

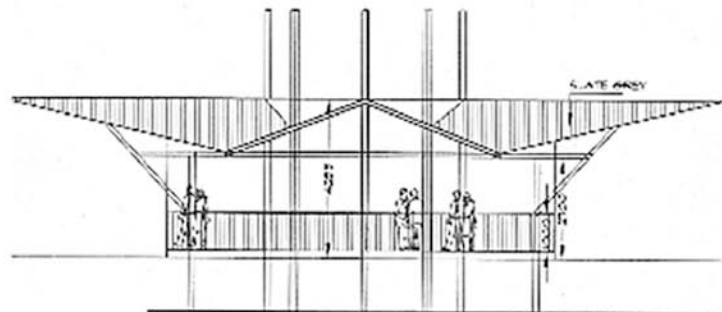


NEWSLETTER #33, APRIL 2008

Launch of the Nillumbik Reconciliation Charter and opening of Moor-rul Viewing Platform

Thursday 17 April 2008
12 noon

Garden Hill, War Memorial Park and Tower
Eltham Yarra-Glen Road, Kangaroo Ground
(Melway 271 G10)



Nillumbik Shire Council invites you
to attend the official launch of the newly adopted Nillumbik Reconciliation Charter
by The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
and the opening of the Moor-rul Viewing Platform by Nillumbik Shire Mayor, Councillor Warwick Leeson

This event marks two important steps in reconciliation being made by Nillumbik Shire Council. The Nillumbik Reconciliation Charter demonstrates Council's commitment to reconciliation and further developing a relationship with the Wurundjeri based on respect, acknowledgement and recognition.

The Moor-rul Viewing Platform is an educational facility where visitors can take in the breathtaking views of the Nillumbik surrounds. Eight, double-sided interpretive panels describe the development of the local area and include images and descriptions of Indigenous significance.

Light refreshments will be served

RSVP essential to 9433 3359 or email
artsinfo@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Image: *West Elevation*, architectural plans
of the Moor-rul Viewing Platform by Dennis Ward



All NRG Members and Friends of Reconciliation are invited to the above event.
Please note that RSVP is essential: 9433 3359 or email artsinfo@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

The Apology: Koorie Voices

Jan Aitken

We have read many articles in the press about the sense of hope and self respect generated by the Apology. It has been an awesome moment in Australia's history, pulling this nation onward in the quest for Aboriginal equality in every sense of that word.

Koorie people too have been having their say in their press. Some of the comments reported in the *Koori Mail* speak deeply and intensely of generations of family pain, and the hurt of not being counted as citizens worthy of being listened to and believed.

The *Koori Mail* editorial writes: "When the dust settles...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are likely to experience a virtually endless array of very powerful emotions.....The matter of an apology to those of our people affected by past removal practices has so consumed us in recent years that it may be difficult to let it go straight away. But we must." It goes on to deal with the matter of compensation and reparation. "The decent and cost-effective thing for the Government to do in this area would be to work with the Stolen Generations advocate bodies towards the establishment of a tribunal or other process to enable compensation to be determined." And finally, some advice: "Receiving the apology with dignity and grace is different to forgiving the wrongs that necessitated it in the first place. That is an intensely personal matter and should remain so."

This brought me to stop in the midst of my very positive feelings about our Prime Minister and the Apology. We do need to take time to think more deeply about the experience of being Aboriginal. In some way all Aboriginal people identify with the Stolen Generations. "Inasmuch as you did it to one of these, you did it to Me." Our response to further actions will make the Apology genuine, sincere and truly healing.

The Mia Mia Aboriginal Art Gallery

Mia Mia offers specialised tours ranging in duration from 20 minutes to one hour. These are tailored to a group's requirements – simply choose from three optional sections: a bush walk covering Aboriginal life and the Indigenous relationship with Country, aspects of Indigenous culture, and a talk on Aboriginal art in the Gallery. The cost for specialised tours is \$5.00 per person per section, with a minimum of \$100 per section for each group booking. For further information phone 9846 4636 Wed to Sun.

International Women's Day

Joan Pickard

In this year of The Apology, it was significantly appropriate that Tania Major, Indigenous Young Australian of 2007, should speak at a celebration dinner for International Women's Day in 2008 at Yarra Theological Union.

This tall, forceful young woman told us of growing up among the 'First Peoples' on Cape York, where her mixed Aboriginal/Celtic ancestry exposed her to early ostracism (although mitigated by the support of 'inspirational teachers' and her 'strong Mum'). In spite of this she portrayed a childhood 'alive with energy and connection to the land': hunting for eggs of magpie geese to 'make the best scrambled eggs', singing and dancing to the rhythm of the clap sticks.

Tania found a mentor in Noel Pearson, became the youngest person to be elected to the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), pursued university studies and became a spokesperson for her people on television and in print.

