



# Land Rights

## NEWS



**One Mob, One Voice, One Land**

Vol 4 No 4 December 2002



**INSIDE: Handbacks, NT parks,  
Customary Law, ABA, Reviews and more...**

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**UTJU School secondary students from Areyonga visiting the Central Land Council during a recent trip to Alice Springs, where they also visited Aboriginal organisations, found out more about the services they offer and talked about career opportunities.**

## Land Rights NEWS

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# CONTENTS

NT Parks Decision .....	3	Suicide Prevention .....	20
Customary Law .....	4	Reviews .....	21
Land Handbacks .....	5	Milingimbi Festival .....	22
ATSIC Elections .....	6	Reviews .....	23
Community Development .....	7	Full Council .....	24
Employment Strategy .....	8		
Elcho Island Festival .....	9		
Mining .....	10		
Mining .....	11		
Land Management .....	12		
Land Management .....	13		
Awards .....	14		
Saltwater Stories .....	15		
Community News .....	16		
Land Management .....	17		
New Lhere Artepe Office .....	18		
Health .....	19		

### COVER PHOTO

CEREMONIAL ACTIVITY REACHED A CLIMAX ON ELCHO ISLAND IN EARLY OCTOBER AHEAD OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE DJAN'KAWU SISTERS. THE SISTERS' ARRIVAL COINCIDES WITH THE ONSET OF THE WET SEASON IN NORTH EAST ARNHEM LAND, BRINGING NOT ONLY A CHANGE OF SEASON TO THE PARCHED LAND BUT ALSO A MUCH NEEDED PURIFICATION FOR ITS PEOPLE. FOR MORE, SEE THE ELCHO ISLAND STORY ON PAGE NINE.

# New era for traditional owners of NT Parks

After years of struggling to establish traditional owner rights and involvement in Northern Territory national parks and reserves, there is finally a break through.



PIC COURTESY NT TOURIST COMMISSION

Gregory Park - Victoria River Inset: West MacDonnell National Park

The Miriwung and Gajerrong people's native title case has had a surprising spin-off for Aboriginal people all over the NT. This case covered the West Australian / NT border including some of the NT's Keep River National Park.

The High Court decision about this case, now known as the "Ward" case, covered many complex issues and it has taken many months to work out the implications for the Northern Territory.

In August the High Court effectively said the NT Government had ignored native title rights when it declared land as national parks or reserves between 1978 and 1998.

The court found that NT national parks and reserves had not been validly declared, because they failed to take native title rights into account.

This means that land claims already lodged over 11 parks could automatically proceed, and the issue of native title rights would remain for the remaining 39 parks.

With legal uncertainty hanging over at least 50 NT parks and reserves, the Chief Minister moved swiftly to seek a resolution to the problem.

The Chief Minister convened an urgent meeting with the Chairmen and Directors of the Northern and Central Land Councils.

Earlier in the year the Land Councils had asked the NT Government to consider joint management arrangements for national parks.

With the prospect of years in court and millions of dollars to test each claim over a national park, the Government proposed a negotiated settlement.

The negotiated agreement over parks and reserves will be based on the following principles:

- Any parks which are scheduled as Aboriginal freehold title will be leased back to the NT Government for a period of 99 years and managed under a joint park management arrangement.
- There will be continued public access to the parks with no permits and no gate money.
- Existing mining, exploration or tourist concessions already granted will remain.
- Issues will be dealt with through negotiation, not through the courts.



- Decisions about each park will be only be made after proper consultation with the traditional owners.

The Land Councils have accepted these principles.

However, there is now much detailed work to be done. Central Land Council Director David Ross said: "I welcome the Chief Minister's announcement today that her Government will negotiate a sensible solution to the legal uncertainty over the validity of more than 50 Territory parks and reserves."

We hope that the money that would otherwise be spent on litigation and adversarial high jinks can be put to much more constructive purposes."

## Elferink on the wrong track

In the Northern Territory Parliament the Opposition CLP's Aboriginal affairs spokesperson, John Elferink, said that he doubted that the Central Land Council really wanted to negotiate over the parks. Rather, he said the CLC was already preparing for court battles.

