

ReconciliationNews

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RAP family hits 200!

We're excited to announce that we have now registered our 200th Reconciliation Action Plan following the recent RAP launch by the Blacktown City Council. This is a significant milestone in the life of the RAP program which began just four years ago when eight organisations pledged their support by promising to sign up to a RAP.

From the start, those trailblazers — the ANZ Bank, BHP Billiton, Canberra Investment Corporation, Centrelink, Melbourne City Council, Oxfam Australia, South Australian Department of Administrative and Information Services and Yarrteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' Corporation — shared our long-term vision for RAPs and reconciliation.

Like us they understood that an organisation with a RAP supported by leaders, staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others offers a tangible way for people to be involved in reconciliation simply through their interaction in the workplace. By providing a framework for the future, detailing steps and priorities to take action to strengthen relationships, promote reconciliation and contribute positively to closing the gap, RAPs pave the way for change.

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The launch of a RAP is always a cause for celebration and organisations often begin with a cultural treat. At the National Australia Bank RAP launch (by the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd) Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu made the day even more memorable.



Reconciliation
AUSTRALIA



Leah Armstrong

CEO's report

As I write I've just passed my three month milestone at Reconciliation Australia. The time has simply flown with meetings with our partners, interviews with the media, working with our management group and getting to know the staff. All in all I'm now starting to feel a little more comfortable in the new role.

Although I'm new at Reconciliation Australia, the organisation is not new to me. I have long admired Reconciliation Australia and its work and have been involved with it in several capacities over the years.

In my time as Executive Director of Yarnteen Ltd, I was on the judging panel for the Indigenous Governance Awards, one of Reconciliation Australia's major projects managed in partnership with BHP Billiton. Yarnteen was also one of the first eight organisations to sign up to a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

I've come to Reconciliation Australia with a 20 year involvement in the reconciliation movement and a background in the private sector that includes capacity building, working with government and maximising partnerships. Needless to say I am enthused at the prospect of using my skills and experience to lead an organisation that has already chalked up an impressive track record.

As you'll see from our lead article, one of our great success stories is the RAP program with 200 RAPs now up and running and just as many in the pipeline. As I mentioned, Yarnteen was one of the first to sign up and so I've seen the benefits first hand. Whether it's high profile corporations like the Commonwealth Bank, Qantas or Telstra, state or federal government departments, sporting clubs or schools, the program has the power to influence the attitudes of millions of people.

I've always been reliant on evidence-based research and so am pleased that the second Reconciliation Barometer has now been completed. Presently the findings are only preliminary but I look forward to evaluating the results and using them to assist us in charting future strategies.

As for the future, I am full of optimism. While there are challenges ahead I know I have joined an organisation of passionate and determined people dedicated to achieving our goal. The Board, recently invigorated with several new appointments, is also fully engaged and supportive. And I sense an opportunity beckons with Australia now more aware than ever of the many advantages reconciliation can bring.

I wish everybody a safe and relaxing time over the holiday season and look forward to achieving great things in 2011 and beyond.



Ken Wyatt delivers his maiden speech in Parliament

Ken Wyatt's Maiden Speech

Here is an excerpt from the maiden speech of the first Indigenous member of the Australian Parliament's House of Representatives, Ken Wyatt, who won the Western Australian seat of Hasluck. Mr. Wyatt delivered his speech to the House on 29 September 2010.

The decisions we make determine our destiny and the choices we make shape our personal future. It is an enormous honour that the electors of Hasluck have bestowed upon me by electing me as their representative for this term of parliament. Only 1,093 people have been privileged to be a member of the House of Representatives. It is with deep and mixed emotion that I, as an Aboriginal man with Noongar, Yamiitji and Wongi heritage, stand before you and the members of the House of Representatives as an equal. I want to reflect these feelings and sentiments so eloquently put by the two previous Aboriginal senators, Neville Bonner and Aden Ridgeway, in their maiden speeches.

In Senator Neville Bonner's powerful first speech on 8 September 1971, he encapsulated the feelings that I am experiencing today. Equally, Senator Aden Ridgeway, in his speech 28 years after Senator Neville Bonner's speech, also outlined the enormity of the task that I assume as a mantle of responsibility to

represent the people of Hasluck and advocate for Indigenous Australians. Regrettably, 39 years later, I stand here and the same principles and ideals still apply. Not a great deal has changed significantly.

I am the oldest child of Don and Mona Wyatt, who raised ten children. My father served in the RAAF towards the end of World War II as a driver and left to work for the Western Australian Government Railways where he worked and ended his career as a railway ganger. In 1972, when I graduated from teachers college my first pay was more than what my father was earning towards the end of his career. My mother was one of the Stolen Generation and spent her childhood years in Roelands Mission near Bunbury in Western Australia.

As a child, I used to listen to the stories shared between my mother and her brothers and sisters about growing up in the respective missions they were sent to. They reminisced about the people they grew up with outside of



their own families and the family connections they re-established after leaving the mission. I often wondered about the experiences that remained locked away in their memories and not talked about. What I found even more fascinating was the blurring of the lines between real family and the many others who were accepted as family because they had shared a significant part of their childhood together in the mission.

The apology to the Stolen Generation has been a powerful instrument in the healing of both our people and our nation. The apology was acknowledged and received in the spirit for which it was offered. When the former Prime Minister delivered the apology on 13 February 2008 in this chamber I shed tears for my mother and her siblings. My mother and her siblings, along with many others, did not live to hear the words delivered in the apology, which would have meant a great deal to them individually. I felt a sense of relief that the pain of the past had been acknowledged and that the healing could begin. At that point, the standing orders prevented an Indigenous response. On behalf of my mother, her siblings and all Indigenous Australians, I, as an Aboriginal voice in this chamber, say thank you for the apology delivered in the federal parliament and I thank the Hon. Kevin Rudd for honouring his commitment to the Stolen Generation.

I hope that all governments continue to embrace new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed, where enduring approaches need to change and where the future we all influence is based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the agencies of government need to jettison the old mindsets that embody Indigenous Australians as

passive recipients of government programs and services, and to instead truly regard people as equals and allow them to be equal partners in developing their solutions.

Governments must allow information to be shared so that an informed consent decision-making process is enabled. If change is to occur and become embedded and sustained then all must be equal and active partners in all facets of planning, implementation and accountability, and I would equally apply this to all Australians that we represent. My parents instilled in us the values of having respect for others, having integrity, trusting others and accepting responsibility for our actions and decisions. We were taught that our word was to be our bond, and that prevails. However, life experiences teach you to be much more astute to those who have ulterior motives based on personal gain.

I have been a battler for most of my life but I have always driven myself to be successful in order to achieve my dreams. I used education as the way to change my life to get to where I am now and I believe that a quality education is the key to success for any young Australian. I have always been inspired by Nelson Mandela, who reinforced the importance of education with these words: Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor; that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine; that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation.

As the son of a railway ganger and a domestic worker who was a part of the Stolen Generation, I am here before you today in this chamber because of the influence of education and my year one teacher, Miss

Abernethy. Her unfailing faith in my ability to succeed and serve Australian society resonated on the day of the election when she turned up to hand out how-to-vote cards for me in Maddington. This ongoing support 50 years after I was in her class has been particularly humbling.

This is why I have always believed and promoted the fact that education and access to the knowledge society involves lifelong learning. An education in Corrigan, a rural town in Western Australia, has not been a barrier to my achievements. The local Rotary Club, the Country Women's Association and a local businessman, Dean Rundle, combined their efforts to ensure I completed my secondary schooling. They met all of the costs associated with my schooling and travel and provided pocket money.

