

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

Wurreker

Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group

Newsletter No. 138

March 2003

Our Common Humanity

Linda Burney Indigenous leader and organizer speaking to *The Koori Mail* (15 January 2003) said, "With the feeling of insecurity in the world and the way in which this phenomena has touched Australia through the Bali bombing, it is time to think about our humanity to each other as human beings. The humble acts of individuals add up to the collective action of all."

Indigenous people and Jews recently honoured Aboriginal opposition to Nazi persecution of Jewish people in 1938, an attack on all humanity.

Raimond Gaita, professor of moral philosophy King's College, London, and professor of philosophy at the Australian Catholic University, says: "Desert Storm's 'softening-up operations', which bombed tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers into the desert sands, showed a brutal lack of regard for human life."

"It is hard to see how one could show such contempt for the humanity of combatants and, at the same time, show genuine respect for the humanity of civilians by careful (and much publicized) attempts to restrict 'collateral damage'. Respect for humanity is not so easily divisible. The frequent attempts to make it so are among the reasons George Orwell was scornful of the importance we sometimes hypocritically attach to the distinction between combatants and civilians". (*SMH*, 22 February 2003)

A recognition of the common humanity of the peoples of the world underlay the Rally Against War which met in Civic Park in Newcastle on Saturday, 15 February. We were welcomed to traditional Awabakal land by Elder Ken McBride who pointed out that Indigenous people had already experienced invasion and war against civilians, and so were well placed to voice their opposition to invasion of Iraq. France, Germany and Russia have undergone similar terror in the past and similarly maintain their opposition to war and invasion.

Mr McBride likened Saturdays 20,000 demonstrators for peace, to those who marched across the bridge for reconciliation, both events a recognition of all people's common humanity. Speakers at the Rally came from Indigenous people, from the political parties, Labour, Progressive Labour, the Greens, Democrats, Socialist Alliance, ex-president of the Liberal Party, John Valder, the Trade Unions, Student and Women's organizations, Iraq Refugees, and the churches including the Catholic Bishop of Newcastle, the Dean of Christ

Church Cathedral and the Uniting Church. Speakers were united in their opposition to War; in short speeches, each detailed specific areas of opposition often deriving from their own particular background, but their thrust the same, No War.

Bruce Childs, a co-convenor of the Sydney Peace March (16 February), said, "I've been in politics for 50 years, and this movement is the most spontaneous thing I've ever seen. It's a movement of people that's going past all the others". (*SMH*, 22 February 2003)

Major-General Alan Stretton (retired). Writes: "As a former deputy director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau and a member of the National Intelligence Committee, I am very unconvinced about the veracity of the United States' intelligence reports presented to the United Nations by the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

This intelligence comes from three sources-satellite photography, communication intercepts and informers. The photos produced could be interpreted in many ways, the intercepts from the huge US resources could only come up with two middle-ranking Iraqi officers discussing the movement of something they wanted to hide' while informants will usually produce any information you want to hear if you pay enough.

The alleged connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda is ludicrous. So US intelligence believes that there is an al-Qaeda supporter in Northern Iraq! There is probably one also in Australia but to suggest that, as a consequence, the Howard Government supports the al-Qaeda organization is laughable.

I can't forget that the American excuse for sending troops into Vietnam, was that the US destroyer Maddox had been attacked by two North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. This statement by the US president was subsequently admitted to have been false.

For the past several months the UN inspectors have been free to go anywhere in Iraq without prior notice. One wonders why, if the US intelligence knows where the weapons of mass destruction are located, the US didn't tell the inspectors where to look.

Even if these intelligence reports are true, there is still no valid reason why the Australian Government should be sending young Australians to be embroiled in a war in the Middle East where the consequences and duration are unknown.

