

NEWSLETTER #42, May 2010

PAST MATTERS 2010

The Past Matters is an annual festival hosted by Eltham Bookshop and NRG. We hold it late in May to celebrate Reconciliation Week (although this year it is a week early). It's an exploration of contemporary Indigenous writing, art and literature. Bringing together some of our brightest thinkers and writers, the festival seeks to generate discussions on Indigenous affairs – whether they be artistic, political, historical or personal.

Eltham is indeed privileged to have such an event on its calendar. Seize the opportunity to be informed and moved by the stories given to us during this event.

The complete programme is attached, and it can also be downloaded from our website.

NGURRUMILMARRMIRIYU [WRONG SKIN]

The distance between Elcho Island and Melbourne is measured not only in kilometres but also in perceptions. Now a group of athletic young people from the Island is showing us how to overcome the spaces between.



They are the Chooky Dancers - artists of mime and satire. At the Malt-house Theatre in March they combined tradition and novelty to portray the turmoil of 21st Century techno kids who have been raised to observe strict

cultural behaviour. Through the drama of doomed love we observe the destructive consequences of "Wrong Skin" attraction.

This tragic outcome is postponed by a series of dances influenced by Broadway musicals, Bollywood, Michael Jackson, the Yolngu, and the original tribute to "Zorba, the Greek." With props as quirky as umbrellas and supermarket trolleys combined with the sounds of the didgeridoo and clap sticks, the mixture of attitudes to be worked out by anyone attempting to understand the other is emphasized.

Dancing between exuberance and despair is probably an appropriate metaphor for young lives on Elcho Island. White fellas would do well to reflect on the severity of many cultural practices in their own world. The hard bit is to respect the differences and learn how to live authentically with them. Perhaps after dealing personally with these variations we can learn to enrich each other.

Joan Pickard



This is a film that deals with the issues in Indigenous life that have been distorted by the intervention of the Howard government. It uses footage from Arnhem Land and Elcho Island to illustrate the necessity of reinstating the UN Racial Discrimination Act which the Rudd government has failed to do. Filmmaker Sinem Saban has, for the past nine years, been teaching English and video production in communities such as Yirrkala. She believes that the focus on paedophilia didn't match "the reality on the ground", and uses Indigenous voices to support this conviction.

Joan Pickard

[Ed: There was a recent preview screening in Melbourne, but no indication to date if it will get a proper release in cinemas or on television. For updates: <http://www.ourgeneration.org.au/>]

New Indigenous representative body

(edited from an article in the National Indigenous Times)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda welcomed as a "new beginning" Indigenous Australia's new nationally elected representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. It was proposed by Mr Gooda's predecessor Tom Calma last year, following a series of consultations around the country.

The directors include public health specialist Kerry Arabena and former ATSIC Counsellor Sam Jeffries, Josephine Bourne, Peter Buckskin, Ned David, Colleen Hayward, Klynton Wanganeen and Daphne Yarram.

Mr Gooda said the congress would be "ground-breaking for all the right reasons". "It has evolved from a process driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and it has stood by its commitment to gender equity by implementing a National Executive comprising equal representation of women and men," he said.

The Meeting Place: Different Minds, Different Hands

**Art Exhibition: 1 July to 29 August
Eltham Library Community Gallery**

This exhibition is the work of five artists who, as members of Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, have used a variety of media to express their thoughts and experiences as they 'meet' Aboriginal Australians, struggle with Indigenous issues and are affected by the rich differences in Aboriginal cultural expressions.

Artists:

Janet Boddy, Don Brown, Ann Curry, Joan Pickard and Diana Warrell

The works are beautiful, confronting, humorous, surprising. Expect to remember this exhibition long after it closes. A unique experience. The first time that works with this theme have been exhibited; the first time that NRG has sponsored an Art Exhibition.

Tuesdays - Saturdays: 10am - 5pm; Sundays: 1pm - 5pm; Mondays: closed



RECONCILIATION WEEK 27th May to 3rd June — a selection of events:

(Updates: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/get-involved/events/events-calendar>)

19th May- 5th June 2010

Manningham Gallery, 699 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster 3108

Ph: 9840 9367 <http://www.manningham.vic.gov.au/>

Winyarr-Ngu-Bala Aboriginal Women Give To You

An exhibition that celebrates a group of Victorian Aboriginal women's identity and connection to culture, community and family. Artists include: Vicki Couzens, Maree Clarke, Bindi Cole, Megan Cadd, Paola Balla, Lee Darroch and Patricia Harrison. Curated by Megan Cadd

27th May, 2010 3pm - 5pm

ANZ Docklands, 833 Collins Street

8654 8125

ANZ Indigenous Speaker Series

An afternoon of music from three Indigenous musicians across three generations hosted by ABC Radio National's Daniel Browning, brings together artists Kutcha Edwards, Deline Briscoe and Jack Charles to perform and share stories.

29th May, 2010 5pm - 8:30pm at The Substation, 1 Market Street, Newport: Koorie Night market, including a fantastic evening with performances by Liz Cavanagh's Jazz Quartet, Jayden Lylist, Allana Atkison, and traditional Dancers and Didge Players. There will also be delicious and unique, contemporary Indigenous cuisine, basket weaving, dance and didge workshops and of course, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stallholders selling a diverse range of handmade quality products.