

ANTaR ACT

Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia's First Peoples



ANTaR ACT
NEWSLETTER
November 2013

Parliament House on 12 October 1997 in what was then the largest public art installation in Australia

photo by Jeanette Mathews

Call for volunteers: AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) and ANTaR are celebrating the anniversary of the National Apology and 50 years of AIATSIS with a large, colourful sea of hands on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin at Acton Peninsula. AIATSIS promotes further understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present, through supporting research and building collections of print and audio-visual materials. We would like your help to create the sea! Join us on 12 February to help set up the hands outside of AIATSIS, Lawson Crescent, Acton. If you are interested in helping out or would like more information, please email us.

ANTaR ACT is the local branch of ANTaR - Australia's main non-Indigenous organisation for reconciliation. We're dedicated to supporting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through public campaigns and advocacy. In the ACT, we support local Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations working to advance reconciliation, host local events and support ANTaR's national campaigns at a grassroots level.

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The Sea of Hands

By Jeanette Mathews

My late husband, David Hunter, was part of the group that began ANTaR in 1997. As a working mum with young children I didn't have much to do with the organisation until the inaugural Sea of Hands display at the front of Parliament House on 12 October 1997 in what was then the largest public art installation in Australia. I took our children and joined David and the rest of the ANTaR Committee and hundreds of others who were wandering among the spectacular display of colour and pattern. It was wonderful at ground-level and stunning from a distance – such as from the top of Parliament House.



photo by Jeanette Mathews



photo by Jeanette Mathews

The occasion was a fantastic community event – people of all ages gathered around the display and also through the collection of hand painted message sticks at the same location.

The Sea of Hands, in the colours of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, was a powerful, attractive, and physical representation of the Citizen's Statement on Native Title – a petition circulated by ANTaR in 1997 to mobilise non-Indigenous support for native title and reconciliation.

The message sticks had their own messages and each hand also carried signatures of individual Australians who were 'putting their hand up' for reconciliation. As the hands fluttered in the breeze on their narrow wire supports, they simulated the waves of a 'sea' and represented a new movement sweeping the nation.

In subsequent months, the Sea of Hands was installed in every major city and many regional centres. Over 300,000 Australians have signed their names on one of 120,000 plastic hands that make up the Sea of Hands, which has, and continues, to gather signatures everywhere it appears. A collection of greeting cards sold by ANTaR show the varied locations and designs.

Smaller 'lakes' or even 'puddles' of hands have also been used on occasion: in Canberra we have helped plant the hands during Reconciliation Week, on Sorry Day commemorations, and at David Hunter Memorial Lectures.



2013 David Hunter Memorial Lecture

Canberra now and beyond

Guest Speakers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, sharing their vision for Canberra, now and beyond.

5:30pm for 6pm start

Tuesday 12th of November 2013

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

15 Blackall St, Barton, ACT

Further information: antaract.wordpress.org

or email: antaract@yahoo.com.au

All welcome, free admission and light refreshments served from 5.30pm

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 ACT hosts the annual memorial lecture in memory of David's contributions to reconciliation and Indigenous rights.

Planting a Sea of Hands is an act of recognition – of identities, cultures and history. ANTaR's Sea of Hands campaign has become a signature symbol for the organisation and so hands are also distributed as lapel pins and earrings – available to purchase from ANTaR stalls and the website.

In February 2014, a Sea of Hands installation will be set up as part of the AIATSIS 50 year anniversary celebrations. We will be calling on ANTaR and AIATSIS volunteers to help set up the huge display for Thursday 13 February 2014 (the anniversary of the Apology).

Along with ANTaR's overall aims, the Sea of Hands powerfully symbolises community support for reconciliation, rights and respect.



photos by Jeanette Mathews

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

Nationally and locally, our major campaign in 2012-13 is about Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as our First Peoples. We are working closely with our partner, Recognise, the organisation established by Reconciliation Australia, to promote this campaign.

What has been happening in the past 12 months?