The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 February 2003 - Pat Cameron

Linda Burney

This is a good news story, rare in these days of wars and rumours of wars, racial discord and oppression. It comes from an interesting article by Tony Stephens in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 2003. This is a condensation of his article:

Linda Burney is standing as the ALP candidate for the seat of Canterbury and is almost certain to be elected to the NSW Parliament in March. She will be the first Aboriginal person to serve as a member in the whole 156 years of the parliament's history. She has had an amazing career, having served on the Anti-Discrimination Board and the SBS Board, and chaired the NSW Juvenile Justice Advisory Board and the State Reconciliation Committee. With that experience and those credentials she will be an outstanding representative.

She was born in the little town of Whitton in the south-east of NSW to a non-Indigenous mother and was bought up by her great-aunt Nina and her great-Uncle Billy, a shearer and drover. She became interested in her Aboriginality when she was twenty and met her father, a Wiradjuri man. She intends to equally represent all the 130 nationalities who live in her electorate as all are equally Australian.

Intrigued by this short glimpse of a remarkable woman, I contacted Linda's office and received a summary of her CV and found more facts. In addition to the appointments listed in the *SMH* article, she also was President of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, was on the Board of Vocational and Training, the Historic Houses Trust, Australian Volunteers International, and the University of Canberra's Council.

She was named one of Australia's "True Leaders" by the *Australian Financial Review's* Boss Magazine in 2001. In 1996 she received the Lipton's Australian Women's Quality of Life Award.

She commenced her career as a teacher in 1979 and remains passionate about education. She was the Charles Sturt University's first Aboriginal graduate and in 2002 received an Honorary Doctorate in Education from that University. In 1993, she received the Director General's Award for Outstanding Service to Public Schools and in 1995 the NSW TAFE Medal. She is a proud member of the Wiradjuri Nation and is currently the Director General of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

This is perhaps the most impressive CV of any candidate up for election and the photo accompanying the *SMH* article shows her certainly to be among the best-looking. We look forward to seeing Linda as Premier or Prime Minister in the future.

Acknowledgements to Tony Stephens, *SMH*, and thanks for help given by the electoral office of Meredith Burgmann.

Pat Keating



National Christian Youth Convention in Newcastle

This convention was held in Newcastle from 5th-11th January and is a bi-annual event ran by the Uniting Church in Australia.

There were around 2000 young people from around Australia and the world who attended NCYC and this included almost 100 Indigenous people. These Indigenous delegates visited from communities in Arnhem Land and Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal Lands as well as Finke, Port Augusta and Grafton.

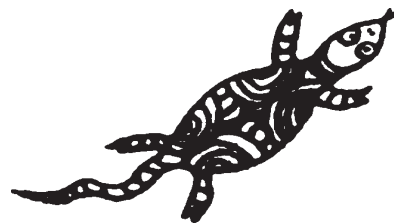
During their stay the delegates had the opportunity to participate in the NCYC program, experience a week of awesome Christian fellowship, meet lots of new people, teach others about their culture, see the sights of Newcastle and be challenged by simply attending the convention.

Some of the Indigenous Delegates were significantly involved in aspects of the program including: the ladies from Ernabella teaching about 100 people a dance; a group from Arnhem Land teaching a small group about kinship, language, tribal customs and dance and then them all dancing in front of 2000+ people; a group of boys from Ernabella and Finke playing in a band for a couple of hundred people and the group from Port Augusta running worship late at night and it growing in numbers.

Personally I found my interaction with the Indigenous delegates to be very rewarding and I have made friends for a lifetime. Highlights for me included seeing the high amount of interaction in the dance party venue regardless of culture or language differences; hearing a group from Ernabella sing in their own language; having so many people trust me and learning more about the differences between different Aboriginal groups within Australia.

I have had some contact with people from Ernabella in the last couple of weeks and they are still bursting with enthusiasm and want to get some new events happening in their community. It's this kind of enthusiasm for new things that makes it a worthwhile event for all who attend.

