



Sorry Day May 2011, Canberra evening ceremony. PHOTO: Joseph Lafferty

Recognizing Indigenous people

ANTaR has been campaigning for over a decade for Indigenous people to be recognized in Australia's Constitution. This issue came to the forefront when the Federal Government announced that, by the next Federal Election, there will be a referendum on how best to express this recognition.

A Government-appointed Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition is gathering input from across Australia. ANTaR has taken this opportunity to make a submission on what constitutional reforms are needed and, just as importantly, how we as a nation should get there.

Our submission called for three main reforms:

1. The Constitution should include a positive statement recognizing Indigenous people.
2. Racist provisions in the Constitution should be removed, namely section 25 (Under Section 25, if a racial group is denied the right to vote in State elections, the people of that race are not counted in determining the State's entitlement for Federal representation.) and section 51(xxvi) (The Government can make special laws for any race). Instead, the Constitution should give the Government power to make laws for Indigenous people, but only to address disadvantage, or protect cultural identity.
3. The Constitution should grant the Government power to make agreements directly with groups of Indigenous people, and to make laws giving effect to these agreements.

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The long history of failed referendums in Australia tells us that consultation and education leading up to the referendum is critical. Throughout our submission, we called for Indigenous people to be widely consulted on the language used, and the legal scope of these reforms. Experience also tells us that referendums with bipartisan support are far more likely to succeed, underscoring the importance of consultation.

So why do we think this issue is so important? The Constitution is more than just words, and more than just law – as significant as these things are. It's a question of national identity. As we put it in our submission:

At its heart, Constitutional recognition goes to our values as a nation – how should we reflect the history of dispossession, prior ownership and continuing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as their rights to self-determination, in our defining document?

When the Constitution was first drafted, Indigenous people were actively excluded – both from the process of preparing it, and from the Constitution itself, in sections that prevented them from being counted as Australian citizens. This discriminatory section was removed in 1967. But we believe there is more work to be done to create a founding legal document for a just Australia.

You can find out more about constitutional recognition by reading our submission, or our more detailed report 'Are We There Yet?' Both of these are available on ANTaR national's website:

<http://www.antar.org.au/>

— By Matthew Fenwick

Campaigning and events

The main campaign focus for ACT ANTaR in 2010-11 was addressing the high rate of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the territory. Incarceration was the main theme for the David Hunter Memorial Lecture in November 2010, where the Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda talked about national issues, while the CEO of the Aboriginal Justice Centre, Brendan Church, provided a local perspective.

In early 2011, ACT ANTaR sent a letter to the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, supporting the creation of an Indigenous Friend position. This person would support young offenders through restorative justice processes, as the rate of participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders had been very low. Subsequently, the ACT Government announced the creation of such a role in the 2011-12 budget.

ANTaR continued to work closely with other organizations advocating for Indigenous rights. We provided financial support to the Working Group for Aboriginal Rights to host the New Way Summit at the Tent Embassy over Easter. The group also supported the National Sorry Day Committee and several members assisted with the evening event on National Sorry Day in June. The photo on page 3 shows attendees at a lunch with on Sorry Day 2011.

As in past years, ANTaR ACT had stalls at a number of community festivals, selling merchandise and talking to people about rights and reconciliation. This year, we had stalls at the Woden Valley Community Festival in November 2011, and the National Folk Festival (with the National Sorry Day Committee) in Easter 2011.

In January 2011, ANTaR ACT had a stall at a special screening of *Liyarn Ngarn* held at the National Museum of Australia. We sold copies of the DVD, with all proceeds going to the Lingiari Foundation.

Committee and administration

The central committee meets monthly, with a core of committed volunteers. We were sorry to farewell Katherine May, who has returned to UK to study (See the profile on page 3 for more on Kat's contribution to ANTaR). We acknowledge her work, particularly in building relationships with other organisations. Another long-term member, Dr Chris Bourke, was elected to the ACT Legislative Assembly, following the retirement of another Member. We congratulate Chris, who is the first Indigenous member of the Assembly.

The committee sends out regular updates to a wider group of supporters, including this Annual Newsletter before the David Hunter Memorial Lecture. The major events are well supported by this group and the broader community.



Sorry Day May 2011, Lunch with Kevin Rudd. PHOTO: Joseph Lafferty

Member profile — Katherine May

Katherine's background is in international development. Prior to coming to Australia she worked with an international environmental NGO in the UK. She joined the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) in September 2008 where she worked initially on the Indigenous Community Governance project, then for several years as a Research Officer for the People on Country project. Her research focus for the PoC project was centred on identifying and analysing government support for Indigenous land and sea management and the social and economic benefits of Indigenous engagement in natural resource management activities. In June 2011, Katherine won a UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) scholarship to undertake research towards a doctorate at the School of Anthropology and Conservation, University of Kent at Canterbury.

