

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

NRG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

Another busy year which is ending with a need to review our activities. We need to be open to new projects and ideas from new members. Having met for years in a private home we now want to meet in a public place and to change the nature of meetings so that they hold more educational value rather than being a business meeting. We look forward to some developments in the nature and the range of NRG involvements. Reconciliation is a changing movement and NRG is looking to relate to this with greater relevance.

THE COMMITTEE:

Jan Aitken: President

Graham Pritchard: Vice President

Diana Warrell: Secretary

Sasha Trikojus: Treasurer

Ann Curry, Jann Darvill, Pam Pedersen: Committee Members

The loyalty and work of the committee members is vital to the existence of NRG. Graham brings a wealth of knowledge of Aboriginal history through his personal involvements over sixty years; Diana is ceaselessly loyal in her work as secretary: minutes, network contacts, Shire consultations, mail outs of information and notices and art work for brochures and displays; Sasha has had multiple functions: treasurer, grant writer, newsletter editor, and web master; Ann has taken responsibility for the bush food stall and for Shire consultations and artistic contributions to displays and brochures; Jann is the Convenor of the Friends Group of the Moor-rul Grasslands; Pam is an Aboriginal elder and advisor on Aboriginal matters; Jan is president and has a finger in all those pies.

Both Jan and Sasha are not renominating for their positions although they will remain supportive of the NRG. There is room for new input to the committee and the possibility of connecting to new people with initiatives and ideas.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES DURING 2011

AUSTRALIA DAY FLAG RAISING: Our speaker was Aunty Thelma Thomson, a Yorta Yorta Aboriginal elder who has had a very active and significant role in working for rights and respect for her people and in providing cultural education for children. Mark Thomson played Didgeridoo. This ceremony precedes the Citizenship ceremony and is a significant way of recognizing the place of Aboriginal people in the nation of Australia.

ROBERT BRIDGFORD TRUST MURAL: The mural was reinstalled at the Eltham Leisure Centre and unveiled by the Mayor on April 6. The work of NRG was referred to and Ann Curry organized the bush food stall for the event.

VOLUNTEERS EXPO: NRG was represented at this event. Diana, Ann, Graham and Jann managed the table.

RECONCILIATION WEEK: The Past Matters Festival of Indigenous writers and writing was held during Reconciliation Week. For the opening session Lois Peeler, Executive director of Worawa Aboriginal College spoke, and art work of the students was displayed and sold.

Members of the committee attended the Whittlesea Reconciliation Dinner on June 6.

NRG took part in the Shire's Reconciliation flag Raising where Colin Hunter and Jan Aitken spoke on the theme: Let's Talk Recognition.

The Shire Council accepted eight commitments as the core of a Reconciliation Action Plan. These included holding events in Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, to fly the Aboriginal Flag whenever possible, cultural training for staff, developing protocols for working with Wurundjeri Elders, supporting community groups working with projects which have an Indigenous aspect e.g. NRG, Darrabi Garden, Gawa Trail, Moor-rul Grasslands and others to come.

NAIDOC Week: Diana Warrell and Ann Curry worked with Melanie Holt from the Shire. They prepared displays for Mill Park and Eltham libraries and for the Shire foyer.

GAWA TRAIL: Maintenance clean ups have been held as required. There have been two school tours which involved a meeting with Mick Woiwod at the Moor-rul Platform for a talk about the history of Kangaroo Ground and the impact on the Wurundjeri of pastoralists and settlers, and a tour around the Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail with Jan and Diana (and Ann assisting) talking about the way the Wurundjeri used the land and the plants and animals.

A new Gawa Brochure has also been developed with careful editing by Sasha, printing by the Shire. It is distributed by the Nillumbik Tourism Association, and is available from the Shire Information displays, Living and Learning Centres, libraries other community groups.

MOOR-RUL RECONCILIATION GRASSLANDS: situated next to the Moor-rul Platform at the Kangaroo Ground Tower, this small area is rabbit proofed and is being weeded and planted to encourage the native grasses and grassland plants to thrive. Jann Darvill is the convenor of the Friends Group and the assistance of Tim Krasevac from the Shire's Department of Environment has been much appreciated.

RECONCILIATION EASTERN METRO, ANTAR, RecVic: NRG is represented at Local Reconciliation Group meetings organized by these three organisations. This takes us into support for Aboriginal rights and the current moves towards constitutional changes which will recognize the rightful place of Aboriginal people in our history and our national identity.

MICK WOIWOD: Mick is our patron and founding member of NRG. A local historian, his latest book on this area, *Forgotten Country*, was launched at Past Matters this year. Another book launch, for *The Diary and Reminiscences of Andrew Ross* (the first school teacher at Kangaroo Ground), took place at the Eltham Little Theatre on 24th July.

Mick has also initiated a project to have a rock with plaque placed by the Yarra River along The Boulevard, Warrandyte. This area had been put aside for an Aboriginal Reserve in 1856. While it was never used for that purpose we consider it important that residents and walkers along this stretch of the river can learn of its history and of the people who lived there before settlers arrived. An application for a Robert Bridgford Trust grant is being prepared.

Mick has also compiled a database of documents and excerpts which he has found during his research for the numerous books he has written about the impact of white settlement on the Wurundjeri. Sasha prepared an application for a small Grant of \$2500 from the Public Records Office and this was awarded recently. Congratulations Mick and Sasha. This money will allow the preparation of the data base on CD and pay for its distribution to libraries and schools in lands traditionally owned by the Wurundjeri.

