

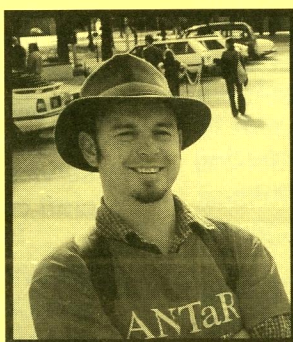
ANTaR

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation



ANTaR ACT UPDATE

October 2006



David Hunter Memorial Lecture

Personal journeys in justice and hope

presented by Ray Minniecon

Ray Minniecon, from the Kabi Kabi people of Queensland, is the Director of Crossroads Aboriginal Ministries in Redfern, Sydney. Previously he was head of World Vision's Indigenous Programs across Australia.

6:30 – 8.30 pm

Wednesday 8 November 2006

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT

Further information: 6295 9470 / 6288 0679

The David Hunter Memorial lecture is held annually to commemorate David Hunter, a founding member of ANTaR and the Journey of Healing in the ACT, and an enormously supportive and inspiring activist on Indigenous issues. In 2000 he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, and died in 2003.



Editorial

In the last few months we have witnessed a veritable media frenzy about so-called 'dysfunction' in Aboriginal communities.

In May riots in the Northern Territory Aboriginal town of Wadeye hit the front pages. In June/July the Central Australian Indigenous community of Mutitjulu was to cop the full onslaught of media attention after ABC Lateline aired a story alleging 'sexual slavery' for petrol, and paedophile rings, allegations which subsequent police enquiries could not substantiate.

The Commonwealth Government has used both incidents to play a very heavy hand with both communities, laying down the law, freezing funding and treating Indigenous people in a bullying and disrespectful way.

As Professor Mick Dodson recently said "If you were from another planet visiting Australia, and all you had access to was the mainstream media, you'd think that we were a hopeless lot who can't succeed at anything. That our men are no-hopers & drunks and child abusers. But that's not the real story".

Indeed it isn't. But the positive stories don't rate, and they don't serve the interests of a government which is hell-bent on assimilating Aboriginal people, and moving them off their lands; or forcing traditional owners to offer 99 year leases for business and housing development through rushed changes to the NT Land Rights Act which had not been negotiated with traditional owners.

This assimilationist agenda runs counter to all the success stories we know about. Such as the wonderful work to counter violence in Indigenous communities which ANTAR showcased at Parliament House in June.

This seminar on 'Ending Violence in Indigenous Communities' was held just prior to the Ministerial Summit, convened in response to the Lateline revelations. No Indigenous people were invited to that Summit – so ANTAR and others brought together a wealth of Indigenous activists and academics playing leading roles in dealing with these issues in their communities.

Their contributions were testimony to the creative ways these people and their organisations were tackling the problems, while strengthening their cultures. Their voices deserved to be heard & ANTAR made sure they were!

Another feast of success was Reconciliation Australia's announcement of the 2006 *Indigenous Governance Awards* to some outstanding Aboriginal organisations. The two winners were *Gannambarra Enterprises* from Wagga Wagga, NSW, and *WuChopperen Health Service* from Cairns, Qld.

Gannambarra develops sustainable businesses and provides opportunities for local Aboriginal people to gain employment. Among other things, it runs "Deadly Detailers" a car detailing service and *Gannambarra Pottery*, an arts & craft centre.

WuChopperen provides a wide range of health services, such as specialist clinics, chronic disease management, oral health & social health & well-being. It also oversees medical services & clinics in remote regions.

Both organisations are justifiably proud that they are Indigenous and their culture is integral to their work! But you probably didn't see headlines about any of these successes.

Nor about the great work that Narrabundah Primary School is doing with its large Aboriginal student enrolments (43% of its students are Aboriginal).

It's time to tell the good news & boost the pride and confidence of Aboriginal people who are battered every day with negative images of themselves.

And closer to home, it's also important to tell the ACT Government that schools which work well for Aboriginal pupils shouldn't be closed!

Finally, if you'd like to get involved with ANTAR ACT, make a donation, or be added to our email list, please email antaract@apex.net.au or phone Merrindahl on 0417 228 556.

ACT ANTAR Committee

Indigenous Health Rights Campaign

Despite Australia's prosperity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still live on average 17 years less than other Australians. ANTaR's Indigenous Health Rights Campaign continues its work to turn this situation around.