Mr Elferink said: "That is evidenced by....a great deal of activity in the Western MacDonnells National Park, where I notice that six of the gorges in question are located, there is a heavy amount of anthropological activity. That is indicative to me that the other party (CLC) which is involved in the negotiation process may be preparing for a litigation process because that is the sort of work that is required to prove things."

The work, which began before the parks deal was announced, is to properly identify the native title holders for the Western MacDonnells in response to a mining exploration application last year.

However, it is worrying that the Opposition spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs doesn't think the traditional owners of a park need to be clearly identified before they can negotiate over their land.

Northern Land Council Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu said: "We have always said that the Government should sit down and talk with us about our involvement in parks and reserves rather than fighting us in the courts. All these parks have enormous natural and cultural value which can now be fully acknowledged and promoted through the enhanced involvement of traditional owners. Many Aboriginal people will be relieved that they will finally be able to have a role in caring for their important sites and protecting heritage for the future."

### Proposed framework

The Government is now working on a proposed framework for the joint management arrangements. This will be put to the Land Councils in the new year as the basis for negotiating with traditional owners of each park.

There is much work to be done resolving issues before any land is transferred but the Government hopes that most of the process will be completed in two years.

Traditional owners will still have to identify their concerns about each park or reserve, be involved in developing management plans for each and identifying economic opportunities such as jobs and businesses that will result from the new arrangements.

Mr Ross said: "We will be working to ensure that Aboriginal people can participate in the management and promotion of Territory parks. This could be a key plank in new regional development strategies, including potential employment, training and enterprise development opportunities."

The Land Councils are now looking to complete anthropological work with traditional owners to identify the correct people to speak for parks on their country.

# NLC calls on media to observe permit system

Media issues loomed large at the Northern Land Council in November, with the arrest of a journalist at Wadeye and an invitation to prominent Darwin-based media personality and ABC television news presenter Barbara McCarthy to address the recent Full Council meeting in Jabiru.

The journalist, Paul Toohey from *The Australian* newspaper, was arrested on 13 November after he was discovered without a permit attempting to cover the funeral ceremony for a young man shot by police.

Speaking shortly after Mr Toohey's arrest, NLC Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu told council members that "the permit system exists for a reason: to recognise Aboriginal people's right to decide who can and who cannot enter their lands".

"The power to grant access rests in the hands of traditional owners and not in the hands of non-Aboriginal bureaucrats, as has been alleged in the Northern Territory media," he said.

Council members agreed, passing the following resolution:

*"The NLC calls on all journalists, media and film companies to conform with the following protocols, which are underpinned by the Land Rights Act and Aboriginal Land Act:*

1. *no entry onto Aboriginal land without a written permit from the NLC, and;*
2. *no commercial filming or recording on Aboriginal land*



ABC Television presenter Barbara McCarthy addressing the NLC Full Council without an agreement with the relevant land trust via the NLC."

It was against this background that Ms McCarthy attended the Full Council meeting, spending time listening to members' concerns about the way the media operates in regard to Aboriginal issues.

She revealed that as the only Aboriginal

woman holding a high-profile position with the country's national broadcaster, she also found it hard to answer other journalists' questions of a cultural nature.

She said she was keen to seek guidance on how best to deal with the current permit system in terms of media access to Aboriginal communities, and ways of to

improve journalists' knowledge of traditional cultural and social practices.

Mr Yunupingu cautioned that Aboriginal people were wary of the media for good reason. He said that "the microphone can be a power weapon", and that high-profile national broadcasters often abused this power to suit their own agendas.

However, he agreed it would be helpful for media representatives to be given greater insight into Aboriginal cultures and communities.

A resolution was then passed by Full Council calling on all media outlets to implement cross-cultural training for staff working on Indigenous issues, with training to include information on local protocols and legislation to guide their behaviour.

The NLC, in consultation with traditional owners, will shortly be writing to news editors and chiefs of staff to open up a dialogue regarding the reporting of issues in Top End Aboriginal communities.

Such dialogue between the Land Council and the media will provide an opportunity to negotiate so that matters of public interest may be investigated and receive public scrutiny – without compromising cultural or personal concerns. ●

## NT Customary Law Inquiry



NT Attorney General Peter Toyne (right) talking about the Customary Law Inquiry to CLC delegates at a recent council meeting at Hatches Creek.

### The NT government has announced an Inquiry to review the working of customary law with other laws in the Territory.

The Inquiry will be co-chaired by the former NT Administrator, Austin Asche QC, and it is to report to the Government by 30 June next year.

