



NEWSLETTER #45, April 2011

TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA

We are the people of the land. The land is our mother. For more than 40,000 years we have been caring for this land. We are its natural farmers.

Now, after so many years of dispossession, we find once again we are being thrust towards a new dispossession. Our pain and our fear are real. Our people are again being shamed.

Under the Intervention we lost our rights as human beings, as Australians citizens, as the First People of the Land. We feel very deeply the threat to our languages, our culture and our heritage. Through harsh changes we have had removed from us all control over our communities and our lives. Our lands have been compulsorily taken from us. We have been left with nothing.

The legislation under which we now live does not comply with international law. It is discriminatory. We are no longer equal to other Australians. We are no longer equal to you.

As people in our own land, we are shocked by the failure of democratic processes, of the failure to consult with us and of the total disregard for us as human beings. We demand the return of our rights, our freedom to live our traditional lives, support to develop our economic enterprises to develop jobs and to work towards a better future for all our peoples.

So extreme have been the actions against our people that we must appeal to all people of Australia to walk with us in true equality. Speak out and help to put an end to the nightmare that Northern Territory Aboriginal people are experiencing on a daily basis.

7th February, 2011

Handwritten signature of Rosalie Kunoth-Monks.

Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Utopia

Handwritten signature of Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra.

Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, Galiwin'ku

Handwritten signature of Harry Nelson.

Harry Nelson, Yuendumu

Handwritten signature of Djapirri Mununggirrit.

Djapirri Mununggirrit, Yirrkala

Handwritten signature of Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.

Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM, Nauiyu

Handwritten signature of George Gaymarani Pascoe.

George Gaymarani Pascoe, Milingimbi

Handwritten signature of Dhanggal Gurruwiwi.

Dhanggal Gurruwiwi, Yirrkala

Most members would be conversant with the Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail on Watsons Creek which the NRG has been busy maintaining over many years, but perhaps few would now remember how it originally came into existence sometime in the year 2000.

Unsurprisingly, it owes its existence to the William Barak Short Story Award that the NRG organised amongst some thirty local primary schools between 2000 and 2007 within which it invited children to write a short story of an imagined group of Wurundjeri children who'd once lived in the bush where they lived.

After the completion of the first year's awards, it became evident to the award judges that participants were having difficulty relating to the theme and so the NRG developed and presented to each school an issue of the forerunner to its present *Wurundjeri Culture Resource Kit*.

Even so, in following years, participating schools appeared to be still experiencing problems, so the NRG searched around for a suitable patch of bushland to develop as a trail for children and adults to walk and connect more intimately with the region's Aboriginal story.

It so happened that about this time the federal government had allocated a billion dollars to the restoration of Australia's degraded natural environment and this saw \$120,000 granted to the Osborne Road, North Warrandyte Land Care Group for the development of the Warrandyte-Kinglake Wildlife corridor. Aware of this, the present writer contacted Margaret Burke, the group's energetic mover-&-shaker to suggest that the NRG would be willing to take over the development of one of the corridor's designated sites as an Aboriginal Resource Trail.

Margaret was enthusiastic about the offer and together we completed a tour and chose the Gawa site, one of the seven reserves already given a Wurundjeri name by the Shire of Nillumbik.

September 2001 saw work underway on the Trail's construction. Here special thanks ought go to Llewellyn Pritchard who took on its

Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail



Photo: Susie Walker

design and purchased the necessary materials out of the \$20,000 allocation provided by Margaret Burke from her \$120,000 Natural Heritage Grant. Assisted by a team of Green Corps, Llewellyn, together with other NRG members then oversaw the laying of the trail's 340 metres of pathways, plus the setting in place of its various seats and the design of its numbered markers.*

The trail (together with its initial brochure) was formally launched in grand style in late 2001 by senior Wurundjeri elder, the late 'Juby' Wandin, during which *Bunjil*, the Eagle was seen to hover low overhead as 'Juby' spoke his well-chosen words.

On Sunday, 6 March 2011, Clean-up Australia Day, a small group of NRG volunteers devoted the morning to the Group's usual weed-eradication and clean-up duties, during which frequent comment was heard about how well the trail presented. Currently, Sasha is working on a new updated version of the Gawa Trail Brochure soon to be generously funded and distributed by the Nillumbik Tourism Association.