Nikkie Condon



The Atsic Elections

At the election, held on 19 October 2002, the following NSW Commissioners were elected: Rick Griffiths (NSW East), Steve Gordon (NSW West) and Cliff Foley (Sydney Region)

Other Regional Chairpersons elected are: Steve Blunden (Coffs Harbour), Lyall Munro (Tamworth), Maxine Conaty (Sydney), Iris White (Queanbeyan), William Jeffries and Robert Carrol (Wagga Wagga).

On the 19 December, an election for Head of ATSI the Victorian Commissioner and present leader, Geoff Clark, was re-elected.

Congratulations to all those who elected in every state and region of Australia.

The Koori Mail, 11 December 2002 – Pat Keating

The Eleanor Duncan Centre

The opening of a new building to house the Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre in Wyong was an occasion for much rejoicing but some anger. The building was financed by the NSW Department of Health and was opened by Veronica Graf, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council's councillor for the Sydney/Newcastle Area. She is also the chairwoman of the Yerin Aboriginal Health Services that runs the centre.

She spoke of the success the Centre has had in providing a marked improvement in Aboriginal health since its inception in 1995. It provides a school screening programme, and clinics for eye, ear and diabetes testing, as well as drug, alcohol and domestic violence counselling. It recently gained funding for an emergency service in addition to its usual medical service facility. Ms Graf acknowledged that funding had come from the State Government, not only for the new building and for all previous initiatives, but was angry that the Commonwealth Government had refused all requests for extra funding. "We have proved our ability to establish and run an efficient health service" she stated, "but though the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging, which is responsible for Aboriginal health in Australia, uses this centre as a model for others, they still refuse us funding".

This means that though doctors in Commonwealth – funded Aboriginal medical services are paid, the dedicated doctors and other health professionals at this centre, work for the Medicare rebate only. When we read that the centre has managed to reduce the numbers of hearing-impaired children from 9 out of 10 in 1995 to 1 out of 10 now, we realise how necessary and successful this service is. The Central Coast has the fastest growing Aboriginal population growth in NSW and the Eleanor Duncan Centre assists an average of 40 clients a day.

There is no worthier cause than the provision of health facilities for Aborigines throughout Australia. What a pity our leader is so obsessed with war and his popularity in the USA. Perhaps Veronica Graf and the Yerin Aboriginal Health Services could go through George Bush to get John Howard's attention.

The Koori Mail, 27 November 2002 – Pat Keating



A Top Operator

Kelvin Kong, a member of the Worimi nation, was given that title in *The Koori Mail*, 27 November 2002 and it took a few moments to realise that the 'top operator' did not deal with machinery, but was in fact a surgeon. Kelvin had been advised to leave school to get a job to help his poor family whenever he expressed a desire to become a doctor. Luckily his Mum was a registered nurse and his twin sisters Marilyn and Marlene had already embarked on their medical studies and with their backing, young Kevin stayed at school. He decided that his future was to become a doctor when, in Year Seven, his class went to the Aboriginal Centre at Wollatuka to hear a talk by two of Australia's first Aboriginal doctors, Sandra Eaden and Louis Peachey. So started his brilliant career.

Graduating from the University of New South Wales in 1998, he rose to his present position as a surgical registrar at

History Rewritten

We follow with interest the move by the Federal Government and its cohorts, to rearrange history to their liking, in regards to how the National Museum of Australia presented Australian history.

In his article (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday, 27 November 2002) Sir William Deane writes 'Decrying the memories of Mistake Creek is yet further injustice'.

"Dismissing Indigenous oral history on the basis of 'no police record' ignores cultural context."

"Paul Sheehan ("Our history not rewritten but put right", *The Newcastle Herald*, 25 November 2002) uncritically accepts and repeats historian Keith Windschuttle's dogmatic denial of any non-indigenous responsibility in relation to the killing of Aborigines, including women and children, at Mistake Creek in the East Kimberly. In so doing, he conveys a false picture upon which he bases some criticism of me. I am led to respond only by reason of the hurt that Sheehan's article, if left unanswered, may cause to the Kija people of that region.