The NT Attorney General, Peter Toyne,

announced the Inquiry in mid-October and said other members of the committee would be announced soon.

However, almost two months later at the time of printing, no other members have

been announced or who will co-chair the Inquiry with Mr Asche.

Mr Toyne said: "The *Toward Mutual Benefit: An Inquiry into Aboriginal Customary Law* will seek to find some mutual benefit in areas including but not limited to governance, social well-being, law and justice and economic independence."

The Inquiry came after public controversies about payback and a traditional marriage with a woman under 16 years of age.

However, the Inquiry has a much wider brief than just looking into these matters.

The terms of reference for the inquiry include: "To report and make recommendations on the capacity of Aboriginal Customary Law to provide benefits to the Northern Territory in areas including but not limited to governance, social well being, law and justice, economic independence, wildlife conservation, land management and scientific knowledge.

"To report and make recommendations as to what extent Aboriginal Customary

Law might achieve formal or informal recognition within the Northern Territory."

The Inquiry will also gather the views of custodians of Aboriginal customary law and review how it is already taken into account in the NT and the States.

It will also examine previous reports and research including the work of the NT Statehood Committee, the Australian Law Reform Commission Report into customary law from 1986 and the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Mr Toyne, addressing the Central Land Council in mid November, said that Central Australia, the Barkly and the Top End could each have an Aboriginal man and woman on the committee but did not outline how they would be chosen or when.

The Kurduju (shield) Committee, representing the successful Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy Committees from Ali Curung, Yuendumu and Lajamanu, has been asked to report to the Inquiry on its work next year. ●

# Wagiman celebrate land handback



The title deeds to more than 1,000 square kilometres of land in the Upper Daly region south of Pine Creek have been handed back to the traditional owners, the Wagiman people.



Consisting of four separate blocks left outstanding from the Upper Daly Land Claim initially lodged in 1979, the return of the land is the result of many years of hard work

and patience.

Title to the land blocks was handed back on behalf of the Governor General by Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Philip Ruddock, to Mr Paddy Huddlestone, a senior Wagiman man. The titles will be held by the newly formed Wagiman (No 2) Aboriginal Land Trust.

"While I am sad that many of the original claimants are no longer here to witness the outcome to this long struggle, it is nonetheless a very happy day for our people," Mr Huddlestone said.

On hand to participate in the ceremonies, Northern Land Council Deputy Chairperson John Daly said the return of the traditional lands marked a significant milestone in the Wagiman's history, and followed a series of extensive negotiations between the NLC and the former NT Government.

"Until their amalgamation in 1983, the Upper Daly Claim consisted of three separate claims," Mr Daly said. "But, after extensive negotiations, the Wagiman have now secured title to country of high importance."

"There is a very important men's site located on one portion of land and today's hand back not only ensures the on-going protection of that site, but also allows for the continuation of traditional practices," Mr Daly said.

In 1990 the Aboriginal Land Commissioner recommended some land be granted to claimants, but decided not to recommend a grant of other land included in the original claim.

With some, but not all land returned to the Wagiman, a repeat claim was lodged, prompting the NT Government of the day and claimants to enter into negotiations that have resulted in a "win-win" outcome for both parties.

"This is a clear example of just what can be achieved when governments are willing to sit down and talk with Aboriginal people and work towards a negotiated settlement, rather than contest them," Mr Daly said.

The popular Umbrawarra Gorge Nature Park is included in the claim area and will be converted to NT Freehold Title and jointly managed between the Wagiman and the NT Government.

A similar agreement is likely to be negotiated with the nearby Douglas Hot Springs Nature Park. ●

Paddy Huddlestone proudly displays the title deeds to the last land handed back in the Upper Daly Land Claim



Senator Nigel Scullion and a proud group of traditional landowners

# New land for Harry Creek East



Harry Creek East, the only community forced to move out of the way of the railway, finally received title to land for a new community in December.

The small Harry Creek East community, about 50 kilometres north of Alice Springs, is on the narrow Arnape Aboriginal Land Trust that was part of the old North-South Stock Route.

It already has the Stuart Highway running through it and about 10 years ago the NT Government said it wanted to squeeze the railway corridor through the block too.