NILLUMBIK SHIRE: NRG committee members, Jan, Diana and Ann have been working with the Shire as their Reconciliation Action Plan is prepared. Melanie Holt, CDO for Reconciliation has organized cultural training for Shire staff and other events which educate and build awareness of Aboriginal history, culture and services in this and neighbouring shires. We look forward to further Shire events which will recognize Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

NRG has always worked closely with the Shire, which has supported the group financially and with consultations and assistance in kind. Our appreciation of this important working relationship is recorded here.

BUSH FOOD STALL: Ann Curry has been managing the ordering and storing of our bush foods stock. We had successful stalls at the mural launch at the Leisure Centre and at the Past Matters Book Festival. However, events such as Hurstbridge Wattle Festival and Diamond Valley Fair have not been attended as we have been short of volunteers able to assist with servicing the stall.

INFORMATION: Diana sends out to members and those on our mailing list information about current Aboriginal events in Melbourne and Victorian towns. NRG is approached by other groups wanting contact details for Wurundjeri elders who can provide a Welcome to Country at local events.

The NRG WEBSITE is managed by Sasha, who keeps it up-to-date with information Newsletters, membership details and current events.

NEWSLETTER: Sasha has been our newsletter editor. We are looking for someone to take over this important job. Newsletters are posted on our website after distribution to members.

INFORMATION SHEET AND MEMBERSHIP FORM: A new format was designed by Diana and Sasha this year and printed in colour. A Shire grant contributed to this cost.

GIFTS: A donation of \$300 was made to Girls Day Out, a service provided by Aboriginal Family violence Prevention and Legal Service. Pam Pedersen, a member of our committee works with this group. The money was used to fund a retreat for Aboriginal Women who needed to have time away from stressful and violent domestic situations, and have access to counselling and legal advice.

WORAWA ABORIGINAL COLLEGE, HEALESVILLE: NRG has supported the college this year: an art display by students at Past Matters; with looking after the Worawa Gallery over a weekend during the month when the Archibald Prize exhibition at Tarrawarra brought more people to Healesville; and a visit to the college with Dorita Thomson and presentation to Lois Peeler, Executive Director of the school, of some of Donald Thomson's publications.

THE FUTURE: Over to you. There are significant things happening in the Reconciliation field. For example, the changes to the Australian Constitution are being prepared for Referendum. There are many voices calling for rights and respect for Aboriginal people, for the end of the Intervention and of Income Management; the numbers of outstanding Aboriginal achievements in leadership is increasing; there is more information about the difficulties in many remote communities and greater challenges as to what assistance is respectful and appropriate. How can NRG contribute to the local appreciation of Reconciliation 2012? The answers lie in the changes to be made and the new initiatives to be taken in NRG.



Nillumbik Reconciliation Group Inc Financial statement for year to 30 June 2011

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Cash at Bank 1 July 2010	\$2,732.80	Past Matters Festival	\$3,300.00
Nillumbik Shire Council grants:		Other event expenditure	\$1,011.89
- Past Matters Festival	\$3,300.00	Bush Food purchases	\$475.50
- Operating grant	\$2,000.00	Information sheet printing	\$302.50
- Information sheet	\$150.00	Newsletter expenses	\$217.00
Bush Food sales	\$641.50	Other administration expenses	\$570.35
Subscriptions	\$730.00	Carried forward	\$4,109.06
Resource Kit CD-ROM	\$267.00		
Fundraising cards	\$80.00		
Donations	\$65.00		
Books	\$20.00		
	\$9,986.30		\$9,986.30
ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
Cash at Bank 30 June 2011	\$4,109.06	Liabilities as at 30 June 2011:	\$24.00
Petty Cash Float	\$50.00	Members' equity	\$4,645.06
Bush Food stock @30/6/11 (approx cost value)	\$360.00		
Personal PA amplifier (estimated value)	\$150.00		
	\$4,669.06		\$4,669.06

Nillumbik Reconciliation Group has had a successful year, during which it raised significant funds in addition to the various generous grants from Nillumbik Shire Council. Sources included membership subscriptions and donations, sales of cards donated by Don Brown, the Bush Foods stall operated at events by Ann Curry, and sales of the CD-ROM version of the Wurundjeri Culture Resource Kit.

NRG intended to again sponsor an Indigenous band at the Eltham Jazz and Blues Heritage Festival in January, which had in the past given us the opportunity to reach a wider audience than those who may attend our other events; unfortunately the booked performer, Lisa Maza, cancelled at the last moment and a replacement was not available.

The Past Matters Festival partnership with Eltham Bookshop was again generously supported by Nillumbik Shire Council; the Council also supported us with a general operations grant and a 50% subsidy for our new Information Sheet/Membership Form. A major saving for the group was to drop its public liability insurance, which was replaced by umbrella coverage as an affiliate of ANTaR Victoria.

Commissions on sales at our Eltham Library art exhibition (\$1,820) were donated to Worawa Aboriginal College; NRG also made a \$300 donation to the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service: "Sisters Day Out", and \$50 to the Friends of the Earth: Barmah-Millewa Collective.

We made a successful application for a grant (\$2,500, not yet received) under the *wilam naling* Small Grant scheme of the Victorian Public Records Office. (The word *wilam* means 'place/family/kin' and *naling* means 'to know': from the Boon wurrung / Woi wurrung language.) This will support the distribution of printed copies, and the production of accompanying CD-ROMs, of Mick Woiwod's important databases, titled "Birrarung" and "Coranderk", of his collection of public records concerning the Indigenous history of the Yarra Valley. The project is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Paid membership of the group is low but stable; member and complimentary distribution of the Newsletter generally results in the need for a print run of 100; the Newsletter is also available for download from the website.