In September 2012, the former Australian Government announced it would extend the timeframe for the referendum on recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the constitution, originally planned for before the 2013 election. The reason for the delay was the concern over low levels of public awareness. The government, opposition and the Greens want the referendum to take place at a time where it has the best chance of success.

In November 2012, the Australian Parliament set up a Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Committee has been asked to consult further on the model of constitutional recognition proposed by the Expert Panel (see below), and help ensure secure and strong cross-party support for a proposal to be put to the Australian people.

In February 2013, the Australian Parliament passed an Act of Recognition. The Bill recognises the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country and aims to build momentum for recognition. The legislation has a sunset period of two years, which Liberal MP Ken Wyatt likened to a "post it note on the fridge" to remind the Parliament to finish the task. A review will be carried out in February 2014 to consider levels of community support for recognition and proposals for Constitutional change. Organisations around Australia have been working to promote awareness about recognition to ensure the Australian public is informed prior to a referendum.

ANTaR National is a member of a national network of non-government organisations that are working to promote constitutional recognition, and played a leading role in its establishment in 2011. The network seeks to share information and collaborate to ensure the message of constitutional recognition reaches as many people as possible across the

nation. ANTaR National has also produced a number of resources to assist supporters to spread the message. A suite of materials, including factsheets, a video, answers to frequently asked questions, presentations and flyers, are available from the ANTaR National website: antar.org.au.

Recognise has been working on taking the message of constitutional recognition to the people of Australia. This enormous undertaking is known as the 'Journey to Recognition' and was launched on May 26, the anniversary of Sorry Day. The Journey is a national relay across the country. Supporters of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be walking, running, driving and cycling through every state and territory to promote constitutional recognition. So far, the team has travelled over 6000km in Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory. They have just begun their new leg of the Journey in the Kimberley and are heading south through Western Australia, with plans to keep moving until the nation is ready to vote in a referendum.

In August 2013, ANU group 'Getting Ready for Recognition' held their official launch. The group has produced clear, concise and legally accurate information about recognition and our constitution. This can be accessed from their website: <http://ready4recognition.com.au/>.

What does the change in government mean for constitutional recognition?

Will a change of government affect the process? We believe not. There has been strong bipartisan support on this issue to date. The Coalition's Indigenous Affairs policy committed to establish a special committee to progress constitutional recognition, with membership including Attorney General George Brandis, Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion and the sole Aboriginal lower House Member for Hasluck, Ken Wyatt. They also commit to putting forward a draft amendment for constitutional change within 12 months of taking office. We expect to see that proposal made public by next year. And then it's over to us

Background

An Expert Panel reported to the Prime Minister in January 2012.

The Panel's report recommended that a referendum should be held in which Australians would vote to:

- Remove Section 25 – which says the States can ban people from voting based on their race;
- Remove section 51(xxvi) – which can be used to pass laws that discriminate against people based on their race;
- Insert a new section 51A - to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to preserve the Australian Government's ability to pass laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Insert a new section 116A, banning racial discrimination by government; and
- Insert a new section 127A, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were this country's first tongues, while confirming that English is Australia's national language.

How can you be involved?

Upcoming events

For information on where the Journey for Recognition is, and when it will come to your town, please see <http://www.recognise.org.au/>.

ANTaR ACT and Ready for Referendum are both running activist training workshops. For more information, please contact us.

Everyone can play a role in spreading the word about constitutional recognition. Ideas about how you can be involved and copies of publications can be found at: http://antar.org.au/constitutional_recognition.

ANTaR ACT Member profiles

Joe and Vivien

Joseph Lafferty

Joe was born in the old Canberra Hospital that used to be on the Acton Peninsula before it was demolished. He is a descendent from the Jaara Nation, Dja Dja Wurrung people, and is passionate about keeping his culture alive as well as promoting a fair go for all Aboriginal people, which is currently being denied.

Joe is passionate about Aboriginal land rights and achieving a treaty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. He would like to see ANTaR's future efforts focus on supporting native title and a treaty, two things that attracted him to volunteer for ANTaR over two years ago. Joe is a freelance photographer and has contributed a lot of time and energy photographing ANTaR ACT's events and laying out graphics for publicity, including this Newsletter!.

Vivien Palmer

Vivien trained and worked as a teacher in Queensland before moving to Canberra with her husband in 1972.

Through her work in ACT government schools since 1994 and up until retirement in January 2012, Vivien had strong involvement in brokering and maintaining community partnerships, as well as taking a leading role in a national project called Dare to Lead, which focuses on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Vivien is most passionate about ensuring children have well established avenues

to access equitable health, social and educational opportunities. In particular, successful outcomes achieved in early childhood could lay the foundations for continued success in primary and higher education, hopefully increasing resilience and avoiding pathways to incarceration.

Since retirement, Vivien has volunteered for numerous community projects, including with local schools, ACT Library projects and has been a Canberra Centenary volunteer throughout 2013. Vivien was inspired to become involved with ANTaR after attending a public ANTaR/ATCOSS (ACT Council of Social Services) meeting on rights and recognition in early 2012. She was impressed by the number of committed and enthusiastic participants at the meeting.

In future, Vivien would like to see ANTaR ACT promoting social justice, especially for youth and their parents or carers. She is concerned about the high incarceration rates across the country and would like to see a 'whole of sector' response to actively reduce these high rates. The response could include ensuring more comprehensive and culturally appropriate services for children and their families, starting with very young children and continuing on an as needs basis if requested to promote improved outcomes for all.

Ura noonkanleek njin ura birithch

'This art is our belonging – it is our voice'
Julie Freeman, artist, elder from Wreck Bay

By Julie Evans

NAIDOC Week is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through many various events. This year, I made the effort to visit a range of exhibitions that galleries and museums around Canberra were featuring during NAIDOC Week. I set aside a Saturday, recruited a friend, and set off with a list. We didn't get to the end, so I kept going over the next few weeks, catching nine exhibitions in all.

The quote above is from one of the artists in the exhibition *Wind-songs and Waterlines – Where is, what is Wreck Bay?* The Wreck Bay community are the traditional owners of Jervis Bay, the only Aboriginal community reserve in the ACT. This exhibition celebrated the community's cultural heritage through paintings and traditional arts such as baskets. The Wreck Bay exhibition was on at Tuggeranong Arts Centre Gallery at Lanyon during NAIDOC Week, but I saw it later at Burrunjy Aboriginal Gallery.

My day of exhibitions started at Southside Community Services Gallery with *Art from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients of ACT Corrective Services*. My friend and I were struck by the work of Dennis Nona, a prominent Torres Strait Islander artist, including a sweeping black painting of clam shells, represented through texture rather than colour. Many of the other artists in the exhibition were only just starting to explore their cultural identity through art. There were paintings that drew out the importance of family and community, while others explored the more difficult issues around isolation or conflict that people had experienced.



Julie Freeman, Shell Grandmother Basket (with Granddaughter)



Pukamani Poles, Jock Puautjimi & Luna Ryan

Next stop was Canberra Glassworks. For *Sand Carved*, Lyndy Delian produced stunning panels with texture and shadow in fluid patterns, drawn from the land. *Parlingarri Mamanta* means Long Time Friendship and was the result of a collaboration, with Luna Ryan incorporating Jock Puautjimi's traditional designs into glass. The results were strong and striking figures. Glass is a medium that provides depth and texture and the combination with designs from an ancient tradition was very effective.

We arrived at Megalo Print Studio + Gallery in time for the formal opening of *Wavehill/Jin-parrak/ Canberra Exchange*. Six artists, four from the Northern Territory and two from New South Wales, worked together over two weeks to produce the prints for the exhibition which (from the catalogue) 'express country, history, the past and the future as well as the impact of decisions made at Parliament House.'

The next two exhibitions were at M16 Artspace (*South Australia: Eyre Basin from the Air* by Patricia Wheatstone and *Desert Life* by Sarah Brown – and also a short film from the NFSA BlackScreen collection) and photoaccess at Manuka Arts Centre (*Colours of India* by their 2013 Emerging Indigenous Photomedia Artist Marissa McDowell).

We finished the day with *Warakurna: All the stories got into our minds and eyes* at the National Museum of Australia (still on until 3 November). Warakurna is a Western Desert community which producing unique art works.

A week later, I saw *Gathered Together: Indigenous Art from the CMAG Collection*, with a very rich and varied collection of works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists with a link to Canberra in their life or work. I then saw *I Do Have a Belief II: Kevin Gilbert, 1933 – 1993*, at the Civic Library. This brought together art and writings from Kevin Gilbert, and highlighted his campaigning for Aboriginal sovereignty.

"I do have a belief in the future. It's not hope. I believe in this country because there is a spirit in this country that nurtures life, that nurtures the land, that nurtures the humanity in it..."

Kevin Gilbert

These exhibitions were – in so many different ways – a celebration of the cultural richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It was well worth making the effort, from the joy of seeing the beauty of what the artists created, to the insights from the voices they found through art.

An idea for 2014: ANTaR may coordinate a tour of exhibitions in NAIDOC Week, possibly with a guide who can provide further insights. Please let us know if you might be interested.

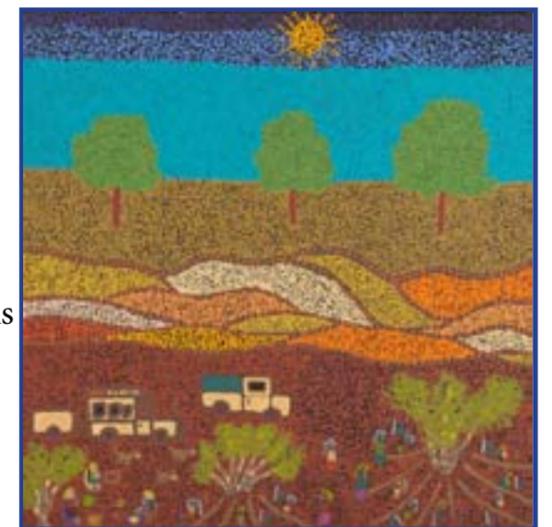
Sources for artworks included:

<http://citynews.com.au/2013/wreck-bay-in-art-and-story/>

<http://www.canberraglassworks.com/exhibitions/past/>

http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/warakurna/paintings/making_paintings

Version: 29 September 2013



Making Painting, Purnu and Tjanpi 2011, Roshanna Yinga Williamson

Calendar 2013-14

12 November 2013 ANTaR ACT David Hunter Memorial Lecture, antaract.wordpress.com

26 January 2014 Survival Day

13 February 2014 Anniversary of the National Apology

13 February 2014 AIATSIS and ANTaR Sea of Hands antaract.wordpress.com

20 March 2014 National Close the Gap Day www.oxfam.org.au/

21 March 2014 Harmony Day www.harmony.gov.au/harmony-day

26-28 March AIATSIS 50th Anniversary Conference www.aiatsis.gov.au/

26 May 2014 National Sorry Day www.nsd.org.au

27 May 2014 Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

27 May – 3 June 2014 National Reconciliation Week www.reconciliation.org.au

3 June 2014 Mabo day www.mabonativetitle.com/home.shtml

1 July 2014 Coming of the Light Festival

7-14 July 2014 National NAIDOC Week www.naidoc.org.au

17-19 July Bangarra Dance Theatre 'Patyegarang' at Canberra Theatre

4 August 2014 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day www.snaicc.org.au

9 August 2014 International Day of the World's Indigenous People www.un.org

2014 is the 50th anniversary of AIATSIS www.aiatsis.gov.au/

Keep an eye on our website (antaract.wordpress.com) and Facebook page for more events, conferences, workshops and celebrations.

Murra Bidgee

By Susie Russell

On 30 September 2013, hundreds gathered for the public Murra Bidgee Mullangari River Ceremony at a sun-blessed Uriarra East. Before a welcome to country from Louise Brown, various speeches in the late afternoon and ceremonial dancing at dusk, weaving and tool-making demonstrations held the attention of many. Others sat in clusters by small fires, chatting and sampling the available morsels while live acoustic music and the river flowed on.

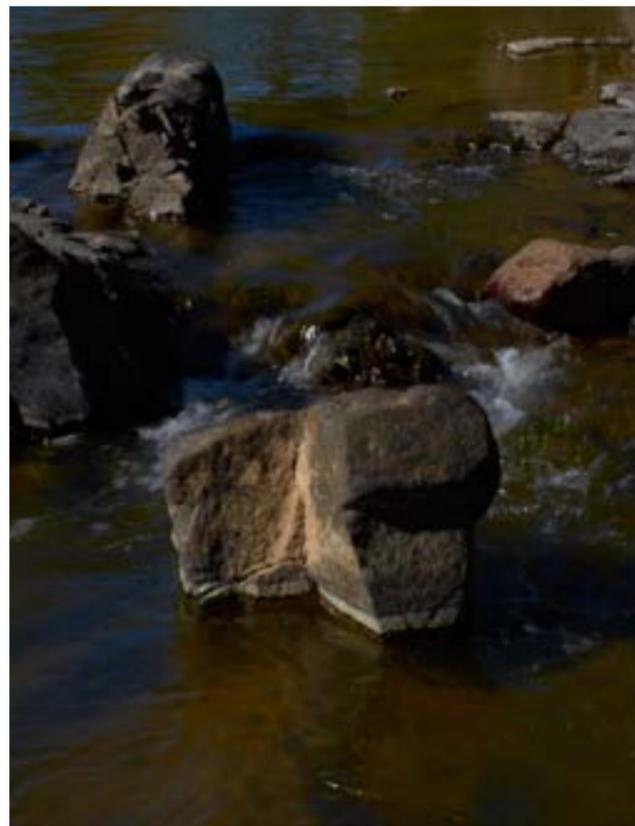


Photo by Joseph Lafferty

Conversations between Ngarrindjeri elder Major Sumner (Uncle Moogy) and Ngunnawal ranger Adrian Brown earlier this year sparked the idea of Ngarrindjeri performing the river ceremony alongside Ngambri and Ngunnawal on the banks of the Murrumbidgee for the first time in at least 150 years. The Murra Bidgee Mullangari River Ceremony now takes its place in a series of river ceremonies performed by Aboriginal people from Queensland to South Australia. Major Sumner has played a key role in reinvigorating these ceremonies over the past five years.

Mullangari River Ceremony

Visiting Ngarrindjeri Tal-kin-jeri dancers and local Ngambri dancers performed on the river's sandy shore in the clear evening. Fire and camera flash illuminated the dancers. Small children learning to dance in their wandering way were skillfully danced around by those more experienced in the troupes. After a time, some rhythms and dance sequences became familiar; and as the evening drew to a close, audience members were invited to take part.

The Murra Bidgee Mullangari River Ceremony is part of the One River program, and one of the many events under the umbrella of Canberra's centenary celebrations. It is a welcome opportunity to contemplate the place we now know as Canberra, and the connections that sustain this place, beyond the 100 year timescale as a capital city.



Photo by Sean Davey

The upcoming Canberra International Film Festival is another opportunity to experience Aboriginal river ceremonies in Australia. The film Ringbalin, screening at the National Film and Sound Archive's ARC Cinema on November 3, depicts the journey of several Aboriginal groups in dancing the spirit back into the rivers of the Murray-Darling from Queensland to South Australia: <http://www.canberrafilmfestival.com.au/films/ringbalin>.

ANTaR ACT



Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia's First Peoples

ANTaR

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

– Tom Calma,
Former Social Justice Commissioner

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

Visit us at antaract.wordpress.com
or on Facebook.

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

One printed newsletter is sent once a year, with regular updates sent via email. To subscribe, please email us with your name and email address.

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Email: antaract@yahoo.com.au

Phone: 0429 850 423

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