt and total indifference with which so many Aboriginal people visited on a day-to-day basis.'

The findings of the Royal Commission were largely ignored and the deaths continued. The Stolen Children inquiry caused many to weep but did not elicit a 'sorry' from our leader.

Have things changed after a hundred years of nation-building? Yes, the Wundundjeri people took part in Parliamentary proceedings for the first time, with their smoking

ceremony of welcome in Melbourne. The Governor General and the Leader of the Opposition and most other speakers acknowledged the Wundundjeri people as the traditional owners. Our Prime Minister took his cue from 1901 and steadfastly ignored them.

The white leader was silent but the Chairman of ATSIC filled the gap. Geoff Clark said that the 'racist assumptions' were still in evidence today. He continued: 'When you formed your nation in 1901 it was evidently designed to be white. Let's not forget that the word federation comes from the Latin word meaning a treaty or agreement. And the federation will be incomplete until we are treated as equals in that federation. You have discriminated against us, taken away our children from us and, in fact, reduced us to beggars in our own land. I think there is a moral duty that you consider us and reach agreement with us.'

Noel Pearson spoke of a way forward as he launched the book *The Enabling State, People Before Bureaucracy* by Mark Latham and Peter Botsman.

'My father died with ten bucks in his pocket in our little fibro house but, thanks to Gough Whitlam's education system, all of the world opened up to me. If our people on Cape York are going to succeed in our vision for securing a better place where young people live according to their own choice and according to their own talents, between their world and the global world, we're going to need a sustained commitment to the education guarantees that came to us in the seventies.'

He added that Governments must turn from delivering 'passive welfare' to becoming deliverers of opportunities to escape the permanent state of dependency that so often exists now.

Quotes from *The Sydney Morning Herald* and 'Distant Voices' by John Pilger.

*Pat Keating*

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## Jack Doherty Scholarship

Presentation Day, 10 May 2001



The worth of recipients over the years is shown by the numbers who complete their degrees. One of the present winners, Lucy Kelly, inspired by her experiences, and filled with the desire to inspire others, also received a Bachelor of Fine Arts (as did James Tabuai, from 2000). Rebecca Anderson, Rebecca Schofield, Luke Pearson and Lisa Morgan, have this goal too. All were grateful for the scholarship as a reward for the support of parents or the determination of a grandparent.

Also from last year's successful candidates, Elizabeth McEntyre, Bachelor of Social Work, was chosen to address the 2000 strong audience in the Great Hall. One notes the success of other Koori friends: Trish Neal, with Master of Social Science; and Gail Garvey, Master of Education.

The setting for our luncheon and presentation was again Wollotuka, now advanced from support centre to Department of Aboriginal Studies. In numbers and training of Aboriginal staff and level of indigenous education the University of Newcastle leads the way. This was emphasized by John Lester from Umilliko, Deputy Vice Chancellor Brian English, and

scholarship chairperson Jean Talbot (who said that Jack Doherty had believed in education as an essential means to indigenous advancement).

We were very fortunate to have Paul Callaghan, of Purrimaibahn fame, from Tighes Hill TAFE, to present the scholarships. He has the capacity to catch and hold us with his sincerity and imagination. First he paid his respect to the land's owners and their spirits. He was delighted that so many of his people were embracing Western education: it was through this their hearts could sing and their spirits dance as in the old days around the camp fire. The graduates, he said, had reached the scary point: they represented their people's future. Our guest concluded by recalling the tears he shed when Cathy lit the Olympic flame. He invited us to turn to our neighbours, shake hands and say, "well done." In the spirit of this simple secular Pax, we thank you Paul.

The Jack Doherty scholarships are now having to draw on one private donor, the Con and Athie bequest. John Lester has hopes of widening the appeal. May success attend his and others' efforts.

*Rodney Knock*

# Labor's Response to the Stolen Generation

A major issue in this year's Federal Election is Reconciliation. The mainstream press has already responded with discussion on the matter. We hope that this newsletter will be able to support informed discussion, and we will welcome policy statements from all parties, as well as hoping that our members ask for the specific commitments to reconciliation from their own representatives.

Joint statements by the leader of the opposition, the Hon. Kim Beazley MHR, and the shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and reconciliation, Senator Bob McMullen MHR.