"As regards details of the killings, there is conflict between the Kija oral history and local police records about the nature and extent of the involvement of a non-Indigenous former police constable named Rhatigan. Otherwise, there is a remarkable degree of common ground between the oral history and the police records."

"It is clear that there was throughout Australia, including the Kimberley at these times, often reluctance on the part of police to file adverse reports or to bring proceedings against white settlers in respect of extreme physical retribution against Aborigines for the killing of livestock on traditional lands." "At the same time there would be few lawyers, at least of my generation, with relevant experience who are unaware of how misleading and unreliable untested police reports of alleged verbal statements by illiterate, particularly illiterate Aboriginal, accused or witnesses can be. If one were to restrict acceptance of oral Indigenous history in relation to the killing of Aborigines to those cases where there was confirmatory police evidence or action, the resulting sanitised version of events of the dispossession would be contrary to plain fact and even commonsense."

Anne Too



Westmead Hospital. He has recently been accepted into an advanced surgical training course for otolaryngology (head and neck surgery) as he had worried for years about the ear troubles suffered by Aboriginal people – about ten times more than the general population.

He has childhood memories of people coming to his home to consult with his mother rather than go to a doctor or hospital because of the bad experiences they had endured in the past. His Nan spoke of the hardships and racism she'd faced bringing up twelve children with little help. But she and his family remained positive and inspired him to keep going.

Kelvin Kong paid tribute to the Elders he had met, both at home and in Sydney, saying "Any success I have is a tribute to my ancestry and my Elders".

The Koori Mail, 27 November 2002

Black Chicks Talking

Book Review

by Leah Purcell, 2002, Hodder Headline Australia, Sydney.

Leah Purcell's very successful one-woman play *Box the Pony* gave insights into her own experiences, now she has written *Black Chicks Talking* to give a wider understanding of the strength, diversity and spirituality of Aboriginal people. Part of Purcell's motivation for this book was to show that "Australian Aborigines are not all the same, just like the rest of the world is not. We are all individuals and we all have our own stories to tell." (p.xiv). In *Black Chicks Talking* Leah Purcell has facilitated the telling of their stories by nine Aboriginal women. Each of the first nine chapters is one woman's story as told to Leah in an interview.

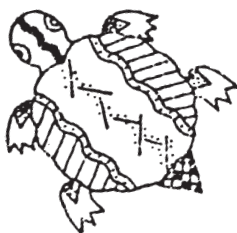
Intermingled with Leah's questions and the women's answers are Leah's own comments about the issues they raise and about her own experiences. The final chapter is an account of the conversation at dinner where Leah brought all the women together at a restaurant. The "Black Chicks Project" also included the women having their portraits painted while they were being interviewed. Colour photos of these portraits are included in the book. There is also a photo of the hot pink "Black Chicks" painting by Bianca Beetson which symbolizes the Black Chicks talking, and includes traditional and contemporary images.

The nine women interviewed are Deborah Mailman – actor, Sharon Finnan – Australian World Champion netballer, Frances Rings – dancer, Liza Fraser-Gooda – producer of Australia's first Indigenous Women's Calendar, Cilla Malone – mother, Tammy Williams – lawyer, Kathryn Hay – Miss Australia 1998, Rachel Perkins – filmmaker, and Rosanna Angus – Community Police Warden. Leah says "the only way we can understand our fellow human beings is by knowing their stories and these women are giving theirs" (p.xiv – xv).

In the interviews Leah explores a range of issues, covering their childhood, participation in Aboriginal and politics, Aboriginal identity, and their individual achievements. During the interviews we learn much about Leah as well as the other women. To quote Valerie Coombs who wrote the forward, "these stories stretch across a range of issues facing Aboriginal people, particularly women in this country today. The frankness, openness and honesty of these women is remarkable, while their suffering, spirituality, strength, dignity, pride and beauty permeate their stories." (p.ix).

Leah Purcell's interviewing style, combined with the warmth, humour and candour of the "Black Chicks" makes for a great read which is both enjoyable and extremely informative. I would strongly recommend *Black Chicks Talking* to anyone wanting to gain an insight into a range of contemporary Aboriginal experiences and issues.