My career led me to leadership roles in education and health both in Western Australia and in New South Wales. Co-chairing the COAG Indigenous health working group, I achieved a \$1.6 billion commitment from all jurisdictions to improve Indigenous health outcomes. For me, that is the jewel in the crown of my work achievements. I was able to contribute effectively in these positions due to my life experiences.

As leaders—and I see all of us in this House as leaders—we need to be pathfinders so that we can accelerate the change needed to improve outcomes for our future generations. To me, pathfinders are leaders who shape the future, which is fast, fragile, fashionable and ever-changing. As pathfinders, we forge the way forward and we draw the maps and pathways for the future generations of Australians. As pathfinders, we have to commit to and fight for change. We have



Mick honoured with degree

to plan for a society that should exist for all Australians in 2030 and 2050.

As pathfinders, we need to design education and training systems that are a means through which Australian societies better prepare future generations to invent a better tomorrow for themselves and their children. The opportunity to address this issue has been lost over recent times and we need to redress the current situation so that we develop Australia's workforce with the skills required for the future. As leaders, we need to be the pathfinders and use our influence at the right times, for the right reasons and for the good of all not the few. We need to continue to search for the best answers and not the familiar ones because they offer the path of least resistance. We need to achieve a legacy of better outcomes for the children of the future and work for the benefit of others and not for personal gain. For all of us as pathfinders, we need to take our ideas and aspirations, act on them, see them through to success and not give up when the quest gets challenging, and remember at all times that we are all our children's future.

The things I have done and achieved in life are not for my own edification but to make a difference for others, that they may choose a destiny that meets their needs and the needs of the society in which they live. I have the experience, wisdom, fortitude and energy to take on this responsibility and to do what has to be done to make a difference for the people of Hasluck. As a pathfinder, I will focus on the present and learn from the past to shape the future for the generations to come.

The full text of the speech can be accessed on Mr Wyatt's home page via the Parliament House website www.aph.gov.au.

The University of Canberra awarded Reconciliation Australia's Co-Chair Prof Mick Dodson an honorary doctorate on 5 November. The honorary degree was in recognition of his distinguished contribution to Human Rights, Social Justice and Indigenous Affairs in Australia and overseas.

In his acceptance speech Mick said that employees should recognise the great potential of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, from pre-school right through to university.

'The low expectations of some teachers makes it hard for some Indigenous students to excel,' he said. 'What is reinforced in them is they're an underachiever because they're Aboriginal, or Torres Strait Islander.'

'My message is we have to stop doing that.'



Reconciliation Australia Board Director, Tom Calma and Ara Cresswell with Professor Mick Dodson, after receiving his honorary degree at the University of Canberra. (Image by Kylie Thompson)



Glen Brennan, Senior Manager, Community Finance and Development at the National Australia Bank.

Bright prospects for Indigenous employment

In this opinion piece Glen Brennan suggests that because it's competition and not collaboration that drives company success, that's good news when it comes to Indigenous employment. He sees a bright future for young Indigenous university graduates as corporations rush to expand their Indigenous strategies. Glen is Senior Manager, Community Finance and Development at the National Australia Bank.

Competition in corporate Australia has always been fierce. Everyone wants the best people, systems, products and services.

But behind the smiles and claims to the contrary, everyone from the Chairman down wants to be one up on their direct competitors on every metric that matters. At stake are bonuses, reputations and most important of all, continued survival in the corporate jungle.

This competitiveness hasn't been checked at the door when it comes to corporates developing strategies for engaging with Indigenous Australians.

Contributing to reducing Indigenous disadvantage and having a bigger and better Reconciliation Action Plan is the newest game in town and competition is hot as corporates mark out their territory.

For Indigenous Australia, this is a great thing. Rivalry will drive corporates to be innovative, develop relationships, attempt to solve complex problems and create new ways of doing business.

It will also keep everyone on their toes because you know the competition is breathing down your neck trying to leapfrog you the first chance they get.

Corporates will be forced to stick to their knitting, play to their strengths and do what they do best.

The cookie cutter, unsustainable cheque book charity will be relegated to the scrap heap. Relationships will replace sponsorships and 'learning by doing' will become the norm. Sure there'll be some mistakes, but not on purpose and rarely the same one twice.

But despite the good intentions, another culture clash is in the air and it's not a clash of traditional Indigenous cultures.

Rather it's the result of Governments' increasing preference to tackle Indigenous

issues collaboratively, and the tension that results when natural corporate enemies are asked to work together.

'Working together', 'partnerships' and 'coordination' have become the battle cries of collaborative Indigenous affairs.

In the corporate world, collaboration among direct competitors is rare. Indeed it is often the role of government to regulate against collaboration because it leads to less competition and choice which is bad for consumers.

Yet there seems to be a growing smorgasbord of government sponsored networks, roundtables, councils, panel discussions, focus groups, think tanks and information sharing days where natural corporate enemies are encouraged to attend and share ideas, contribute feedback and collaborate with each other regarding their Indigenous strategies.

For corporates it's a surreal experience. A bit like being forced to share answers with the kid who hasn't done his homework while holding hands and singing Kumbayah. It's supposed to be a good thing, but you still feel uneasy about it.

Governments argue that facilitating collaboration opportunities will fast track the improvement of corporate Indigenous strategies. However, what corporates really want is to work with Government to grow their points of difference from their natural enemies.

Indigenous employment is a noticeable exception. Twiggy Forrest's ambitious 50,000 jobs target has transformed Indigenous employment into a compliance issue so corporates are currently driven by fear of being left behind.

However natural competitive tension will soon reassert itself and transform Indigenous employment into a more self-serving business outcome. It will shift from

quantity to quality as corporates compete to attract the brightest and the best young Indigenous minds to join, and more importantly stay, in their companies.

Some may decide it's easier to have lots of Indigenous trainees; others may go straight for Indigenous university graduates; and some may crack the whip on the education system to deliver better educated kids.

Whatever the case, competition will heat up and social outcomes will merge with sound business principles. As this inevitably gains traction, corporates will become less willing to share their recruitment secrets and competition will replace collaboration.

One outcome is assured — if you're a young Indigenous university graduate, you can pretty much name your price, because you are the hottest property around.

Competition is not a bad thing and neither is collaboration — both have their place. However, to date fierce competition has been sadly missed from Indigenous affairs as big corporates seek to invest their significant resources to do good.

For the average Indigenous family the benefits are likely to be many — real jobs, real business opportunities and a toehold in the real economy for starters. This may then cascade into intergenerational wealth creation opportunities like home ownership.

Improved health outcomes may even see the glaring gap in life expectancy reduce enough for most Indigenous Australians to live long enough to collect their superannuation cheque.

So let the competition begin and may the best corporates succeed. I look forward to the inevitable innovation and change that is bound to benefit Indigenous Australians at all points along the way.

Big business bridging the gap

New research by the Business Council of Australia confirms its members are showing leadership to find new ways to help close the gap on Indigenous opportunity.

Chief Executive Katie Lahey said the BCA report: *Common Ground, Uncommon Results: Closing the Gap* shows that member companies are developing creative strategies to increase Indigenous engagement in the Australian economy.

'The BCA established an annual survey last year to identify, promote and share lessons from what our members were doing to help close unacceptable gaps,' Ms Lahey said.

'This year, 46 of our member companies responded — a 30 per cent increase on last year. When you consider the size and reach of these businesses, their commitment on this issue and what can be learned through their efforts is significant.'

Ms Lahey said the survey report is designed to:

- raise awareness about what business can do to improve opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Australians;
- share information about what works, what doesn't and why;
- encourage more businesses to develop their own business case for getting involved; and
- promote collaboration and partnerships.

'While the results indicate a clear focus on lifting Indigenous employment opportunities, member companies are involved in an increasingly diverse range of initiatives,' Ms Lahey said.



'The importance of collaboration with Indigenous partners is a consistent theme in what members see as a key to lasting success.'