She considers her experience as idyllic compared to current conditions of teenage pregnancies, abuse, jail and suicide within Indigenous communities, but is still optimistic – although her frank assessment of the problems often results in a reaction of shame that inhibits improvement. Sometimes considered 'disrespectful' of her people because of her disclosures, she sadly mentions 'crippled communities' and the lack of confidence among young Aboriginals where the voices of the strong dead Elders are silent amid the 'voiceless young ones'.

She states that the lack of communication that silenced the Stolen Generations could not exist within today's information technology, but poignantly adds that this will not prevent a 'lost generation of contemporary young Indigenous people'.

Tania is preparing herself to teach others how to negotiate between state and federal levels of government to promote political representation within the First People. She believes that the confusion existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can only be overcome by valuing human relationships and engaging in the conversations that dispel alienation.

With honesty, humour and hope, Tania is proud of being one of the First People. Her determination and training make one wonder if Australia might one day be mature and confident enough to elect an Aboriginal Prime Minister, maybe even a female Aboriginal Prime Minister.

Success Stories in Indigenous Health

Jan Aitken

ANTaR has published a booklet providing a showcase of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health projects.

So often the only news we read about Aboriginal life are dreadful reports of abuse and drunkenness and debilitation. This is different. We need to expose our white selves to the successful and inspiring reports from Indigenous community projects that work.

At the launch of the booklet, held at the Gateway in Eltham, Bev Greet spoke. She is from Marie Stopes International Australia and her project was 'Keeping safe with a Snake'. Snakes are condoms which were named thus to appeal to the youth market, especially Indigenous youth.

The first town targeted was Mildura, where the project was an outstanding success. The packets of three are black and white with a curly vibrant snake in red. Marketing was unique and relevant. Peer sellers were trained at Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and learnt about sexual health issues.

These Snake Charmers were soon recognised in the communities they served and could be approached for information and condoms. They sold the packs for \$2 and received \$1 back for each packet sold. Hotels stocked them, and with the purchase of a bottle of beer there was the question: "Do you want a Snake with that?" The advertising posters were designed by young black people:

Beware the one eyed snake!

The trouser snake is the most dangerous of all!

And so on. Black posters with red and yellow letters.

SNAKE charmers know how to keep danger at bay

After Mildura, the Snake project was taken to Shepparton, Bendigo, Echuca and Bairnsdale. Recently it has gone national – to Kalgoorlie – where there has been more resistance because of the racism and negativity to Aboriginal people.

The booklet describes fifteen projects including Nutrition at Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation in Healesville, Blackout Violence, Healing Past Hurts at Yorgum, A Healthier Community Living Longer at Pik Wiya Aboriginal Health Service.

You can purchase this booklet for \$5 from ANTaR, phone 9419 3613, and at the Past Matters Book Festival 25-26 May

What's On?

- Please come to the double-launch of the Moor-ul Viewing Platform and Nillumbik Shire Council's Reconciliation Charter on Wednesday 17 April at 12 midday at the Kangaroo Ground Tower. All NRG members and friends are invited to attend, but don't forget to RSVP – see front page.

- Next NRG Business Meeting is on Tuesday 6 May at 5.30pm at the home of Don and Joan, 22 Hillcrest Avenue, Eltham 9439 7016 Open to all members.

- Special Meeting on Wednesday 14 May:

Daryl Taylor speaks and discusses:

Where to with Reconciliation in Nillumbik? We have the Apology, the Reconciliation Charter and the UN Bill of Indigenous Rights. What can we do now?

Daryl Taylor was Community Development Officer at Nillumbik shire Council for 3 years from 1998 until 2000. He was responsible for implementing Aboriginal Reconciliation policy and programmes for Council. He is now working as an independent organisational and community development consultant to Local, State and Federal Governments through his business: **Integral-Evolution**.

Members, friends of NRG, Diamond Valley OXFAM, Amnesty and Micah Social Justice Group members – anyone who would like to work through these important issues – are warmly invited to this evening of inspiration and commitment. 7.30pm at the Meeting Room at Steve Herbert's Office, 718 Main Road, Eltham – 9439 7016 for enquiries. Park at the rear or in Brougham Street.

- Past Matters Book Festival of Indigenous writing. A partnership between Eltham Bookshop and the NRG, will comprise talks, discussions and readings on Sunday May 25th 1.30-8.30pm and Monday 26th, 6.30-9.00pm. There will be special recognition of Reconciliation Week. Programmes and registration at the Bookshop.

- Sunday 1 June: Melbourne's Indigenous History with Kay Pitts. A walk of approx 8km through the City of Melbourne. Meet at Eltham Station for the 8.45am train to the city in the last carriage. Phone Kay to book after 10 May: 9439 8957

- Flag Raising commemorating the Batman Treaty on June 6 at a local school: TBA

- Planting of native grasses at the Kangaroo Ground Moor-rul Viewing Platform, and a maintenance working bee at the Gawa Trail: TBA