Lyndall Coan



Profile: Durungaling Hostel

Durungaling Hostel is part of Aboriginal Hostels Limited, which aims to ensure accommodation is provided in an environment that encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve personal goals and obtain dignity and equity in the Australian community.

Durungaling Hostel provides a comfortable, friendly and happy environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students. It is situated in North Lambton, close to the university, which can easily be reached either by walking or a short bus trip. Jesmond shopping centre is also close.

The hostel provides full board and lodging at an affordable rate. This includes three meals per day plus supper. Communal facilities include a study/computer room with internet connection, TV and video, laundry facilities, and tea and coffee available 24 hours per day.

Single and shared rooms are available where students have their own desk, and sheets are washed weekly. Car parking spaces are available for students who have cars.

The manager, Beau Mundine, lives in at the hostel and is on call 24 hours. A relief manager, Dianne Gordon, also lives in when she is on duty. Other staff include a cook, cleaner and handyman/gardener.

Durungaling Hostel currently has places available for Indigenous students. Enquiries can be made to the manager Beau Mundine on 4952 4062.

Yorta Yorta Decision

Following the High Court's decision that the land claim of the Yorta Yorta people is invalid, Dr. Bill Jonas' article in *The Koori Mail* included the following comments.

"The difficulty of establishing native title contrasts markedly with the ease with which it can be extinguished. — The social benefits arising from coexistence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous interests on land must be found outside the native title arena. The cultural benefits of having Indigenous laws and customs recognized as a vital and necessary part of the lives of contemporary Indigenous people is replaced by a notion of native title as a heritage value only.

For many Indigenous people whose identity is moulded by a diverse range of influences, institutions and laws it provides a demeaning test casting doubts upon, in most cases, the most significant aspect of their identity; their Indigenous identity.

Is contemporary Australian society one that will uphold laws that discriminate against Indigenous people? With native title law in its current form, the answer to this question must be yes. I can only hope that the High Court is wrong when it assumes that laws are a reflection of society. I can only hope there are many, many people who will find native title laws intolerable."

Commenting on the Yorta Yorta case, Senator Ridgeway said, "[this case] was the longest running native title case in Australia, having been bounced around the courts and various mediation processes since 1994.

It is also likely to claim the unenviable title of being the most expensive-leaving generations of Yorta Yorta to carry the unjust legacy of debt."

The Koori Mail, 15 January 2003 – Pat Cameron

'Get Political' says South African

The Minister for Local Government from the South African Province of Eastern Cape, Gugile Nkwinti, has called on Aboriginal people to be more active in the political process.

Mr. Nkwinti, speaking at a meeting with NSW Aboriginal Land Council, said the first step would be to become members of a political party that best represented Aboriginal people. "I think that the best way to make your voice heard loudly is to be in the 'main game' of politics". He spoke also of the importance of leadership.

NSWALC chairman agreed with him about becoming involved in the political process, "We cannot rely on white politicians to speak for us". Mr. Trindall believes that some of the young talented Aboriginal people in the community should consider a move into politics. "We have a lot of talent in our community. I hope that some of these people will broaden their aspirations outside of the Aboriginal community," he said.

The Koori Mail, 15 January 2003 – Pat Cameron



Carol Ridgeway Bishop

Worimi woman Carol Ridgeway Bishop has been elected president of the Port Stephens Historical Society, near Newcastle, NSW.

Ms Ridgeway Bishop is the first Aboriginal person to fill the position and after years of work as a researcher and social justice campaigner she knows plenty about the coastal area where her family and ancestors have always lived.

She is also a member of the Lower Hunter Catchments Management Board and deputy chairwoman of the Hunter Aboriginal consultative committee for the Department of Land and Water Conservation. As well she supports the Port Stephens Reconciliation Group.

"We need social justice and to preserve our natural heritage and in turn allowing for us as Aboriginal people to continue our cultural practices," she said.