The findings show that 40 companies now have Indigenous engagement initiatives, compared with 28 last year; 29 companies have Indigenous employment and/or traineeship strategies, compared with 21 last year; 21 companies have specific Indigenous employment goals or targets, compared with 14 last year; and 14 companies have completed Reconciliation Action Plans, compared with nine last year.

'One of the main challenges is the need to better connect Indigenous Australians to employment opportunities,' said Ms Lahey. 'There are valuable lessons here for policy makers in lifting the quality of education and training outcomes, and improving the matching of employer needs with the skills/aspirations of potential candidates.'

Business Council of Australia member Ross Love (Managing Partner, Australia and New Zealand, The Boston Consulting Group) meets pupils during the Jawun inaugural executive leadership visit to the East Kimberley in July 2010. Photo courtesy Natika Hawes-Wright Photography.

'The survey results show there is clearly scope for more companies to be involved, and the progress being made by those who are involved is often slow and challenging.'

'But the strong common ground between business, the community and all sides of politics in our determination to close the gap is cause for real optimism, we believe. We are inspired by the case studies contained in the new survey and members are deeply committed to maintaining their leadership role.'

Carbon has that winning feeling

After winning their category in the 2010 Indigenous Governance Awards, the crew at Carbon Media were justifiably elated. Soon after we received the following message from Rachel Borm, their corporate affairs and strategic relations manager.

In the edit suite at Carbon Media — Wayne Denning (centre) with Alden Lyall in black and Ben McBurnie in the checked shirt. Image by Wayne Quilliam

Back in February this year, Carbon Media submitted an application for the 2010 Indigenous Governance Awards. We were hopeful that we might receive some positive feedback from our submission but when we heard that we were a finalist and then went on to win our category, we were amazed!

We won in the category for businesses established less than 10 years. Carbon Media managing director Wayne Denning, camera operator Alden Lyall and I accepted the award on behalf of the whole Carbon Crew.

The crew was thrilled to have Mick Dodson, award winning photographer Wayne Quilliam and the Reconciliation Australia judging panel visit us all in Brisbane in May this year. Two members of the crew, Alden Lyall and Danielle Ah Boo were away filming during this visit, so Alden was happy to have a presence at the awards ceremony.

Alden said the workshops, where representatives of the eight finalist organisations presented a profile of their company, were a highlight of the two days in Melbourne.

'It was good to learn more about these Indigenous companies, from health to construction to childcare. They're all doing amazing things, so to win and be in such good company was unexpected,' he said.

'I was proud to be in Melbourne, and it was great to meet and have a quick chat to Mick Dodson. He's someone I've looked up to and his speech was really inspirational.'

Carbon Media was established in 2006 and we are a wholly Aboriginal owned new media production company. Carbon is a one-stop creative shop for the design and delivery of 360° content across all genres and platforms, including television, internet and mobile. One third of our staff are Indigenous and we have Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC) certification. We are passionate about promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their culture.

Congratulations to the other finalists in our category: Mirrimbeena Aboriginal Education Group Inc, Napranum Preschool PaL Group, Noongar Mia Mia Pty Ltd.



Crazy Ants carry off Banksia Award

The Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation's eradication program for one of the world's worst ant pests, the Yellow Crazy Ant, has won Australia's most prestigious environmental honour, the Origin Gold Banksia Award.

The Yellow Crazy Ant is an invasive species that has gained a foothold in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, and had the potential to seriously impact natural ecosystems and agriculture from Broome to the east coast prior to the program's intervention.

It's the first time in the 22 year history of the awards that an Indigenous organisation has won the top prize. The Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation's program, run in collaboration with CSIRO, Rio-Tinto Alcan and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, was held up by the judging panel as a nationwide model for effective project collaboration.

The Executive Director of the Banksia Environmental Foundation, Graz van Egmond said: 'Common themes and trends that emerged this year include a strong emphasis on community, government and industry working together to get

things done; brilliantly illustrated by the achievements of the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation project.'

The 22 year-old Banksia Awards recognise Australia's leading environmental or sustainable initiatives across business, government and community organisations, and act as a barometer of change across the sustainability landscape.

Pictured at the Awards ceremony are (from left) Dr Ben Hoffman from the CSIRO, Daryl Lacey, Dhimurru Senior Ranger and Balupalu Yunupingu from the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation.



Free calendar!



To receive a free copy of our 2011 Governance calendar simply email us at the address below. The colour calendar includes useful pointers about good governance along with insights by the eight finalist organisations in this year's Indigenous Governance Awards and the four prize winners from 2008.

Each month features an image by award winning Indigenous photographer Wayne Quilliam (and one from Leon Mead), important dates and space to include your own appointments.

Just for your information, there is a small error in June. The woman identified as Corine Matasia is in fact Relena Ara.

Email us on enquiries@reconciliation.org.au.

RAP family hits 200!

continued from front page

Now, following the most recent group of RAP registrations including Westpac, Corporate Express, Mecu, the Committee for Perth, the Intercontinental Hotel Group and the Blacktown City Council, we have exceeded the double century. Notably those first 200 include Australia's 11 largest corporations.

But it doesn't end there. Not by a long shot. Like any good batsman with a big score on the board we plan to keep the ball moving. In addition to the 200 registered Reconciliation Action Plans, our RAP team is currently working with 248 more organisations that have RAPs in different stages of development.

They include major companies, small businesses, local councils, sporting codes, hospitals, schools, universities and state and federal government departments. Together the RAP family now represents 20 per cent of the Australian workforce.

Each organisation is able to tailor its RAP to include actions that are appropriate to the particular business or service. By looking at its strengths, location and sphere of influence an organisation can use its RAP to make a real difference. That's what makes the collective impact of our 200 RAPs so exciting.

You can read more RAP news including recent launches and initiatives in RAP Chat in this newsletter, starting on page 16.

IFSN meets again

Efforts to improve Indigenous financial literacy and independence are ongoing thanks to the work of the Indigenous Financial Services Network (IFSN). Comprising key representatives from major banking corporations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations (including the Traditional Credit Union) and state and federal government agencies, the group meets regularly to identify innovative financial literacy and banking products and services for delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Westpac supported and hosted the most recent IFSN meeting in Perth which was Co-Chaired by Reconciliation Australia and the First Nations Foundation (FNF). One important outcome was the reconvening of the Indigenous Advisory Group (IAG). This sub-committee provides the IFSN with leadership and direction and ensures the views and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are considered when decisions are made on issues that affect them.

Paul Briggs, Chair of the IAG noted that 'the IAG are vital in representing the voice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and provide valuable guidance/support to IFSN members'.

The issue of Native Title Tax Reform and its implications on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country was discussed and is set down as a priority on the agenda for the next IFSN meeting.

Let the rivers run wild?



The Wild Rivers Act has locked up numerous river systems across Queensland. The aim of the Act is to preserve these regions as wilderness. But what is the legislation and why is it such a hot political issue, particularly in Cape York? Here are some answers to questions that are commonly asked.

1. What is the Wild Rivers Act?

The Wild Rivers Act was passed by the Queensland Parliament in 2005. The Act came about in part as the result of conservation group The Wilderness Society's pressure on the Queensland government to protect the state's pristine river systems. The purpose of the Act is to protect rivers that have not yet been significantly impacted by development, by declaring them 'wild river areas'. In a wild river area, new large-scale development projects such as in-stream dams and weirs, surface mining, and intensive agriculture, are subject to certain restrictions. However, other low impact activities such as small-scale commercial fishing, ecotourism, and sustainable industries, are permitted with Government approval.