"We are today announcing Labor's response to Bringing them Home, the report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

The response is made up of three main commitments:

- A national apology in the first sitting week of a new parliament.
- A national conference to examine methods of resolving the consequences of forced removal.
- Monitoring and annual reporting to parliament by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on the progress of the implementation of the *Bringing them Home* report.

These Labor commitments aim to provide a means of addressing the hurt and trauma suffered by those removed through past government policies to enable this country to move forward together as a nation. Labor's position is not about blame or assigning responsibility to present generations. It is about acknowledging an honest and accurate shared history of relations between the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Australia.

The Howard Government's policy involves refusing a national apology, ignoring the existence of the widespread claims for redress and spending millions of dollars on expensive legal processes.

We believe that apologising for the mistakes of the past is the first step to effective reconciliation.



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consultation process will take place on 27 July at Newcastle City Hall from 9am – 5pm. The Newcastle consultation will allow individuals and community groups to raise issues and develop strategies to address racism and racial discrimination. For more information contact Janis Constable from HREOC on (02) 9284 9785 or Joe Perry from the AWAAR Working Group on 4921 6252.

You can find out more about AWAAR by logging onto the AWAAR website at: <http://www.hunteraboriginal.com/awaar>, or send an email to the AWAAR Working Group at [awaar2001@yahoo.com.au](mailto:awaar2001@yahoo.com.au)

More information about the World Conference can be obtained from the United Nations website at <http://www.un.org.wcar>

*Deirdre Howard*

The terms of the apology will be based on those already passed by all State Governments, Labor and Liberal. Those State precedents make it absolutely clear that an apology does not render the government making the apology vulnerable to compensation claims.

Present Government policy of allowing the courts to resolve the issue of forcible removal does not provide a solution and exposes the Commonwealth to an unquantifiable risk of financial liability. This is made clear in the Government's budget papers where government policy is listed as 'Contingent Liabilities, Unquantifiable'.

We need to look for a more satisfactory way to deal with these claims. The current Approach carries an enormous social, political and financial cost.

This is clear when we look at the enormous costs resulting from the Government's handling of the Cubillo-Gunner claim against the Commonwealth. This has cost taxpayers over \$12 million to date, and the case is still under appeal.

This shows the Government has its priorities wrong yet again. Costly and divisive litigation results in millions of dollars flowing to lawyers and nothing going to the Stolen Generation.

Every Australian, regardless of political allegiance, could think of better ways to spend this money to provide assistance to many who are amongst the poorest Australians.

Labor believes Australia has two choices. We can either turn our back on the Stolen Generation, as this Government has done, or we can specifically acknowledge past injustices with a national apology and by agreeing on practical means to address the loss and grief of so many indigenous Australians.

A Labor Government's response to *Bringing them Home* will allow a reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians about our history. It will provide acknowledgement and an opportunity to move on together. It will seek to end division and costly litigation.

Most importantly it will make real progress towards the goal of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Melbourne, 25 May 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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# Towards Equal Outcomes

My years at the University of Newcastle will remain in my memory for the rest of my days. Both the Wollotuka Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre and the Department of Social Work on the Callaghan Campus have empowered me through the acquisition of knowledge and assisted me to realise and reach my full potential academically, culturally and spiritually. My intent now is to encourage others to confront and accept the challenge of a tertiary education and share my rewarding experience.

I would like also to acknowledge the Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group as playing a major role in my tertiary education. In my final year of studying for a Bachelor of Social Work in 2000 I was fortunate enough to be awarded a Jack Doherty Undergraduate Scholarship which greatly assisted me to complete my studies. I will be forever grateful for this financial support.

For my Graduation Ceremony in May I was nominated to be the Graduate Speaker. My speech among other things, focussed on 'positive discrimination' and the need for Indigenous peoples to be given 'special measures' through policies to address our disadvantage in education. I would like to share a part of this speech with you.