What the trail now needs most is greater promotion! Perhaps an appropriately worded letter to all primary schools in our part of the Yarra Valley, offering a guided tour might be a good next step taken. I, for one, would be willing to take on the role of guide should arrangements be made for my electric scooter to be transported to the trail's entrance and back.

Mick Woiwod

*See NRG's 7th June 2001 AGM minutes



Mick Woiwod, 'Juby' Wandin and Elizabeth Savage Kooroonya at the opening of the Trail

The Intervention

By Jan Aitken, with reference to articles by Jane Bardon (ABC) and Mark Schliebs (The Australian)

Over the last few months there has been a growing voice of objection to the government's NTER, now always referred to as The Intervention.

Aboriginal leaders speak of dispossession again: loss of rights as Australian citizens, the removal of control over their own communities with lands being compulsorily taken, of the failure of democratic processes. They want the return of their rights, freedom to live traditional lives, support to develop economic enterprises which will create jobs – having in mind the creation of a better future for their people.

Problems generated by the Intervention are exemplified in Hermansburg, 150 kms west of Alice Springs. Baydon Williams is an elder there and he is 'fed up with governments exacerbating the problems of Indigenous people across the Northern Territory'. His community of 550 is an Intervention-targeted community, and he watches as many of his people are travelling to Alice Springs. The government's \$150 million programme to build houses in the town camps there is bringing more and more people into the Alice from bush communities. (M.S)

The policy of concentrating funding in 20 large communities known as "growth towns" is encouraging people to leave the smaller communities, which are excluded from assistance. "There is nothing out there for them any more." Unemployment, boredom, drinking and violence are conditions of town life for the community people, who are left to roam the town streets. The problems of violence and anarchy in Alice Springs is reported frequently in the press.(J.B.)

Tony Abbott has invited Julia Gillard to join him in consultation with Indigenous leaders, but to date Julia Gillard has refused.

Mr Williams is one of 10 leaders who have sent an invitation to both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott to 'sit down in the dirt with us and find solutions together for the alcoholism, boredom and anti-social behaviour'. Nathan, his 28yr old son, says both sides of politics must work together with Indigenous people to improve remote communities. (M.S)

Many prominent Australians and the international community are speaking out against various aspects of the Intervention. Check out these people on the Internet:

Alastair Nicholson: former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia:

The film: Our Generation

Concerned Australians

Rev. McCrae

Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia

There are reports from communities in which women in particular are benefitting from the use of the Basics Card, to which half a welfare payment is made, reducing the loss of money to humbugging, gambling and alcohol, and making it available for food and clothing. Bess Price on QandA recently spoke supportively of the Intervention and its benefits to her community – she supported Noel Pearson's view. This drew an angry Tweet from Larissa Behrendt.

The underlying problem with the Intervention seems to lie with the philosophy which drives it. There has been an overt return to assimilationist attitudes in which white Australia knows what is best for Indigenous communities and legislates to make it compulsory. Inherent in all that is provided is an assault on attachment to land, to religious practice and to community. A spear in the heart of Aboriginality.

The questions remains unanswered: how to provide assistance and support while practicing respect and recognition. The move to include Aboriginal people specifically in our constitution is a necessary step. But it does not satisfy the vital need for bipartisan cooperation in sitting down in the dust and confronting the crisis together.

Healthy Outlook as Lowitja Institute opens

- a report sourced from the Koori Mail, April 6 2011



Lowitja O'Donoghue Painting by Robert Hannaford

The Lowitja Institute brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, academic institutions and government agencies in the service of Indigenous health research and engagement. The head office has been opened in Carlton, Melbourne within 2 kms of a third of the country's bio-medical and health research facilities.

Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin said her Wurundjeri people were very happy to have the Lowitja Institute on their country. Patron Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG said she was proud to lend her name to "the first national outfit solely committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. There needs to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at all levels of the health service: policy, administration and practice.

Archie Roach, who sang at the opening, told this story: "I remember one time when one old uncle went to a health service. He came out with tears in his eyes. 'Are you right, Unc?' I said. He said 'I'm just so happy that I was treated today by an Aboriginal doctor ... I never thought I would see the day!'"