The Koori Mail 12 February 2003 – Rodney Knock



Colin Markham

"We've had some good people in politics, but none quite like Colin Markham," said NSW Aboriginal Land Council chairman Les Tindall. "He's got in there and taken the gloves off for Aboriginal people.

There is a genuine sadness among many NSW communities because Colin Markham, current Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs, did not win pre-selection for Wollongong for the March State election.

"But that's politics" said Mr Markham, disappointed but not surprised at the outcome following his outspoken exposure of Labour branch-stacking in Wollongong in July. — Although I'm not going to be a Member of Parliament after 22 March, I'll still be around for some time working for social justice for indigenous people."

The Koori Mail, 15 January 2003 – Pat Cameron

Ministerial Statement by John Ah Kit

In his first ministerial address to the NT Legislative Assembly, Mr Ah Kit warned of a downward spiral of hopelessness in Indigenous communities, which threatened to turn the Territory into a financial basket case and create a permanent underclass. Dysfunction was endemic 'through virtually all of our communities, both in towns and in the bush.' The list of statistics demonstrating this was staggering.

Mr Ah Kit said that his people 'must escape from the cargo cult mentality of the government doing everything for them, of relying on the empty rhetoric of playing the victim [must] overcome the cancerous ideology of despair'. This statement was widely reported around Australia.

Related comments were, however, strangely absent from media reports – 'government must allow the development of forms of governance that allow Aboriginal people the power to control their lives and communities'.

'None [of the Community Councils] are self-reliant financially or structurally'. — 'As government subsidies have shrunk their capacity for self-determination has withered'. Instead the councils have been used by previous governments 'as part of their trench warfare against the Land Rights Act'.

Mr Ah Kit said 'it was extremely hard to recruit and retain [skilled] staff in remote centres' but at the same time 'there had been any number of incompetent or crooked people working for Aboriginal communities'. At the same time 'there had been no effective strategy to supply the education and training necessary for Aboriginal people to run their own lives-let alone the complexities of local government council'.

The speech spelt out various concrete examples of both failure and success included in the later the work of Health services and the Indigenous Housing Authority. As part of a new era of social justice, Mr. Ah Kit foresaw an expanded role for IHANT, and the establishment of Indigenous knowledge centres.

From Atsic News, Summer 2002 – Rodney Knock

Brave Act Honoured

Indigenous Australians and Jews have gathered in Melbourne to celebrate what until now has been a little known humanitarian gesture led by one of Australia's greatest Aboriginal men.

Back in December 1938 a small delegation of Aborigines sought a meeting with the German Consul in Melbourne to protest at the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

That delegation was led by the late William Cooper, the founder of the Australian Aborigines League – a forerunner to the Aborigines Advancement League- who in the same year had been a leading figure at the day of mourning marking 150 years of white arrival in Australia.

The failed 1938 meeting with Adolf Hitler's representative in Australia' where the Aboriginal representatives attempted to voice 'on behalf of the Aborigines of Australia a strong protest at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi Government of Germany', resulted in minor coverage in a Melbourne newspaper.

That coverage recently came to light and resulted in a gathering at Melbourne's Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research centre, where the Aboriginal actions were honoured.

The Koori Mail 15 January 2003 – Rodney Knock

Healing Our Spirit

Linga Longa ABORIGINAL PHILOSOPHY FARM presents Philosophy Week 2003 "Healing Our Spirit", 21-26 April 2003. This is a unique opportunity to spend five fulfilling days with Australian Indigenous Philosophers and Teachers, sharing their cultures, values and spiritual beliefs to heal ourselves, our spirit and our land.