'...One of the biggest barriers for Indigenous people in accessing tertiary education is financial insecurity. This is recognised by the Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group whereby, each year up to five undergraduate scholarships, funded by community donations, are offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to assist them to complete

studies at this University. The scholarships are in memory of the group's founder Jack Doherty, who saw tertiary education as a key factor in Aboriginal liberation and ultimately self-determination. I view this type of 'special measure' to be real action towards reconciliation, perhaps an alternative to sticking coloured plastic hands in the earth. Reconciliation for me therefore, includes equal outcomes for education, which transpires into social justice for Indigenous Australians...'

Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone from the NASG for your support and I look forward to us working together in partnership towards a reconciled future.

*Elizabeth McEntyre*

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## NAIDOC Week

This is a reminder that Naidoc week starts on Sunday 8th July and an interesting week is planned. Yarnteen is soon to send out the calendar of events and you will be given details at our June meeting. The walk from the Cathedral to Civic Park is planned for Monday, 9 July and all of us who remember these gatherings from former years will be marking that day on our calendars.

For more information contact: Yarnteen, Pat Capper 4956 7688.

*Pat Keating*

Our next meeting: 7.30 pm Wednesday 27 June 2001 at Wollotuka

A Forum on names and places: Recognising Aboriginal place names and stories associated with places in the Newcastle region.

Guest speaker will be John Maynard and Michael Donovan

Discussion, planning and recommendations for 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.

**Non-member:** individuals or organisations may subscribe to Wurreker for \$30 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

## Annual General Meeting – 26 April 2001

The AGM unanimously endorsed a proposal for NASG to join the NSW Reconciliation Committee. This will enable the NASG to be linked with other reconciliation groups throughout NSW and be covered for public liability insurance as an incorporated association. (See enclosed form for your signature.)

A new Executive was elected. For me, it was a surprise and an honour to be elected as the Secretary of the NASG for the next year. However, it is going to be hard work following in the footsteps of someone as exceptional as Rodney Knock.

Our new President is Lyndall Coan. The Vice-President is Stan Masterson, Sharon Claydon is the new Treasurer. Other members of the Executive are, Rodney Knock, Anne Too, Bob Berghout, Margueitte Morrison, Jean Talbot and Jill McKeowen.

Deirdre Howard. (Secretary) contact at nasgsec@yahoo.com.au

*Deirdre Howard*

## Administration Costs

Our administration costs keep rising. With this in mind, recent generous support has been offered by the Australian Association of Social Workers, (AASW) Hunter Branch, with a continuing, yearly donation of \$250, towards administration costs. On behalf of the Support Group we sincerely thank the AASW for their considerable contribution.



## Telephone Tree

We are hoping to re-establish the telephone tree. The tree will be used to notify members of important events which are given at short notice, missing publication in Wurreker. If any member does not wish to receive information via the tree, or is unable to pass the message onto three or four others, please let us know.

## Purrimaibahn 2001

In recent years Hunter people have become aware of the excellent work done by the Aboriginal Unit of Hunter TAFE. This year's presentation on Thursday, 12 April attracted several hundred friends and supporters to the City Hall Banquet Room to view the work of the 41 categories and regions represented.

The unit's name, Purrimaibahn, is Awabakal for platypus, appropriately symbolising the varied backgrounds of the 1500 Aboriginal students in the Institute. Campus origins, in addition to Newcastle, include Gosford, Ourimbah, Karuah, Maitland, Cessnock, Singleton, and Glendale. The awards covered art, cultural practice, painting, food and beverage, nutrition and woodturning.

After a welcome and dancing by 'Millibah', themselves from many tribes, guest speaker and director Gaye Hart emphasised the constant distinction being conferred on the Unit (which has received four of the six NSW awards given for excellence in Aboriginal Education), whose works are 'just as exciting as those in Alice Springs'.

We supporters have no doubt that these successful recipients will return, as she suggested, and do further work at TAFE.

The current Purrimaibahn exhibition at the Regional Museum, with works submitted by more than 50 students, will be over by the time you read this. Our congratulations to Paul Callaghan for his inspiration and hard work in this thriving TAFE enterprise.

Purrimaibahn is over but you are reminded that the 'Mixed Mobs' exhibition at the Regional Museum is still there, ever-growing in scope and excellence.

*Rodney Knock*

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**Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group**  
PO Box 79  
Broadmeadow NSW 2292

## Wurreker June 2001

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PP 229460/00080

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