Katherine is a dedicated Indigenous rights advocate. She took over as ANTaR coordinator in the ACT when Kristina Beck left for Cambodia and helped us maintain a great deal of activity and a strong volunteer network. In particular she made good links with the student activist group ReconciliACT, and she liaised closely with the New Way Summit held in Canberra early in 2011 to which ANTaR ACT gave considerable support. Kat was also the alternate ACT representative on the National Management Committee in 2010-2011.

We wish Katherine all the best for her PhD and future plans. Her departure left us in need of more volunteers. We invite you to join our team.



— By Janet Hunt & Annick Thomassin

WALK WITH US

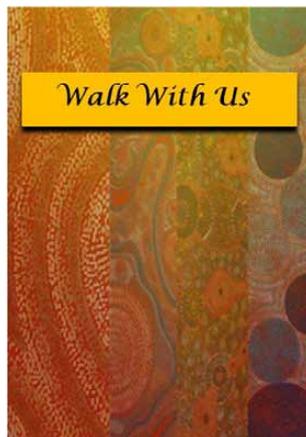
Aboriginal Elders call out to Australian people to walk with them in their quest for justice

Published by concerned Australians, August 2011

Four years ago, in June 2007, the Howard Government announced the Northern Territory Emergency Response, or Intervention, in response to the *Little Children are Sacred* Report, which highlighted serious problems in some Aboriginal communities. However, while the Report called for community empowerment underlying a response, the Intervention has been characterised by governments making decisions affecting Aboriginal communities with little consultation. 'Concerned Australians' is a loose collection of churches, social justice groups and individuals, united in their concerns about the injustice of the Intervention. The group has been determined to give voice to what many Aboriginal people feel about the Intervention, through books, submissions to UN Committees and public statements.

Walk With Us is the second book published by concerned Australians. The first – *This Is What We Said*, February 2010 – gave voice to the statements made by Aboriginal communities during consultations in mid-2009. New legislation around the Intervention was introduced in 2010. However, many felt the changes didn't reflect the concerns that had been raised. In August 2010, two Elders, Rosie Kunoth-

Monks and Djiniyini Gondarra, travelled to Geneva to speak to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In February 2011, concerned Australians released two statements, one from Elders and the other from 33 prominent Australians, calling on the Government to end the Intervention and start anew.



Walk With Us contains statements from Elders in communities affected by the Intervention, as well as the statements from February 2011 and comments from other prominent Australians. It is a beautiful book, respectfully presenting the words of the Elders, with a luscious design and photos of those speaking for their people and their country. While reflecting the pain of the Intervention,

there is also pride in heritage and hope for the future, as shown in these quotes.

[The Intervention] is destroying our communities. It has taken away our rights and it has failed to deliver proper services'.

– **Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, OAM, Utopia**

In our eyes, in our Law... no individual people can decide or make a decision on what should happen in their community. It's got to be the whole community living in that area got to agree.

– **Harry Jakamarra Nelson, Yuendumu**

We have lived together in this society, this community. We are the Australians. Don't let the other people, the First People of this country, be rejected! ... We invite you brothers and sisters, walk with us, then fight a system that victimises people.

– **Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, Galiwin'ku.**

Walk With Us can be purchased from:

www.concernedaustralians.com.au

— **By Julie Evans**

FREEDOM RIDES 40 years on

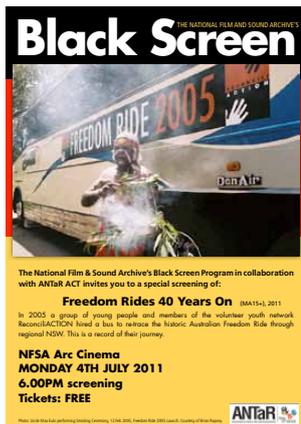


Photo: Uncle Max Eulo
Courtesy of Brian Rapsey



Dr Chris Bourke



Mrs Pauline Bliim

“Freedom Rides - 40 Years On”, a film about the 2005 bus trip tracing the nation-changing 1965 tour that exposed the level of racism experienced by Aboriginal people in rural New South Wales, was screened by the National Film & Sound Archive, in conjunction with ANTaR ACT, to mark NAIDOC Week in Canberra.