Philosophy Week gives you the opportunity to spend five days and nights "Koori time", camping under the stars in the tranquil Rollands Plains. The week includes presentations from Indigenous Philosophers and Teachers and allows lots of time for sitting around a campfire and sharing your views on culture, spirituality and healing. Between 200-300 Indigenous and non Indigenous people of all ages, (including children) gather each year in this relaxing and friendly environment to learn, laugh and grow with the oldest living culture in the world. Information on previous Philosophy Weeks is on their website www.aboriginalphilosophyfarm.com

Facilities and Food

Linga Longa provides non-powered camping facilities including showers and toilets. The registration fee includes all meals and drinks. Participants also receive a Philosophy Week 2003 T-shirt, carry bag and a choice of either a cap or drink bottle. Evening entertainment will also be provided. Please note there is often rain during the week so please come prepared with adequate camping and wet weather gear as the program will continue regardless of weather conditions. Please note that Philosophy Week is a Drug and Alcohol free event.

Cost

Full registration:\$660

Student/Pensioner registration:\$440

Child registration:\$110

Loyalty registration - in recognition of their support of Philosophy Week, previous participants will be given a 10% discount per year that they have attended.

Presentations

Each day there are two presentations given by prominent Indigenous Philosophers and Teachers. This year 's theme "Healing our Spirit" will include presentations on: Belonging in the land, Stages through life, Ceremony, Time and timelessness, Death and dying, Country, Healing and Healers, Spirit and spirituality. Each day, between presentations there are cultural workshops allowing a hands on, fun and practical experience of various cultural activities including: Bush Medicine, Bush Tucker, Dance, Language, Art, Music, Craft, Spiritual Growth, Spiritual Healing

A full program and Registration forms are available on the website www.aboriginalphilosophyfarm.co or through contacting

Linga Longa Aboriginal Philosophy Farm
PO Box 713, Telegraph Point NSW 2441
Phone (02)6585 8282, Fax (02)6585 8042
Email PhilosophyWeek@midcoast.com.au



Dancer's Death no Accident

Nearly eight years have passed since Keith Connors was killed on a dark highway in Hawaii. Keith was a dancer, a graduate of the Sydney Aboriginal and Island Dance School. He was invited to Hawaii to attend a cultural exchange between the Indigenous peoples of Hawaii and Australia.

The tour was sponsored by Billabong and Quicksilver, with surfers and dancers from Wreck Bay and Coffs Harbour, along with the De Hui surf club of Hawaii.

The Connors family of New South Wales does not know how Keith died in Hawaii. A recent investigation published this year in The Weekend Australian newspaper revealed serious questions about the death of Keith Connors, then 25 years of age.

In 1995 Keith's family was told by a tour organizer that Keith's death was an accidental hit-and-run, but since then have received advice from Hawaii that his death was a homicide, related to a violent incident in Oahu North Shore hotel. Keith was not involved in that fighting, but his death has been described as a result of "a bar-room brawl that got out of hand."

Although the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade routinely offer 'consular support' to the families of victims killed overseas, they have declined assistance to the Connors family a number of times, telling them that they should themselves appoint a private solicitor in Hawaii.

However ATSIIC is now looking into the Department of Foreign Affairs handling of the death of an Australian citizen.

Hannah McGlade, Koori Mail, February 12, 2003.

The Koori Mail editor notes that Hannah McGlade was Keith's girl friend, and that "The Honolulu Police Dept. recently advised that the case has been formally re-opened."

The Koori Mail, 12 February 2003 – Rodney Knock



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

President:

Lyndall 4969 7965

Secretary:

Deirdre 4967 1418

Jack Doherty Scholarships:

Jean 4957 5562 Zeni 4957 1466

NASG Finances:

Sharon 4927 8691

Editing Wurreker:

Anne 4929 1123 Pat K. 4928 2837

Pat C. 4920 1642

General Enquiries, Subscriptions:

Rodney 4963 6143

Letter to the Editor

The Maitland Mercury

I first became aware of the Aboriginals in Australian life when, during a Church conference in 1962, we discovered them living on the (Armidale) rubbish dump. On our protesting, the City Council showed a complete lack of interest.

Since then we've had the freedom ride, a steady stream of history and biography, and friendship across the previously unbridgeable racial divide. We have learnt a history of extermination almost achieved, and of an apartheid regime which taught South Africa a lot.