Robert Palmer, on behalf of the community, accepted title to the new block at a ceremony at the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station.

"We knew that the railway was coming but now everything is happening that fast," he said.

"I knew they were coming through so I moved out before that and I've been living at the new area. That's where I am now at the moment, living under a tree."

The community was left in limbo, unable to improve their tin 'shed' housing and other facilities on the existing block and unable to agree with the Government over title to a new block.

They successfully held out for Aboriginal freehold title to the new block, which is 4.5 km in size and about 12 km east of the highway, in return for giving up freehold title to the existing block.

A dispute about their new housing was recently resolved with the help of Minister John Ah Kit.

Construction of seven new houses is only just beginning while the railway corridor earthworks on the old block have

already started.

Mr Palmer said: "I'm happy that I'm going to see the houses built now after all them years. We've been living in tin houses, it's like a hundred degrees during the summer and in the winter it's like a freezer.

"Everybody's happy to be moving. There's a lot of things we are going to do. We are going to try to make it a restricted area, put a big sign out front and if people want to drink they can drink outside, not inside.

"We all scattered at the moment (in other communities) but we'll get things sorted out when we are living out there (on the new block). We are going to work something out as we go along. We'll all work together."

Secure title to the land means the community can join with nearby groups to work towards getting essential services in their area.

"We know we are going to settle down there, with houses, we want a school," Mr Palmer said.

"A clinic, we been arguing for that one for that many years, all our old people died, you know, waiting while we've been talking about that one."

"The main things are water and power, it comes up at every meeting, and a school and education. Children out there have to get up at 6am every morning to get into town (Alice Springs) on the bus and that's a long way."

"If we get a school, we know our kids will settle down then."

"In 20 years time it'll be a lot different if the Government can help us." ●

## Anderson, Hill re-elected as ATSIK Commissioners

**ATSIK's two Northern Territory Commissioners, Central Zone's Alison Anderson and Northern Zone's Kim Hill, have both been returned to office following the ATSIK elections on 19 October and the subsequent vote for the two Commissioners' positions.**

It is the first time that sitting Commissioners in the NT have been re-elected for subsequent three-year terms.

Northern Land Council Chairperson Galarrwuy Yunupingu was elected to ATSIK's Miwatj Regional Council, where he will be joined by East Arnhem council member Jack Munyarrir.

NLC councillors have also been elected to the other three ATSIK Regional Councils in the NT's Northern Zone and one in the Central Zone.

Noel McDonald (Katherine), Roddy Friday (Borrooloola/Barkly) and Apaak Miller (Katherine) are on the ATSIK Garrak Jarru Regional Council, with Ms Friday appointed as the Council's Alternate Deputy Chairperson.

West Arnhem Executive member Bunug Galaminda and Darwin/Daly/Wagait's Harold Wilson have joined the ATSIK Jabiru Regional Council, on which Mr

Galaminda will serve as Alternate Deputy Chairperson. Congratulations also to Eddie Shields from Darwin/Daly/Wagait, who won through to the ATSIK Yilli Rreung Regional Council.

Meanwhile Borrooloola/Barkly member Kevin Neade has been elected Chairperson of the ATSIK Yapakurlangu Regional Council in the NT Central Zone.

Also in the Centre five Central Land Council members have been elected to the other two ATSIK regional councils.

Congratulations to CLC member Clarry Robinya, who has been re-elected as the Central Remote Regional Council Chairperson for a subsequent term where he will be joined by CLC's Conrad Rataras as Deputy Chair.

Three other CLC members, Geoff Shaw, William Tilmouth and Daniel Forrester, have been elected on ATSIK's Alice Springs Regional Council. ●

## New Mereenie deal a gas



**The Central Land Council and traditional landowners will shortly sign a radically improved resource agreement for the Mereenie gas and oil field about 220 km west of Alice Springs.**

The previous 21-year-old agreement signed in 1981 expired in November.

While that agreement provided for Indigenous training, employment and contracting opportunities, there was no training, only one Aboriginal person, from Alice Springs, ever worked there and no contracting eventuated.

The new agreement negotiated with the Mereenie Joint Venture partners, Santos and Magellan, has detailed conditions covering training and employment for local people, enterprise development, and community development for the outstations.

There are important changes to sacred site protection procedures and it includes a mechanism for environmental protection and rehabilitation when the oilfield closes down.