The campaign has now expanded into partnerships with other national bodies working in Indigenous health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma released his Annual Social Justice Report in late February 2006. A task force of key organizations and individuals working in Indigenous health, including ANTaR, has subsequently formed to realise the key recommendation of Commissioner Calma's report: to achieve equity in the life expectancy of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

ANTaR is also developing an independent lobbying campaign to gain multi-partisan Federal, State and Territory parliamentary commitments – including action plans and proper resourcing to close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

Seminars are being run around Australia to highlight the work of successful projects and organisations that are making a real difference in improving the health of Indigenous people. They will focus on positive forward action in the area of Indigenous health and how governments can best work in partnership with Indigenous people.

ACT Health Seminar

ANTaR ACT is joining with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services to hold an indigenous health seminar on November 21.

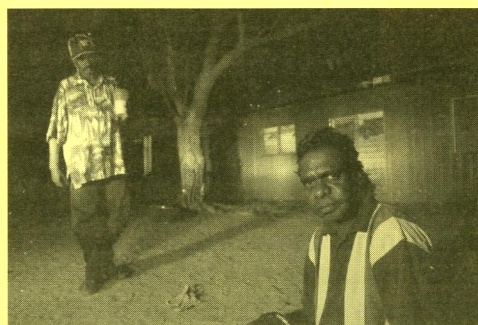
A major focus of the seminar will be helping mainstream health services, take positive steps to improve the way they meet the health needs of Aboriginal people. It is the responsibility of all mainstream services, including health, housing, education and youth services, to have a better understanding of the cross sectoral determinants of health and wellbeing, and to better equip their own services to cater to Indigenous clients. By responding to issues of access to, appropriateness of and cultural sensitivities of their services, seminar participants can develop ways to make a positive contribution to Indigenous health services in the ACT.

Success Stories Booklet

All around Australia, Indigenous communities are taking action to improve the health of their people. The success of their work shows that with a concerted national effort we can end Australia's Indigenous health crisis within a generation. Thanks to funding from the Rio Tinto and Mercy Foundations, ANTaR has commenced a project to document successful Indigenous community led health initiatives with the potential to be adapted to other communities. The project's objective is to drive commitment to the expansion, strengthening and replication of successful Indigenous health projects. After careful consultation with Indigenous communities and related health organisations and research into the details of the health programs, ANTaR will publish a book of success story examples. The success stories are identified using an assessment framework from the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health.

Stop Petrol Sniffing Campaign

For the past two years ANTaR has campaigned for the rollout of non-sniffable Opal fuel throughout Central Australia. In October 2005 ANTaR launched a postcard distributed to cinemas cafes and other public places around Australia. People were encouraged to write to the Prime Minister voicing support for the Opal rollout. More than 7,000 postcards were received by the government. Public pressure by a range of organizations) including the Greens and the Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) led to the Government changing its position and announcing that it will provide Opal fuel to any Aboriginal community that asks for it. A Senate inquiry into petrol sniffing recommended the comprehensive roll out of Opal and a range of other measures to overcome this practice which has been so damaging to Aboriginal communities. The Government has yet to respond to the Senate Committee's report.



Brothers Evan and David Wilfred have given up petrol sniffing and taken up art, Aug 2005, The Age.

The Wave Hill Walk Off

August 23 2006 marked the 40th anniversary of the Wave Hill walk off. The anniversary was marked by special commemorative activities including a festival organised by the Kalkaringi and Daguragu communities.

In 1966, led by Gurindji leader Vincent Lingiari, the Indigenous pastoral workers of Wave Hill station went on strike, walking away from the stock camp existence they had led for forty years and entering a new period of hardship and negotiation that ultimately changed Australia. This action is seen by many, as the beginning of the land rights movement in Australia. As Indigenous leader, Pat Dodson, has put it, "Lingiari started us on the road to reconciliation".

Although seen initially as a strike for wages and living conditions, the struggle of the Gurindji was essentially about the issue of access and rights to their own traditional land. After nine years of intense struggle they were finally given the title to the land in an official handover ceremony by the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam in August 1975.

Background to the Walk Off

Gurindji people first encountered Europeans from the 1850s, when the explorer began traversing the area. In the 1880s large pastoral operations were established.