Worawa was proud to host visitors from the Warlukurlangu Artists' Aboriginal Corporation: Otto Jungarrayi Sims and his wife artist Ormay Nungarrayi Gallagher and Manager Cecilia Alphonso and daughter Eliana, who travelled from Yuendumu for the opening of the Yapa, Stories From the Heart art exhibition at Worawa and held workshops with students.



YAPA, STORIES FROM THE HEART: Perspectives of Aboriginal Identity and Spiritual Essence from the people of Yuendumu, Central Australia. (Yapa is the Warlpiri word for Aboriginal.)

Worawa Aboriginal College: The Sandra Bardas Art Gallery
60-80 Barak Lane, Healesville Ph 5962 4344

Sandra Bardas OAM was a champion of Aboriginal education. An accomplished artist, photographer and art collector, she established the Greenhills Foundation. The establishment of Worawa Aboriginal College, the first fully independent Aboriginal secondary school in 1983, was a major achievement of the foundation.

The College has created the Sandra Bardas Art Gallery and is currently exhibiting art from a number of Central Australian Aboriginal communities. The fifty two works include paintings, sculptures, clap sticks and Coolamons. The are vibrant, colourful portrayals of dreamings: Seven Sisters, Fairy Wren, Bean Tree and Women's Dreaming. The paintings provide a variety of painting styles. The personal meaning of the dreamings portrayed give vitality and appeal to each of the works. Many of the girls who are Worawa students come from Yuendumu and neighbouring communities, so this work is of particular significance to them.

Jan, Diana, Ann and Pam attended the opening of this exhibition on Sunday 3rd April. Lois Peeler, Principal of the school, introduced Otto and Ormay [see box above], who are artists in residence at the school and who are in charge of the Art School at the Yuendumu community. Otto spoke of the importance of education and art to the lives of Aboriginal people in their path to a better life. He explained to me that the earnings of the art school went to the artists, to the gallery for supplies of paint and canvases and to the community. Recently they had purchased a dialysis unit for Yuendumu, and assisted families who were in dire need of support and funds because of illness. "It's not all bad" he said.

The exhibition is closed over the school holidays but will be open again when school resumes.

Jan Aitken

The Past Matters 2011

Culture, history, family, memory, reconciliation....
May 27-28

Connecting Both Ways

Venue: The Barn, Montsalvat, Hillcrest Avenue, Eltham
Presented by NRG, [ELTHAMbookshop](#), the University of Melbourne and leading publishers

Friday 27th May

- 6.30pm: Refreshments
- 6.45pm: Welcome: Jan Aitken, President, NRG
- 7.00pm: Reconciliation Week Address
- 7.30 pm: **Wisdom Man**
Camilla Chance in conversation with Guy Atholl

Some lives, like that of Banjo Clarke, are so special they touch countless others without trying. A descendant of Truganini, Banjo was born in the early 1920s in the Framlingham Forest near Warrnambool, Victoria, a member of the Kirrae Whurrong tribe. By the time he passed away he was known and loved by thousands for his wisdom and kindness. He carried a swag during the Depression, fought with Jimmy Sharman's famous boxing troupe, built roads for the army in World War II, and has 67 great-grandchildren. Despite the great hardships he faced, Banjo was renowned for espousing love and forgiveness, sustained by his deep connection to his land, his ancient culture and its spiritual beliefs.

Saturday 28th May

- 9.30am : Morning Tea
- 10.00am: Welcome: **Helen Coleman**, Mayor, Shire of Nillumbik
- Opening address: **Connecting Both Ways – Philip John Morrissey**, University of Melbourne

- 10.30am: **Ground Truthing**
Paul Carter in conversation with Morag Fraser
- 12.00pm: Lunch \$10.00 - please book ahead
- 12.30pm: **Playground**
Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle in conversation with Morag Fraser
- 1.30pm: **Islam Dreaming**
Peta Stephenson in conversation with Philip John Morrissey
- 2.30pm: **Fiction Dreaming**
Anita Heiss and Stephen Gray in conversation with Adrian Hyland
- 3.30pm: Afternoon Tea
- 3.45pm: **Forgotten Country**
Mick Woiod's book is launched by Philip John Morrissey
- 4.45pm: **Personal Journeys**
Andrew Stojanovski and Stephen Gray in conversation with Philip John Morrissey
- 6.00pm: Refreshments
- 6.15pm **little bit long time**
Ali Cobby Eckermann and Lionel Fogarty
- 7.15pm: Close