2. What areas have been affected by the Wild Rivers Act?

So far 10 regions in Queensland have been declared wild river areas under the Wild Rivers Act. These include Settlement Creek, Gregory

River, Morning Inlet, and Staaten River in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the Wenlock, Archer, Lockhart, and Stewart river basins on the Cape York Peninsula. Hinchinbrook Island and Fraser Island have also been declared wild river areas.

3. Why is the Act controversial?

Some opponents of the Wild Rivers Act are concerned about how the legislation will affect Aboriginal Traditional Owners who are seeking to develop their land. Prominent Cape York leader Noel Pearson argues that the Act denies Traditional Owners the opportunity to make decisions about how their land and its resources are used, impeding Indigenous economic development. Other high profile figures like Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton have agreed, arguing that Wild Rivers runs the risk of further disadvantaging Indigenous people. She argues that 'mainstream society' has built its own economy on environmentally destructive development, and so it should not try to control development on land owned by Indigenous people.

There has been widespread dissatisfaction with the consultation process the Queensland Government undertook around the Act. Many Indigenous communities feel that their views on the Wild Rivers legislation have not been taken into account. Another issue for some groups is that the term 'wild rivers' implies that the river areas are not inhabited or used by people. The Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council points out that Aboriginal people have successfully looked after these 'wild rivers' for thousands of years, and that the river systems continue to be an important part of their culture and everyday lives today.

4. What is the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010?

This Bill to be introduced to Federal Parliament is in response to some of the concerns about the Queensland Wild Rivers Act. The Bill aims to protect Indigenous native title holders' rights over their land and its resources by overriding the existing Wild Rivers legislation.

If it is passed, it will guarantee the rights of Traditional Owners to own, use, develop and control their land, even if this land has been declared a wild river area. It will also require the Queensland Government to get permission from Traditional Owners before it can regulate the use of native title land in a wild river area.

Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott has recently tabled notice of his intention to introduce the Wild Rivers Bill as a private member's bill, while the Gillard Government has announced that it will ask the House of Representatives Economics Committee to examine the issues raised by the bill and decide if they are valid concerns. The Wild Rivers Bill will probably be debated in parliament over the coming months, once the committee has delivered its findings.

5. Who are the Traditional Owners of the areas affected by Wild Rivers legislation?

The Traditional Owners of land surrounding the Lockhart, Stewart and Archer river basins include Northern and Southern Kanyu, Wik Mungkan, Apalach, Wintchnum, Olkola, Kuuku-Y'au, Umpila, Kuntanumpu, Ultahganu, Lama Lama, Kuuku-Yani, Ayapathu, and Umbindamu peoples. The Traditional Owners of the Gulf of Carpentaria wild river areas include the Kukatj, Ganggalida, Gananggallanda, Agwamin, Kutjar, Koknar, Kunjen, Kokoberrin, Maga-Kutana, Wakabunga, Nguburinjo, and Mingin peoples. Hinchinbrook Island's traditional owners are the Wargamaygan people and Fraser Island's traditional owners are the Badtjala people.

6. Were Indigenous communities consulted about the Wild Rivers legislation?

The Queensland Government has conducted consultation with communities and Indigenous organisations about the Wild Rivers legislation since 2004. However, some traditional owners in Cape York and other wild river areas feel that the consultation process was inadequate and that their submissions were not given enough weight in the final decision-making process. In its submission to the Senate inquiry into the Wild Rivers Bill 2010, The Wilderness Society acknowledged that the Queensland Government's consultation process could be improved and made several recommendations in that regard.

7. How did the Wild Rivers Act impact on Traditional Owners' use of their land?

The Queensland Government maintains that a wild river declaration will not affect native title or cultural heritage. Indigenous people will still be able to carry on with activities like camping, fishing, hunting, conducting ceremonies, and traditional fire management. Small-scale development projects, such as eco-tourism industries, are also permitted, and in some wild river areas the Government sets aside a reserve of water for use by Indigenous communities for economic development.

However, the legislation does impose restrictions on high impact development in a wild river area. Intensive development is prohibited in an area within one kilometre of the main river and tributaries, but can still occur outside this area if it meets certain conditions. Some people have suggested that this will nevertheless have a negative impact on local Indigenous communities. A study by the Anglican Church shows that the limitations on development in wild river areas will lead to many Indigenous people missing out on job opportunities. Others say that although development can still technically take place in a wild river area, most Traditional Owners don't have the money or expertise to go through the bureaucratic process that would give them permission to do so.

On the other hand, other people have argued that the effect of the Wild Rivers legislation on Indigenous development is not so clear. The Queensland Government says it has not been made aware of any Indigenous development projects that have been blocked by the new legislation, and points out that it has approved over 100 development applications in Wild River Areas.

8. Are all Indigenous groups against the Wild Rivers legislation?

While it may seem like Indigenous people are on one side of the debate and conservationists are on the other, this is not the case. Some Indigenous people oppose the legislation, and others are in favour of it. For example, prominent activist Murrandoo Yanner of the Carpentaria Land Council has argued that many Aboriginal people

don't want large-scale development on their traditional land anyway: 'The majority of the people ... would rather have the sustainable rivers so we can continue as we have for thousands of years to draw our food and nourishment from those rivers.' David Claudie, a Northern Kanyu Traditional Owner, has told media that he is in favour of Wild Rivers legislation because it supports sustainable industries. Likewise, Gina Castelain, a Wik leader from the Aurukun community and managing director of Wik Projects Ltd, has said: 'We want to protect our environment and our rivers. We are working hard to develop and maintain economic activity which does not harm our waterways — such as Aurukun Wetland Charters — using catch and release fishing and eco-tourism.'

9. Why should Indigenous people be allowed to develop or use resources on land that is of conservation value?

This is a difficult issue on which there are many perspectives. On the one side, environmentalists and conservationists are seeking government help to protect pristine land from destructive development. They are supported by some Aboriginal groups who argue that the Wild Rivers legislation is in their peoples' interests; as the land and its rivers have great significance in their traditional cultures, conservation efforts are helping to preserve Aboriginal cultural values and heritage.

On the other hand, some people feel strongly that conservation issues should not be seen as more important than the property and development rights of Aboriginal traditional land owners. Noel Pearson feels that any limitations on development have a particularly adverse effect on Indigenous people, who are already greatly economically disadvantaged. Pearson and others are also determined to safeguard the right of Indigenous people to have a say in how their land is used and protected. To make sure that both the environmental and the Indigenous agendas are met when important decisions about land are being made, most people agree that genuine and respectful partnership with Aboriginal communities is vital.

Reflections of Yuendumu

This insightful story by Liam Campbell first appeared on his blog (see www.tootable.com). A man of many talents, Liam says he is currently living in two places trying to decide where to have his mail sent. He spends time in Melbourne where his main work involves making iPhone and iPad applications. The rest of the time you'll find him in Yuendumu working with the Mt Theo Program.

'When in Melbourne, I live and work in an old Post Office (built in 1896) next to a very nice couple who make even nicer hats. When in Central Australia, I live in Yuendumu and hang out at the Mt Theo Program. I spent about 14 years in Warlpiri country. It's my favourite place in the world, and I love the opportunity to keep going back. And the takeaway shop has recently branched out into offering eight different types of fried chicken!'

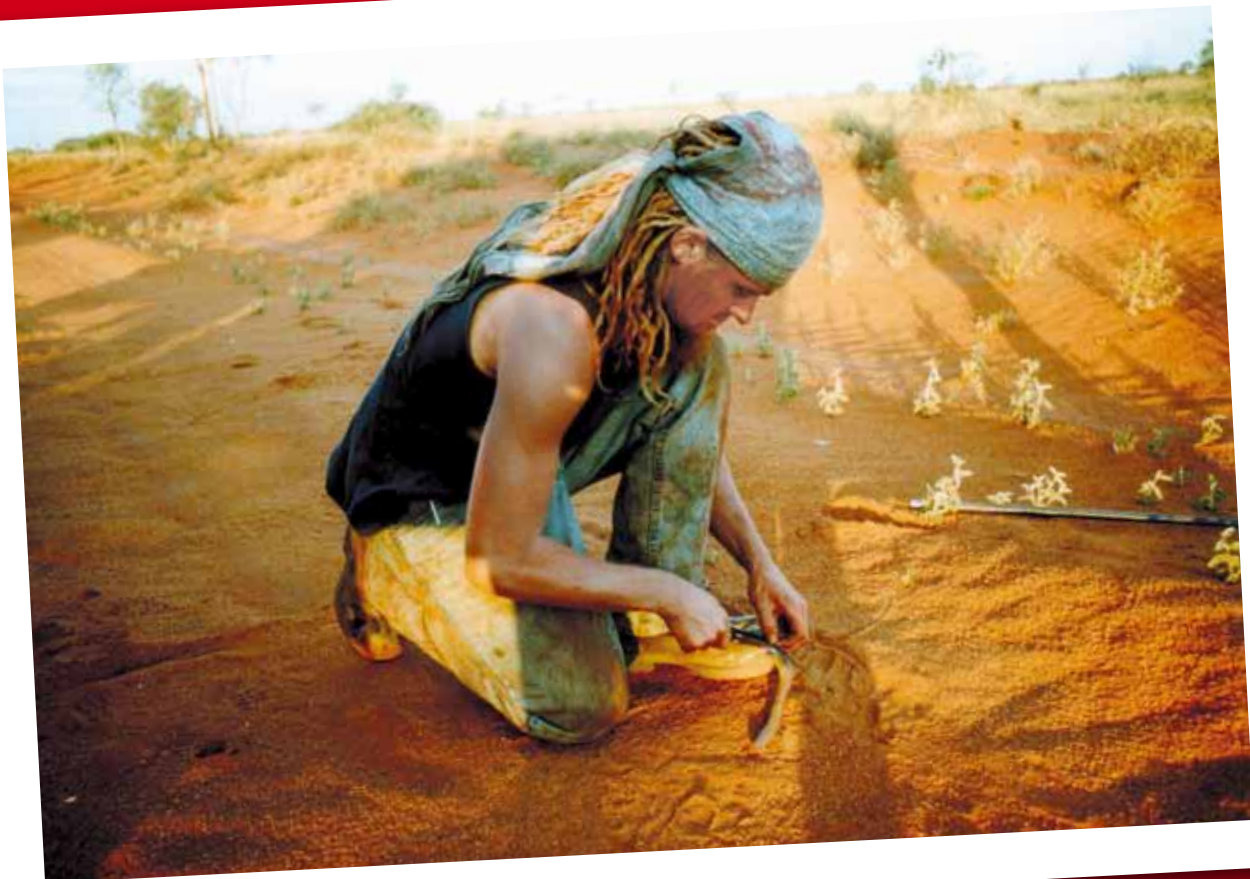
Liam worked as a youth worker, art coordinator, and on a number of collaborative youth and media projects at Yuendumu. He studied Indigenous Studies through the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, Monash University and published a biography of Darby Jampijinpa Ross in 2006.

Here are his reflections on Yuendumu.

A few years back, after returning from a funeral in Melbourne of a whitefella who used to live in the community I was greeted by two Nampijinpa ladies. They wanted to talk to me and I offered them a cup of tea and we sat on the grass outside. We each sat looking in a different direction. We talked for a little while about my trip and the insignificant details of travelling 3000 kms in a Toyota. It soon became clear that the ladies wanted to discuss the funeral.

I did not realise the effect this person's death had had on the community. One of the ladies, who people had begun calling my 'mother' after her only son died, took my hand in hers and told me that if I should

Liam gutting a snake on the Nyirripi road.



ever feel like that man — if I should ever stay away from Yuendumu and feel sad or alone — I should know that I had family here in Yuendumu. I looked at the other lady who smiled in agreement.

Not knowing what to say, I replied 'Yuwayi.' I had already told her that it had been good to see my family down south. But, that man had family down south and he was still sad. I told those two ladies that I was not sad. People used to call that man Wajampa, which is Warlpiri for sad.

When the ladies left I started thinking about how I had become close to some of the people at Yuendumu. I remembered back to the time when I was just a youngfella standing on the cracked pavement of a basketball court with kids going through boxes of coloured jumpers looking for their favourite number. I umpired short offensive games dominated by little kids that launched the ball off their shoulders with both hands and somehow managed to get it through the hoop.

After the kids' games, the young men would come to play on their court. I collected the jumpers and whistles and threw a ball over to them. We didn't really know each other at that time, the 40 or so young blokes on the other side of the court and me, the whitefella who didn't know much Warlpiri and was about the same age as a few of the older players.

For the first time in my life I was challenged with the feeling of being very much out of my depth and knowing I was being watched. I didn't understand what was being said, or what was going on; even the body language was different.

It's hard now to remember exactly why I had trouble understanding these blokes — now that they seem more familiar and I know their names and we have lived together. But, I do remember feeling very isolated, intrusive, and self conscious. I don't feel so much like that now. I've lived here long enough to have seen older kids become young men, and young men become fathers.

There are all these other stories that are part of my experience at Yuendumu.

Driving into Yulara with a truck covered in red dust stuck to diesel, the result of a leaking fuel tank. People covered in red ochre walking from the truck to buy cigarettes, leaving smudges of colour wherever they went on the white washed walls of the resort.

Sitting waiting for the fuel line to be fixed wondering if the tourists who were watching us realised that the desert had just got into town and would soon pass them by. Then driving out of town and picking up the old men who were sitting under a tree.

Being at the side of a man who just passed away. Sitting with other men my age as a brother and son of the deceased. Sitting confused and crying with women as they walked behind us, embracing us one by one. Going to the clinic and lifting a body into a black bag. Putting the bag into the back of a car of a man we had just met, a man we did not know.

Sometime later, driving through the scrub looking for a gravesite with the backhoe following. Watching the hole being dug, thinking that it's a crappy place to end up, in a hole in the ground, even if it is just your body.

Then celebrating the man's life, speaking some words to his family and friends, laying across the coffin and finally dropping a handful of sand before decorating the place with plastic flowers and a white cross. Eating sausages at the church when we arrived back at Yuendumu, wondering if the image of a man is stronger in our minds when we don't remember him in photographs, as we took some of each other.

Creeping up on a sandhill way out west at Yininti-walku-walku with an old man, two youngfellas and two friends. Looking suspiciously at an area of water on the salt lake that Japanangka said is where the Warnayarra lives. Listening to his stories of when he walked there as a child while I made spinifex resin on the head of a shovel

under a large desert oak. Desperately pulling things out of the back of the Toyota when we thought the goanna we had just caught set off the emergency beacon. Then getting bogged in a claypan with rain coming in, a long way from the nearest road.

Travelling to a group of low lying hills to the south of Mt Theo with an old man and his family. Digging out a soakage that the old man had drunk from with his family as a child. Collecting the water in a green Sprite bottle. Keeping that water for four years before finally giving it to the old man's grandson who was yet to visit the site of his own country.

There are many other stories. Stories that I think about now and then. They make me laugh, make me think, make me sad... but ultimately, make my life richer for having been a part of them.

My experiences at Yuendumu have revolved around relationships built with people within the community. A constant daily occurrence — interaction was not a choice — I was forced to communicate, to understand and seek to be understood, and to cross barriers.

This has been difficult and one of the biggest challenges of my life; to be uncomfortable, develop a greater sense of family, have the patience to sit and listen to old people, and have the humour and humility to (like them) learn another language and attempt to use it. I have learnt to allow language to break down barriers; to laugh at mistakes and enjoy drinking really strong, milky sweet tea.