Wave Hill cattle station, which included the Kalkaringi and Daguragu area, was first stocked in 1883. From this period, up until the 1930s, the Gurindji suffered lethal reprisals for cattle theft. Over time, they slowly moved into the cattle stations, adopting a more sedentary life and working as ringers and domestic staff. In 1914 Wave Hill Station was bought by Vestey's, a British pastoral company comprising a large conglomerate of cattle companies owned by Lord Vestey.

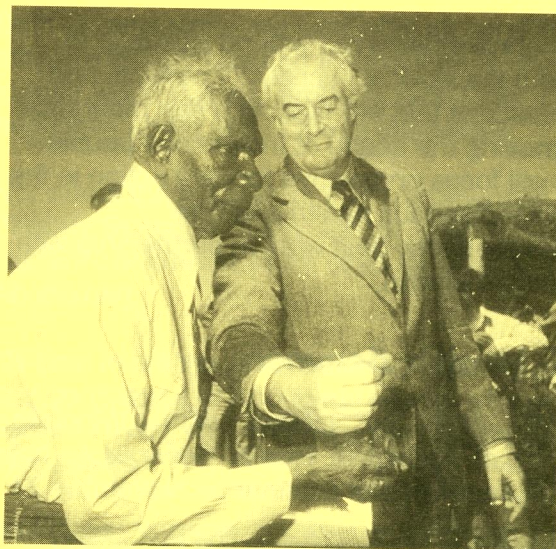
Conditions for the Indigenous workers and their families on cattle stations generally were poor. Pay rates were less than their non-Indigenous colleagues. At this time it was in fact illegal to pay an Indigenous worker more than a specified amount in goods and money. In many cases, the government benefits for which Indigenous employees were eligible were paid into pastoral companies' accounts, rather than to the individuals.

On Wave Hill Station, there had been complaints from Indigenous employees about conditions over many years. An inquiry during the 1930s was critical of Vestey's employment practices, but little was done over the decades leading up to the decisive action of 1966.

Recognising the significance of these events the protest eventually led to the Commonwealth Land Rights Act (Northern Territory), 1976. This Act gave Indigenous Australians freehold title to traditional lands in the Northern Territory and, significantly, the power of veto over mining and development on those lands.

The vision, strength and determination of the Gurindji has been recognised and celebrated in Australian popular culture. Many Australians have become familiar with the story of Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji through the lyrics and melody of the Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody song 'From little things big things grow'.

"Freedom Day" is celebrated annually in the Kalkaringi and Daguragu communities, about 800 kilometres south of Darwin.



This famous picture shows then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam pouring soil from Gurindji land (previously under pastoral lease) into the hands of traditional owner Vincent Lingiari, soon after the introduction of the NT Land Rights Act in 1975.

Compiled from information at
www.freedomday.info

Senate votes to undermine Aboriginal land rights

On 16 August 2006 the Senate passed a new law that could see Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory forced to hand over control of their land for 99 years.

The changes to the *Northern Territory Land Rights Act* give more power to the Minister at the expense of traditional owners and the Land Councils that serve them.

More than 28 000 Australians signed an online petition organised by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) and online campaigning organisation, Getup to oppose the changes.

The changes were also opposed by the Northern and Central Land Councils, traditional owners including Indigenous Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, organisations including Oxfam as well as Labor, the Democrats and Greens.

ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland said the Government ignored the wishes of all of these people when it refused to delay passage of the controversial elements of the Bill to allow for further consultation.

The new legislation has also resulted in a number of current land claims recommended for granting by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner automatically wiped out.

Earlier, ANTaR had argued in a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the legislation that Aboriginal people could be pressured into signing over their land to the Government for 99 years in return for basic services that their communities desperately need.

Of further concern, rent for leasing land will not be paid by the Government, but from mining royalty equivalents via the Aboriginal Benefits Account that was established for the benefit of the Indigenous people, funded from mining activities on their land.

"This will result in a situation where in effect the savings of the landlord are used to pay the rent of the tenant," Mr Highland said.

"The changes ended 30 years of bipartisan support for what had been the high water mark of land rights in Australia," he said.

The Government maintains that any changes to leasing arrangements or land council functions

will be voluntary. ANTaR said it will carefully monitor the implementation of the legislation and listen to Indigenous Territorians about its affect on them.

"We will expose any examples of changes that are not based on the free, prior and informal consent of traditional owners," Mr Highland said.

This media release is just one of many on the ANTaR website providing up-to-date commentary on issues affecting the reconciliation and land rights movements.

www.antar.org.au

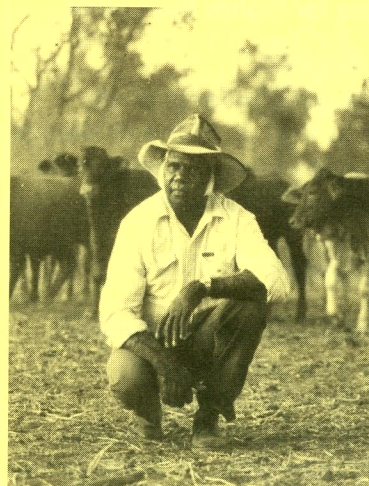
Senate Inquiry into Indigenous Stolen Wages

Throughout the first half on 2006, ANTaR lobbied Senators to establish an inquiry into the practice of state and territory governments with holding the wages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. In June this inquiry was established following a motion tabled by Australian Democrats Indigenous Affairs spokesperson, Senator Andrew Bartlett. It is set to report at the end of the year.

From 1900 right up to the 1980s wages of many Aboriginal workers were withheld, as were Aboriginal child endowments, pensions and soldiers' pay. As a result, Aboriginal people were condemned to lives of poverty while their money was used as public revenue or disappeared through fraud or negligence.

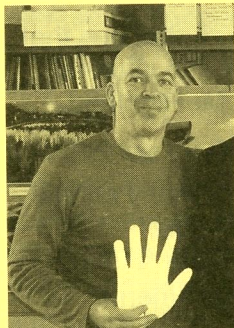
ANTaR has supported stolen wages claimants in NSW and Queensland to achieve just settlements from governments in these states. We have been particularly critical of the Queensland scheme under which Indigenous

people were offered only a fraction of the money taken from them. ANTaR will continue to urge the Queensland Government to develop a fairer scheme. We are also calling on other state governments take this issue seriously and



meet their responsibilities to Indigenous people.

ANTaR around Australia

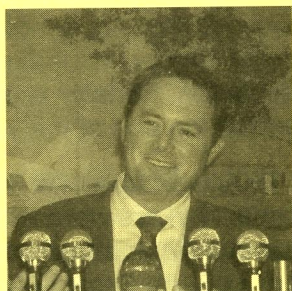


Long serving ANTaR National Director, Dr David Cooper (a founding member of ANTaR ACT) left ANTaR at the end of April 2006 to spend more time with his partner in Darwin. Tributes flowed in to David following news of his resignation.

ANTaR National President Mr Phil Glendenning

described David's contribution: "David has been with ANTaR right from the beginning. He has led the transformation of ANTaR from a short-term lobbying and support network into an independent and professional national organisation that is here for the long haul. He has served ANTaR and the reconciliation movement with great distinction."

David has been replaced as National Director by Gary Highland. Gary grew up in Townsville, North Queensland. He was an Adviser to Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Minister, Robert Tickner, and has worked in senior roles for Australia Post and Amnesty International Australia.



Gary has firmly grasped the baton passed by David, saying that nowhere is the need for change more pressing than in the area of health, where Indigenous people are suffering premature death rates far higher than other Australians.

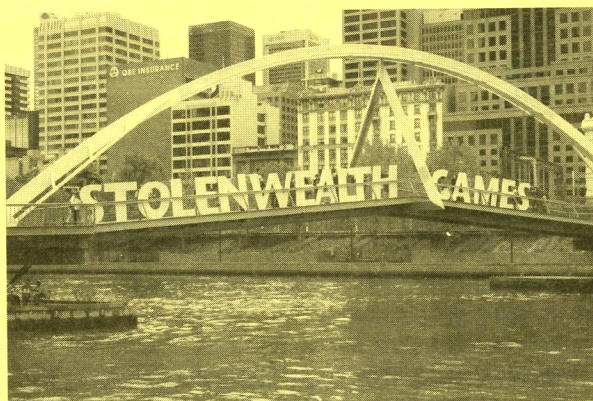
"We have to convince governments of all political persuasions to sign up to the challenge of closing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people" he said.

Stolenwealth Games

With all Australians, ANTaR celebrated the achievements of our elite athletes and applauded the profiling of south east Indigenous culture via the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne during March 2006. At the same time ANTaR saw the Games as a chance

involved in a public installation of two-metre high letters spelling out

"Stolenwealth Games" during the Moomba Parade in Melbourne. ANTaR also coordinated 18 non-government organisations to co-sign an Indigenous rights statement. , through these two initiatives, ANTaR Victoria members and supporting organisations were able to draw significant public and media attention to the ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples in Australia to restore their voice, wealth and health.



Treaty Scroll

ANTaR has created a unique 'petition' for a Treaty. The petition takes the form of a 20 metre scroll which non-Indigenous people 'sign' with their thumbprint. The Treaty Supporters' Scroll serves as a call on the Crown and the Commonwealth Government to recognise Aboriginal sovereignty and enter a Treaty process. The scroll also seeks to spark action on local agreements (treaties) between Traditional Owners and non-Indigenous people, groups and institutions.

Sea of Hands

Twelve *Sea of Hands* installations were held across rural, regional and urban Australia throughout 2005-06. The Hands continue to be in demand in schools around the nation as a symbol of hope for reconciliation.

Removing our White Blindfold

The White Blindfold Ritual involves non-Indigenous participants ceremonially removing white blindfolds and signing an artistic petition for a treaty in front of Indigenous leaders. It was designed as a powerful visual symbol for non-Indigenous Australians to acknowledge that so

respect for Indigenous culture and communities impacts on Indigenous peoples.

Close to 200 people participated in the first White Blindfold event, held in August 2006 at the Melbourne Town Hall to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. By removing their blindfolds and placing a thumb print on ANTaR's Treaty Scroll in front of Indigenous leaders, the non-Indigenous participants demonstrated their commitment to "seeing things differently" and to working in solidarity with Indigenous people.

The event also drew attention to the need for the non-indigenous community to acknowledge its role in the ongoing marginalisation and impoverishment of Australia's Indigenous Peoples.

Want to find out more about ANTaR's activities, events and campaigns?

Why not bookmark the ANTaR website

www.antar.org.au

You can also make a donation, subscribe to the newlist, find out how to get involved and buy merchandise.

The year ahead

2007 will be a year of anniversaries for people committed to reconciliation and social justice for Indigenous Australians. In May we will celebrate forty years since the history-making referendum that recognised Indigenous people in Australia's Constitution and enabled them to be counted in the Census.

The second question in the referendum was to determine whether two references in the Australian Constitution, which discriminated against Aboriginal people, should be removed. The proposed changes were considered by many to be representative of the prevailing movement for political change within Indigenous affairs. As a result of the political climate, this referendum saw the highest YES vote ever recorded in a Federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent voting for change.

Next year is also the tenth anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generations and the Howard Government's infamous *Ten Point Plan*.

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families was established in 1995. It was a response to the concerns of Indigenous agencies and communities that the general public's ignorance of the history of forcible removal was hindering the recognition of the needs of its victims and their families and the provision of services. The *Bringing Them Home* report was released in 1997, documenting the findings of the inquiry.

2007 also marks ANTaR's tenth birthday. When a small group of people began ANTaR in 1997, none of them imagined the organisation would evolve to be, in the words of Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, "the most significant national community-based organisation for reconciliation and Indigenous rights in Australia."

While ANTaR's development has been a source of great pride, the past ten years have not delivered greater justice to Indigenous Australians. While there have been achievements in some areas of Indigenous health and education, the Government's much touted "new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs" have not delivered anywhere near the outcomes promised.

Nowhere in its history has the role of ANTaR been more crucial. Although the issues may change from year to year, our priorities remain the same – basic human rights for Indigenous people and an end to the racism that diminishes all Australians.



Christmas shopping

Visit the ANTaR stall

Oxfam Australia Christmas Fair

Albert Hall, Yarralumla
Saturday, November 25
9am – 3pm

Cards, calendars, t-shirts and more
will be available.

ARE YOU RECEIVING THE ANTaR ACT EMAIL UPDATES?

If you would like to subscribe, simply send an email to antaract@apex.net.au with your name, email address to be subscribed and a request to be added to the list.

KNOW SOMEONE YOU THINK WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANTaR?

Drop us a line, or suggest they check out our website (www.antar.org.au)

IF YOU'RE MOVING...

...please let us know so that we can update your contact details.

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