Chris Bourke, Australia’s first Indigenous dentist and the ACT’s newest Member of the Legislative Assembly, and Pauline Bliim of Wyong, a participant in the 2011 Freedom Ride, spoke about their experiences.

Chris was working as a locum dentist with the Aboriginal Medical Service in several towns on the Freedom Ride route until a recount following the resignation of Jon Stanhope put him in an ACT Assembly seat. He found residents and officials in those towns respectful of him and his position.

Pauline described how, when she slipped away from the formal meetings organised for the ‘Freedom Ride’ of February-March 2011 and talked to Indigenous people on the street, they shared stories reminiscent of the original tour. She described a situation where young Aboriginal people found it very hard to enter the workforce, as they were treated as a group to be untrustworthy. Being unemployed, these young people were largely idle and poor, and thus prone to fulfilling the stereotype in which they were cast. If they entered stores in town (and there is not a lot else to do) they were followed around by staff. Pauline also heard of some Aboriginal people being given work as the result of advocacy on their behalf, and this providing paradigm-changing circumstances for their families. Pauline said that, regrettably, racism and discrimination remain entrenched in many of these places, but whereas it was blatantly obvious to the original Freedom Riders, now it is practiced ‘behind closed doors’.

A DVD of “Freedom Rides - 40 Years On”, and a host of other great publications, are available on-line from ANTaR at:

<http://www.antar.org.au/shop>.

— By Peter Blackwell

2011 DAVID HUNTER MEMORIAL LECTURE

Beyond the Intervention: Aboriginal Development in the Northern Territory

7:15 – 9:30 pm

Thursday 17th of November 2011

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
15 Blackall St, Barton, ACT
Further information:
antaract@yahoo.com.au

All welcome.
Refreshments will be provided.



David Hunter was one of the founding members of ANTaR and the Journey of Healing in the ACT, and an enormously supportive and inspiring activist on Indigenous issues. In October 2000 he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. He died in December 2003. ANTaR and Journey of Healing ACT host the annual memorial lecture in memory of David's contributions to reconciliation and Indigenous rights.

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OUR 2011 GUEST SPEAKERS

Damned lies and statistics: overcoming the myths of Aboriginal policy in the Northern Territory

JOHN PATERSON

Representative of Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory

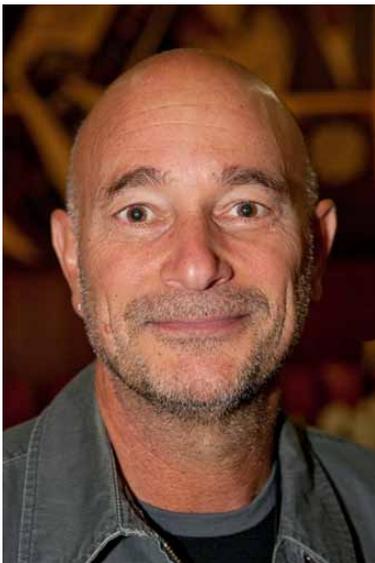
John Paterson is currently Chief Executive Officer for AMSANT (Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the NT). He has held senior management positions within government and Aboriginal community organisations for the last twenty-five years. He is affiliated with the Ngalakan tribe from the Ngukurr region, southeast Arnhem Land. John graduated from Edith Cowan University with a Bachelor of Social Science in Human Service. He is also a graduate and Fellow of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. His interests include mentoring Indigenous youth, strengthening Indigenous governance structures, gardening and football.



In search of productive intervention in the Northern Territory

JON ALTMAN

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University



Jon Altman is a research professor currently holding an ARC Australian Professorial Fellowship at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University. He has an academic background in economics from the University of Auckland, New Zealand and in anthropology from the ANU. Since arriving in Australia in 1976 he has dedicated his professional career to research on Australian Indigenous economic development, mainly in remote Australia. In 1990 he was appointed the Foundation Director of CAEPR, a position that he relinquished after 20 years in 2010. Much of his recent research focuses on Indigenous development, the hybrid economy, political ecology of the Indigenous estate, native title, land rights and property rights. Since 2007 Professor Altman has been a vocal critic of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention. He recently co-edited (with Melinda Hinkson) the award winning book *Culture Crisis: Anthropology and Politics in Aboriginal Australia* (UNSW Press, 2010).



Become a volunteer, join a campaign, inform yourself, donate, subscribe to our newlist, get involved!

ANTaR

“...perhaps the most significant national community-based organisation for reconciliation and Indigenous rights in Australia.”

– Tom Calma,
Former Social Justice Commissioner

www.antaract.wordpress.com

ANTaR is working locally and nationally on a range of Indigenous issues.

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