Bouncing along a dusty track out bush I learnt to accept country music as a legitimate genre. I even considered barracking for Collingwood. I discovered the currency of boomerangs, blankets, kangaroos and firewood.

I spent most of my 20s at Yuendumu; I feel like I grew into a man there, and I did not do it on my own. Maybe one day I'll be that old man sitting on a bed, keeping myself company by closing my eyes and recalling these stories.

Small giants for reconciliation



EWB — Neville Atkinson is always willing to share his knowledge.

On a cold Saturday morning in June, Neville Atkinson, chair of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Nation, was a busy but contented man. The newspapers were calling keen to get a piece of the positive action, Ministers were arriving the next day and most importantly he had his daughter's netball match to watch.

Despite the happy chaos, Neville stood on the banks of the Murray to share his stories and connection to his country with 15 staff and volunteers from Engineers without Borders (EWB). He was giving his time to assist with part of a wider EWB initiative to provide members throughout the Murray Darling Basin with a deeper understanding of Aboriginal knowledge, values and culture.

EWB works with several Aboriginal communities and sees first-hand the scarcity of available resources and the immense pressures and expectations put upon them. Neville's dedication to the partnership with EWB is testament to his commitment to his values and his people. It's thanks to his enthusiasm and energy that EWB volunteers and staff could participate in a moving and challenging day, inspiring them into action.

EWB Australia began in 2003 and has steadily grown to the point where it now has 13 staff, 1,300 active members and a community of over 7,000. Two years ago, EWB began its Indigenous Australia program, employing a full time coordinator and creating an Indigenous Advisory Committee to help set the program's direction.

The vision is for a reconciled Australia and the mission two fold. The first is to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to support their community aspirations through sustainable engineering and education projects. The second is to take the inspiration, skills and understanding it gains from working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partners to create positive change in all areas of its work.

Bankstown Council full of ideas

Being a community partner with EWB can be a challenge. EWB provides access to skills, networks and resources within the engineering industry and in return its community partners play their part through cultural mentoring of volunteers and staff. This might include cross cultural training for volunteers, providing guest speakers for events and imparting advice on relationship-building and cultural exchange initiatives.

Cultural mentoring also emerges from the relationships formed when both parties invest their time, trust and energy. These relationships are vital to the success of EWB programs. When Neville and EWB's community partners invite EWB to share their culture, experience, knowledge and skills on country it is a generous and powerful experience that leaves a lasting impression.

It is these cultural experiences and relationships that can create the greatest change and assist EWB in its vision for a reconciled Australia.

At EWB they call it the 'small giant' phenomenon, where the smallest of actions can lead to immense impact and change inspired by the generous spirit of its Indigenous Australian community partners.

EWB celebrated the launch of its second RAP in November having been actively engaged in the program since 2008. Its RAP supports the ongoing development and direction of their Indigenous Australia Program.

Earlier this year, the organisation was Highly Commended in the Queensland Government Reconciliation Awards for Business. EWB acknowledges that the immense contribution of its Indigenous community partners was instrumental in receiving this accolade.

Now the partnership continues with Neville and so many others proving that when people meet, share stories and learn about each other, the suspicion fades, the air clears and almost anything is possible.

In October, the Bankstown City Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committee met to discuss reconciliation generally and Reconciliation Australia's RAP program in particular with an eye to considering the development of a RAP for the Council. It was the first time a request for information about RAPs had come from a local government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee.

Committee members, along with Community Development Officer Turkan Aksoy, spent three hours talking about the issues with Reconciliation Australia's local government RAP adviser, Kerrie Nelson. Following a presentation about RAPs, the group shared information, asked questions and discussed the steps involved in developing a RAP. Some of the questions the committee explored were:

- What does Reconciliation Australia do and who is on the board and staff?
- Who else has a RAP?
- How do RAPs fit with other organisations involved in reconciliation and other reconciliation initiatives?
- What other councils have RAPs or are developing them?
- What opportunities and challenges come up when organisations develop a RAP?

The committee was able to look at Blacktown City Council's draft RAP (to be launched on 26 November), which was freely available to the public during their excellent consultation process. The Blacktown draft gave the committee plenty of ideas about how to make Bankstown City Council's RAP unique to its local government area and communities.

A minimum element of a RAP is that organisations need to establish a working group made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians — staff and/or stakeholders. Bankstown City Council's RAP journey is sure to be enhanced by having the support of such a proactive advisory committee.



Bankstown City Council's RAP working group: (back row from the left) Aunty Maggie Williams, Aunty Margaret Goneis, RA's Kerrie Nelson, Turkan Aksoy, Hazel Hind, Aunty Laraine Sullivan, Derek Walker and (front row) Uncle Harry Allie, Aunty Noeline Holten, Uncle Colin Williams and Aunty June Magrath.

One team's day of cultural discovery

Reconciliation Australia's own Reconciliation Action Plan is helping us discover new opportunities for team building and cultural development for our staff. A measurable target in our RAP is for all staff to take part in cultural training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. Staff are also expected to have a personal plan to assist in the development of cultural awareness and cultural competency.

Earlier this year, to meet the increasing demand for assistance, RA's RAP Agency team who look after the needs of government organisations, early childhood area, schools and not for profit organisations, expanded from two to six people. With an eye on team-building and to help everyone get to know each other better, the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council (BBLALC) was approached to see if the Walbunja Traditional Owners and Elders might deliver a day of activities on their country to build the team's capacity while at the same time promoting greater cultural understanding.

They were keen and so beach fishing was chosen as the focus for our activities. Just as learning to fish can provide food for a person and their family, and learning to craft and maintain fishing gear can provide

skills that benefit many generations, so too can improved cultural understanding benefit our RAP advisors, helping them guide RAP organisations more effectively in their reconciliation journey. In this way RAPs become vital tools for community development.

Glen Toohey tells the story of the day.

The day at Batemans Bay and Broulee provided some wonderful experiences for the team of Christine King, Michele Abel, Jacqui Bethel, Caitlin Buxton, Michelle Groeneveld and me. On arrival at the Bay, Les Simon, Traditional Owner, Elder and Chair of the BBLALC, gave a Welcome to Country. Our team leader Christine King, a Larrakia woman from the NT, gave a formal and traditional reply on behalf of us all. For some this was the first time they had witnessed a response to a welcome.



Les Simon, Traditional Owner, Elder and Chair of the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council (centre) and Nipper, Traditional Owner and Elder (right) surrounded by members of the RAP Agency team — (back row, from left) Glen (state and territory government RAP advisor), Caitlin (not for profit sector RAP advisor), Michelle (social worker student on placement), and (at front) Christine (RAP Relationship Manager) and Michele Abel (acting RAP Relationship Manager and early childhood/school RAP advisor).



Les and Nipper (Traditional Owner and Elder) then took us to Broulee where much of the team building and cultural discovery took place and provided us with fishing gear, bait and advice on preparing to fish. As we started fishing, a sea eagle (budjaan, the Walbunja name) soared overhead and Les and Nipper said it had come to greet us as it always does when Walbunja people are there. All the while, we were fortunate enough to enjoy the company of a whale (muriyira, the Walbunja name) who was still there when it was time to head back to Bateman's Bay.

Over a relaxing lunch we shared stories and afterwards looked through the art studio above the BBLALC office with Colin Davis (Wiradjuri man and a member of the Stolen Generations).

The team learned that the studio is considered a safe place for all people to express themselves and their relationship with country and animals through art and painting.

The team's engagement with Les and Nipper and others at the Council about Reconciliation Australia and our RAP work enabled us to talk about our role and contribute to the positive and ongoing relationship we had begun that day.

A necessary part of every RAP is to nurture relationships between the RAP organisation and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations within its community. Our day with Les and Nipper had provided us with much to think about and we were all the richer for what we had learned.

Christine (foreground), Glen and Michele look like they've been fishing from the beach for years!

And on top of everything else we actually caught some fish!

We wanted to share our team building and cultural learning story as just one example of fostering a respectful relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. For anyone interested in forging such a relationship, RA's Cultural Awareness training register (visit www.reconciliation.org.au) provides a list of people and organisations offering cultural awareness training and related services.'

C4C takes the grass roots path

Communities for Children (C4C) Logan is a tiny not for profit organisation with a high hitting community development approach to formulate a truly informed and collaborative RAP.

Its first step was to share a RAP planning day with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Traditional owners and community controlled organisations.

For C4C's Aboriginal staff member, program manager, and staff and management committee representatives it was a jam-packed day of celebrating culture, visiting local historical sites, walking through the Berrinba Wetlands and a traditional lunch of kangaroo, dugong and Torres Strait Islander food.

Guests included speakers from Reconciliation Queensland, a traditional owner and the President of Keriba Mabagail Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage. The Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company and a didgeridoo player added a cultural flavour.

The group also examined paintings depicting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history from pre-contact right through to the present day. The paintings helped explain the impact of policies on generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

After lunch the group work-shopped short, medium and long term RAP goals and developed a set of recommendations for presentation to the C4C's next management committee meeting.

Communities for Children Logan is one of 45 programs funded across Australia under the umbrella of the Family Support program funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. These local programs with coordinated partnerships and services provide prevention and early intervention remedies for families.

The C4C family support programs are about improving child outcomes and wellbeing across the broad domain of health, learning, social inclusion, development and family assistance. Projects are undertaken to build partnerships between key stakeholders including community leaders and members, business and other service providers and levels of government, all designed to meet the common goal of improved outcomes for children.



Communities for Children RAP committee members:

Back Row: Kim Wright (Kingston East Neighbourhood Group), Thomas Sebasio (Keriba Mabaigal Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Culture and Heritage)

Middle Row: Shona Doyle (MultiLink), Geraldine Harris (Program Manager, C4C), Katie Biggs (C4C Family Team), Andre Vester (Youth and Family Services Logan), Cheryl Wardrope (Browns Plains Community Health Centre), Kylie Jackson (Kingston East Neighbourhood Group), Edward Kriletich (C4C Family Team)

Front Row: Major Colin Hopper (Lifeworks Centre), Marilyn Casley (Early Childhood Australia QLD), Tracie Nelder (C4C Family Team), Aunty Heather Castledine (Reconciliation Queensland), Aunty Betha Stewart (TSI Elder), Aunty Vicki Boyd (TSI Elder), Uncle Barry Watson (C4C Inclusion Worker) **Absent:** Lorena Thompson (Traditional Owner)

LWB sets up new unit

Life Without Barriers, one of the largest not-for-profit organisations in Australia has announced the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit in Sydney to deliver culturally sensitive care throughout NSW.

The creation of the new unit, consisting of 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions, reflects LWB's strong commitment to reconciliation and will deliver specific services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home-care.

Operations Manager of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit, Belinda Kendall, is responsible for recruiting and day to day management.

'Life Without Barriers commenced recruitment for the unit with a focus on employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a strong understanding of the cultural needs of our children and young people,' she said.

'Our aim is to provide the foundations for Aboriginal children and young people to thrive and become successful and confident adults whilst upholding the links back to their family, community and country.'

Deputy CEO Claire Robbs said the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit is an important part of LWB's Reconciliation Action Plan.

'The establishment of this unit demonstrates our strong commitment to achieving responsible and effective engagement and work practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

'Aboriginal staff will build relationships with Aboriginal children, their birth family and carers to ensure the cultural identity and safety of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is maintained.'

LWB have reported on their initial RAP and are now implementing their second RAP.

The Aboriginal National Reconciliation Project Manager Kerri Clarke says that 'LWB's commitment to reconciliation grows stronger and stronger and they listen to what

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to say...'

Successful applicants for positions with the unit must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and hold a current driver's licence.

For more information please visit lwb.org.au or contact **02 4013 4500**.

Life Without Barriers new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit will provide culturally sensitive care throughout NSW.
Image by Wayne Quilliam



Gloria sees a career with Fred Hollows

In its 2009 RAP, the Fred Hollows Foundation pledged to engage two Indigenous trainees as part of its recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. As a result, Gloria Dalywater came on board as a trainee Health Promotion Project Officer based in Katherine in the Northern Territory.

Belonging to the Dalabon people Gloria was born in Katherine and grew up on nearby communities such as Manyallaluk, Weemol and Bulman. She is proud to share her experience of joining the Foundation.

I went to school in Katherine right up until Year 7, then in Year 8, I went to boarding school at Warwick in Queensland for three years. I didn't want to go back to school, so I came back.

I did nothing after this but then I decided to do a business course for a week. It was at that time that I heard The Fred Hollows Foundation was offering a traineeship for two years, so I decided that I wanted to do it. I put my application in and before I knew it I was talking to someone on the phone saying 'Congratulations, you've got the job!'

It's good working with Fred Hollows. I started off on some bush trips, just to get used to the work and learned how to complete a trip report.

In the Katherine region I deal with the women's centres and they deal with aged care and schools. We also support the ladies on little projects they'd like to do. So the work is really about supporting the local communities.

I also help with a nutrition program called 'Sprinkles' which tackles issues like anaemia. I'm working on the rollout of this program

in the community of Ngukurr by helping the community based workers to understand infant feeding. We're going to be expanding this program to other communities soon.

The traineeship has changed my life from being nobody to being somebody and everybody knows who I am now. It's a good experience. It's given me more knowledge and understanding of how a community works and what sort of partnerships are running and who we are working alongside.

Hardly any organisations are offering these traineeships but I think they should. If Fred Hollows can do it, I'm sure everybody else can do it.

You meet lots of different people, even from the big cities, who come out and learn about communities and what we do. In the next couple of years I'd like to go overseas, see what it's like to work overseas with other Fred Hollows people.



Health Promotion Project Officer Trainee, Gloria Dalywater, prepares for a flight to Ngukurr community (Katherine, NT).

RAP launches



Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

Pictured at the launch of the CDPP RAP are Director Chris Craigie (second from left) and members of the RAP working group (l to r) David Adsett, Toni O'Keefe, Avenina Tarrago and Abbie Burchill. In his remarks Chris Craigie said that it was appropriate that the CDPP should embrace reconciliation through its RAP as part of its ethos.

'The plan is designed to ensure that in our work we exemplify respect for the unique place of Indigenous people, both within the community and as valued members of this office joining us in its service.'



ACTCOSS and Woden Community Services

The ACT Council of Community Services (ACTCOSS) and Woden Community Services (WCS) chose to launch their RAPs together on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. With ACTCOSS Director Roslyn Dundas and Director WCS Chris Redmond looking on, Bevan Smith from the Wiradjiri Echoes played the didgeridoo as a welcome and Nathan Carter from Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation performed an original RAP song.

RAP Chat

RAP launches



Parsons Brinckerhoff

Guests gathered to celebrate the launch of the Parsons Brinckerhoff RAP in the stylish setting of the NSW Art Gallery in Sydney. The RAP is a momentous one for the transport, infrastructure and environmental sectors, with Parsons Brinckerhoff leading by example in terms of best practice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement.

Leanne Townsend, CEO of the NSW Reconciliation Council, congratulated the company for its unique contributions to reconciliation – not least of which is their continuing support for the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School. With over 2,500 staff across Australia, Parsons Brinckerhoff is well-placed to be a national leader for reconciliation, helping to shape Australian attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, colleagues and communities.