I therefore never cease to be surprised by the welcome constantly extended by the descendants of Australia's oldest culture, without which the great leaps of Reconciliation since 1990 would have been impossible.

I live in your neighbour city further east. I am hearing from my friends in Mindaribba Aboriginal Land Council of

contempt shown by people in government and the media for legal land claims made under the 1983 Act. I've learnt of hatred preached by adults and picked up and practised by children; of the refusal to meet and talk; in fact, of slamming the door on understanding.

Yes, it is a big topic, and this a mere letter, but where have these people been during the last ten years? Do they still believe myths about Mabo and Wik? We sing of 'boundless plains to share', but apparently only with Europeans. Is 'mateship' only for the white mate in the pub? Has Australia no spiritual dimension?

My life's experience with Aborigines (I'm 70) has enriched me. It is sad that so many of us prefer to remain impoverished.

Why did we walk across the harbour Bridge if not to Unite the people of this fair land?

Rodney Knock



Our next meeting: 7.30 pm Thursday 13 March 2003

at the new Birabahn Indigenous Higher Education Centre

University of Newcastle, Callaghan

Guest speakers: Brian Dowd, Aboriginal speaker for 'Blacks on Track'

Laurie and Mavis Smith talk about their long involvement with the Aboriginal people of Northern Australia.

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

I would like to receive *Wurreker* via email. My Email address _____

Bits and Pieces

A Quote from *Resistance is Useful*

Quote: "So long as power persuades the disenfranchised their challenge has no point, protest will feel helpless and our strategies like spitting in the wind."

"We too need to be cunning as serpents and gentle as doves as we speak our pointed resistance into the hardened ears of power and wealth."

From *Resistance is useful*, by Rev L. Levett-Olson, minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. Article in AWD newsletter, Autumn 2002.

Acknowledgment

Special thanks to Pat Cameron, Pat Keating, Rodney Knock, Lyndall Coan, Nikkie Condon and Anna Kaemmerling for the production of this newsletter.

Colin Markham

We've had some good people in politics, but none quite like Colin Markham," said NSW Aboriginal Land Council chairman Les Tindall. "He's got in there and taken the gloves off for Aboriginal people."

There is a genuine sadness among many NSW communities because Colin Markham, current Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs, did not win pre-selection for Wollongong for the March State election.

"But that's politics" said Mr Markham, disappointed but not surprised at the outcome following his outspoken exposure of Labour branch-stacking in Wollongong in July. — Although I'm not going to be a Member of Parliament after March 22, I'll still be around for some time working for social justice for indigenous people."

The Koori-Mail, 15 January 2003 – Pat Cameron



A Sad Celebration!

It was sad to receive the news in late December, that AWD was to cease operation by the end of February 2003, due to financial stresses. This decision was made shortly after AWD's 30th Anniversary.

The NASG has been an enthusiastic subscriber to the AWD Newsletter since the beginning of our groups existence. It was at a Newcastle branch AWD meeting, at Marist Brothers school in Hamilton, that the group which soon became the NASG, was initiated.

AWD's role as educator for environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, and social justice has been an inspiration to all. As an early member of AWD, and on behalf of the NASG, I would like to thank all those who have been a part of such an uplifting and empowering body of people. We will miss you!

Anne Too

Scholarship Donation

We are happy to acknowledge the following further donors to the Jack Doherty scholarships in 2002: John Walmsley, Griselder Brown, Zeny Giles, Dr. Peter Hendry.

Meeting Calendar for 2003

AGM Meeting: 1 May
Guest Speaker : Bryce Gaudry

Following meeting dates for the year 2003:
26 June
28 August
30 October
11 December

If you do not wish to continue receiving this newsletter, please return to:
Newcastle Aboriginal Support Group
PO Box 79
Broadmeadow NSW 2292

Wurreker March 2003

Print Post Approved
PP 229460/00080



**SURFACE
MAIL**

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA