



RECONCILIATION RENEWED

The Newsletter has a different form. We have had to cut our costs and will be sending it via e-mail with hard copies to those who are not on the Internet. We plan to have a shorter newsletter and have it a little more often.

Contents Nillumbik Reconciliation Charter
Australia Day Flag Raising and Citizenship Ceremony
The Apology
The New Era in Nillumbik, by Don Brown
VALE Leanne Girardi
Pam Pedersen: Nomination for Nillumbik Women
What's On?

Nillumbik Reconciliation Charter: The Shire has consulted with Wurundjeri Elders and their organizations as well as with NRG and other stakeholders to produce a Charter which will be used as a basis for all Shire projects and events. It is to be launched at the opening of the Kangaroo Ground Platform with Wurundjeri Elders present. We are delighted with this statement of relationship between them and the Shire Council. NRG wholly supports the Charter and will be working with the Shire in the preparation of a more detailed 'Action' document which will shadow the Charter and be reworked as needed.

Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony and Flag Raising: Before anyone entered the Community Centre they were directed to the front lawn where two flag poles stood. Matt Weegberg played his didgeridoo before the Mayor gave the Acknowledgement Statement and welcomed distinguished guests, Jenny Macklin and John Cain. Pam Pedersen's excellent address was followed by the flags being raised. Mick Woiwod, our Patron raised the Australian flag and Eva Joe, Matt's mother, raised the Aboriginal flag. A fitting beginning to an Australian Citizenship Ceremony.

Excerpt from Pam's Speech:

"Aboriginal people have always known what a great country this is. The land was nurtured for thousands of years and, despite what has happened in the last two hundred years, our relationship to the land and to one another has never changed. As for reflecting on what we have achieved, I think most of us in my community congratulate ourselves for surviving another year.

I think that Australia Day should be about respecting one another's differences and acknowledging the many different people of this country. We should be proud of who we are whether Aboriginal, third generation or newly arrived immigrants. We need to celebrate the mix of backgrounds, histories, cultures, religions, values and beliefs....Australia Day means that, yes, Aboriginal people can share in this celebration of the nation along with everyone else, but we also celebrate our survival as the Aboriginal people of this country. "

The Apology: On Wednesday 13 February Kevin Rudd made his historic apology to the Stolen Generations of Indigenous people. It brought passion, relief and hope to our whole nation. At the Flag Raising at the Shire Offices to mark this significant day the Mayor indicated two young students and said to them: "You'll be going home to your parents tonight, bringing home to us what the early policies for Aboriginal Half Caste children meant."

Jan Aitken spoke on behalf of the NRG: “Along with the lump in my throat and the tears which well up for the suffering for so many, I know that now I feel able to engage more fully in this Reconciliation process. Moves ahead can be made now in a spirit of sincerity, which has been lacking. The raising of the Aboriginal flag here marks this new spirit and the hope we all share for a new order, for respectful relationship, for working together.”

The New Era in Nillumbik by Don Brown. In December, NRG members joined with Pam Pedersen to celebrate with her family and friends, the unveiling of **the statue of her parents, Pastor Sir Doug and Lady Gladys Nicholls** in the Parliament Gardens in Melbourne. These sculptures capture their spirit of human kindness and their persistence in keeping everyone not only aware of the plight of their people but the need for all Australians to be treated with equality and dignity. Pam follows in their footsteps. (See below for her citation for entry into Nillumbik Women).

At Heide, we saw an exhibition of **Aboriginal Art titled Power and Beauty**. Go and see it! Lin Onus’s “Maralinga” shows a black person, hair blown back by an atomic blast holding a fearful child while another stands over a distraught mother. Three poles, delicately painted with stars are placed in front of a floor to ceiling window. Outside the trunk of a lemon scented gum adds natural form to the scene. Delicate masks from Thursday Island, and a “Little Johnny’s Statement” emerges as you stare at a large dot painting: ‘I am not sorry’. And don’t miss the stunning portrait at the entrance to the gallery. On your way from Heide call in at **Mia Mia**. It’s up and running, the art works, artefacts and history are beautifully presented with Ricky Drill’s works prominently displayed.

Finally after months of consultation with the Wurundjeri Elders, the NRG and other stakeholders, **Nillumbik Council passed their new Reconciliation Charter** unanimously with many supportive statements from Councillors. We were there to see this. NRG will be working with the Shire preparing the documents and action plans which will accompany the Charter. **Attitudes are changing**. The revelations by Cathy Freeman of her ancestors and their treatment would not have been acceptable viewing a few years ago. And a documentary of a Swedish Expedition to the Kimberley showed artefacts and bones taken for museums now being repatriated – another stolen generation back in its Dreamtime. Finally, we have the anticipation of the **Sorry Statement** from the Government. It all gives us great heart and a feeling that full reconciliation can be a reality. (Can we reconcile ourselves to the possibility of there not having to be a Reconciliation Group? Let’s work toward that goal!).

BE DIFFERENT, NOT SEPARATE

VALE Leanne Girardi 14/1/57 – 25/1/08 We remember Leanne with particular respect and gratitude. Her passionate concern, her gentle manner, her brave hopes extended to NRG and enriched our time together. We admire her living and her leaving. Joan Pickard.

NRG Nomination for Nillumbik Women: Pam Pedersen: A proud Yorta Yorta woman.

Excerpt from her citation: Pam is a Master Athlete: triathlons, swimming, fun runs and sailing, National Indigenous Sportsperson 2005, and Baton Relay, Commonwealth Games. Pam is an Elder of the Koori Court Melbourne and a Mediator with the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria. She is also Deputy Director of Elizabeth Hoffman House, a Women’s Refuge in Eltham and sits on the Governing Body of Worowa Aboriginal College. Pam serves on the NRG Business Committee, the Robert Bridgeford Trust and the Committee of Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership. As well as all this she is a much sort-after speaker.

Nillumbik Women is an initiative of the Nillumbik Women’s Network. The histories and profiles of Nillumbik Women will feature on the Internet.

4. What's On?

- **March 4, Tuesday:** NRG Business Meeting 5.30pm at Don and Joan's 22 Hillcrest Ave, Eltham. All members welcome.
- **March 7, Friday 7pm:** International Women's Day: Tania Major, outstanding Indigenous young woman, speaking at dinner : Box Hill Golf Club. Book 9890 3771
- **The Dirty Mile:** A play about Aboriginal history of Fitzroy played in Gertrude Street. On from 23 Feb until March 16 9685 5111
- ~~12 March, Wednesday 7.30pm at the Gathering Space, Catholic Church 4 Henry Street, Eltham. Daryl Taylor speaking, followed by discussion on future plans for Reconciliation in Nillumbik, Victoria and Australia.~~
- **April 1, Tuesday:** NRG Business Meeting at Don and Joan's. Members welcome.
- **Sunday 25, Monday 26 May:** Past Matters 2008: Indigenous authors and writing at the Gathering Space hosted by Eltham Bookshop and NRG. Bruce Pascoe speaks on Monday 26 in honour of Reconciliation Week.
- **Reconciliation Week: Flag Raising at a local school. TBA.**
- **Visit Parliament Gardens and be inspired by the sculpture of Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls and Lady Gladys Nicholls.**
- **Basic Grant Writing Seminars:** at Melbourne's North and West ACC 9925 7304 to register your interest.

We will inform members of other events as they come to hand.

An Acknowledgement Statement

Written by Paul Byrne-Moroney, member, NRG Committee

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri as the traditional custodians of this land – the Kulin Nation – and acknowledge the continuing relevance and significance of their culture, customs and connection to land.

We identify Aboriginal Australians as a strong and successful community who, having endured dispossession, social injustice and prejudice, remain a powerful and capable people.

We commit to supporting Aboriginal Australians to achieve equality and success in all life endeavours and to self-determine the pathway to this. We aspire to reconciliation and affirm our on-going commitment to achieving this.