Pictured are Michael West (Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Authority), Leanne Townsend (NSW Reconciliation Council CEO) and David Stuart-Watt (Parsons Brinckerhoff Regional Director for NSW and the ACT) at the RAP launch.



Urban Seed

Wurundjeri Elder Bill Nicholson and his son Damien conduct the smoking ceremony in Baptist Place in Melbourne at the launch of Urban Seed's RAP.

Urban Seed (Collins Street Baptist Benevolent Society Inc) is a Christian based organisation that prioritises and assists marginalised people while developing broader, supportive communities in the city of Melbourne, Footscray, Norlane (Geelong) and Long Gully (Bendigo).

Urban Seed recognises that the problems in streets and neighbourhoods have causes that are systemic as well as personal. Its projects seek to address the underlying causes of poverty.



Westpac

The Westpac Group's CEO Gail Kelly launched its Reconciliation Action Plan on October 21 at an event held in Sydney. Ms Kelly said that the Westpac Group's Reconciliation Action Plan summarises more than a decade of support towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'The Westpac Group's vision for reconciliation is to build a better future for all Australians — helping our customers, our communities and our people to grow and prosper. We'll do this by meeting the specific banking needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous customers, committing ourselves to appropriate and meaningful engagement with all of our stakeholders, and by providing educational, financial and employment opportunities within the breadth of our core business.' Pictured are CEO of Westpac Gail Kelly and Reconciliation Australia's CEO Leah Armstrong.

Brisbane Youth Service

Brisbane Youth Service celebrated the launch of its RAP at its youth centre in Fortitude Valley in August. The RAP focuses on engaging young people in the Service's reconciliation journey. Service users Tamika Hopkins (21) and Susan Butterworth (19, not pictured) performed their own reconciliation rap at the launch. The depicted RAP artwork titled *Murri Cod* was specially commissioned and was painted by young artist and Service user Morris Mickelo.

Wilting on welfare



A postcard sized 40-page booklet called *What Body Part Do I Need To Sell?* written by Dr. Kate Connelly has been produced by Jobs Australia to highlight the deprivation and depth of despair felt by certain people in the Australian community.

The booklet personalises the plight of disadvantaged people using the power of poetry. The words belong to some of the 150 single mothers, disability pensioners, carers and unemployed in three states who were interviewed about their dependence on welfare between 2007 and 2009.

In his foreword, former Justice of the High Court The Hon Michael Kirby says the poems stimulate the reader's feelings, challenging us to think new thoughts and reject old stereotypes.

'This book shows us in its vivid way the power of rhythm, rhyme, cadence and structure to shock the reader into a reflection on unknown human journeys. This is breathing humanity speaking to us. Their words demand attention and action,' he said.

Words such as these from Tracey:

*They gave me
nothing at all...
not even a private room.
I'm in tears,
highly stressed,
sounding angry...
In full public view
emotionally breaking down...
they were just giving me nothing.
I was being treated like shit.
What to do?
'Ring some churches or something.'
Well thank you very much.*

One of evocative images from the booklet

CEO of Jobs Australia, David Thompson AM says some of the poems show that the basic decencies of respectful encounters with institutions, which can cost nothing, matter a lot.

'A lack of money inspires not just shame, anxiety and occasionally stoic resignation, but also a powerful sense that things could be different,' Mr Thompson said.

To purchase a copy of the booklet (delivered to your letter box for \$15) go to the Jobs Australia website — www.ja.com.au — click on *Our Publications* and follow the link to the online order form. All proceeds from the book will go to the Jobs Australia Foundation which provides direct assistance and support to the country's most marginalized people and communities.



Closing for Christmas

Reconciliation Australia's office in Canberra will close at 5 pm on Christmas Eve and reopen again at 9 am on Tuesday 4 January.

In the meantime, our RA Board and staff wish you and your families a safe and relaxing festive season and hope the coming year is kind to you. We look forward to highlighting many more stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement as we continue to promote and report on reconciliation throughout 2011.



Annual Report online

Our 2009–10 annual report has just been published and will soon be available online. If you would like to receive a hard copy, please email us at enquiries@reconciliation.org.au.

Please donate



Reconciliation
AUSTRALIA

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December 2010

We have mail!

Space permitting, we're always happy to publish letters or emails about people doing positive things or topics likely to interest our readers.



What's wrong with 'Aborigine'?

We received the following email from Miangaal Elder Les Ridgeway (Snr) who wrote to us about the use of the word 'Indigenous'. As a child, Les was forced with his parents onto a State government owned and controlled Aboriginal Reserve. Denied a white education, he was taught by unqualified Reserve Managers at a Reserve school.

Les says that he was probably the first and only Aborigine employed by the Commonwealth Public Service in 1946 in Canberra, later becoming Aborigine Manager of Aboriginal Reserves in NSW after he joined the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB).

As a old Traditional Miangaal Clan man of the Worimi Nation group of many Clans I ask that the Reconciliation folk think carefully and please refrain from referring to us as 'Indigenous' we have never ever referred to our many Clan folk as such.

Our deceased ancestors would be horrified if they had been described as being indigen. ous / indidganas /, adj. originating in and characterising a particular region or country, native{to}.

So please refrain from continually referring to Aborigines or Aboriginal folk as 'Indigenous' for I and many Elders across the Nation have rejected this terminology that refers to us. Please tell your politicians, like we Elders have told them, get rid of this hideous slang name pronto.

Let's get back to basics remembering we were the first Australian Aborigines, we will remain Aborigines and we will die Aborigines and not 'Indigenous'. Get it?

If you Gubba Folk want Aboriginal support then stop awhile and listen for once to us before hurting us some. I have been hurt enough,

When I say I was hurt I mean because of white invasion. I was denied from becoming an initiated Aborigine in our LORE not the Whiteman LAW, that's what I mean by being hurt. This word will not hurt folk it's just a name change, but it would be great if governments first consulted with our folk prior to making changes.

As far as being referred to Australia's First Peoples that also is a mouthful. Why not go back to the beginning when we were called 'Aborigines'. In the dictionary its meaning is 1. one of a race of tribal peoples, the earliest inhabitants of Australia. 2. (generally) the people living in a country at the earliest period.

The word 'Abor.igi.nal' 1. of or pertaining to an Aborigine 2. of or pertaining to the Australian Aborigines.

I am nearing 83, your members should get a copy of my life story recorded in a book called 'The Rainbow Beach Man' by Professor John Ramsland and published by Brolga Publishers. John placed many copies in the Mitchell Library. Folk should read it, then comment.

Two cultures sharing one land

Scott Petrie sent us this thoughtful poem about Australia's twin cultures. He told us he wrote it while driving his road train to Mt Isa. 'I have a lot of time to think while driving and on this particular night as many others I was thinking about reconciliation, Australia, my children and how it will all fit in the future. Anyway while thinking about this I wrote this poem and wanted to share it.'

I am of this land

*You are black fella of this land
I am white fella of this land
I don't know your history
You don't know mine
I don't know your culture
You don't know mine
We only know snippets of what we have
And what our cultures have been
What our histories have been
We know little pieces, we never know the whole
But what I do know
Is that my future and your future will combine
When my last breath is breathed
I will return to the land, the sea, the air,
And there I will join with you
And our futures we will learn together*



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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation fostering reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

All the work we do with our project partners is dedicated to closing the unacceptable gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

Reconciliation involves justice, recognition and healing. It's about helping all Australians move forward with a better understanding of the past and how the past affects the lives of Indigenous people today.

This newsletter is compiled by Reconciliation Australia to share reconciliation stories, issues and opinions. Feedback and story ideas are always welcome along with names and addresses of people who would like to receive the newsletter. Please email us at: robert.beattie@reconciliation.org.au