The oilfield is running down and may not be profitable in a few years. While there is still plenty of gas, the NT Government contract to buy it only has six years left.

Most of the gas is bought for the Top End and it is not certain that the Government will renew the Mereenie contract.

Instead it might buy Timor Sea gas to prop up the Darwin industry.

Under the new agreement, Mereenie has agreed to develop a program to assist Aboriginal organisations to contract for work with Mereenie and other companies.

It will run a training and employment scheme for traditional landowners to work on construction to do with the project and it will fund and support three apprenticeships/cadetships in the Alice Springs area.

Mereenie will also support the development of a Western Arrente cultural centre at a site on the Mereenie Loop Tourist Road.

The project is in the early stages with an initial report and consultations completed but a feasibility study and discussions with other parties still to happen.

Under the agreement there will be additional funds to assist the outstations west of Gosse Bluff with community development projects.

Proposed projects include an upgraded water pipeline, and completion of an airstrip. Other projects will be developed over time by the communities. ●

## Impact of Alcohol Trial Continues



**Information presented at the latest meeting of the Alice Springs Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) showed a continuing improvement in public order and some health outcomes.**

Compared to the same period last year, over the course of the Alice Springs alcohol trial from April to October there has been:

- a 10% reduction in alcohol-related assaults.
- 28% fewer Protective Custodies.
- 10% fewer admissions to Sobering Up Shelter, despite it being open an extra day.
- a 15% reduction in alcohol-related ambulance call outs.
- 16% fewer alcohol related presentations to the ASH Emergency Department and 7% fewer at the Congress clinic.

There is concern about the long-term effects of the shift to Port that has been observed throughout the trial.

At present it is unclear exactly what health and social consequences might develop if higher alcohol content products remained the drinks of choice.

The ongoing inconvenience reportedly caused to tourists will also be given particular attention at the end of the trial to examine if there has been any effect on

Alice Springs as a preferred tourist destination and what actions, if any, might be taken as a result.

"There is agreement that overall the trial is having some positive effects, especially in terms of public order and especially around the town centre. The decline in injuries and problems related to intoxication are also pleasing," Chair of the ERG Dr Ian Crundall said.

"It is clear that the shift to Port has become embedded though. The Group will be focusing on this as the trial comes to an end to check whether this is creating new problems and issues that may then need further strategies."

The ERG is keen that the community keeps the Group informed and up to date with what is happening around town.

Comments can be made via post or the trial website: write to ERG, c/- Dr Crundall, POBox 721, Alice Springs 0871, or visit [www.nt.gov.au/health/casn/liquor.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/casn/liquor.shtml).

The website allows for comments and also provides the latest reports from the ERG. There have been over 900 hits so far. ●

## ABA Meeting endorses new approach

**The Advisory Committee to the Aboriginal Benefits Account met in Darwin on 5 and 6 December and endorsed a new approach to the trust account.**

The Committee met with Indigenous Affairs Minister Philip Ruddock and called for greater accountability and better corporate governance in the management of the money, as well as a bigger role for Aboriginal people in making decisions over the money.

The members of the Committee, drawn from the four NT Land Councils, also drew Mr Ruddock's attention to the frustration felt by Aboriginal people over the lack of ABA money being distributed over the past three years, and the very infrequent meetings of the Committee.

During this time almost \$68 million has built up in the account, all of it meant for funding development and environmental projects on Aboriginal land.



Mr Ruddock urged the Committee to put their ideas for reform of the management and decision-making over the ABA to him early in 2003.

In the meantime, he has agreed to consider any suitable projects which are put to him by the Land Councils or Aboriginal people. ●

# Agreement secures Gulin Gulin's future



Another beast headed for the markets in Asia

**In any market you think of, it pays to deal with the biggest supplier. And in the case of water buffalo they don't come any bigger than the Gulin Gulin Buffalo Company, the Aboriginal-owned and managed business which has risen to become Australia's biggest harvester of buffalo.**

Gulin Gulin started operations in 1987 and has been totally owned by traditional owners in the Bulman region since that time. But while it has steadily built its business, it has lacked a formal agreement with the traditional owners on whose land it operates.

Now, after a period of negotiations conducted by the Northern Land Council, it has secured a Land Use Agreement

covering most of the country in the Wilton River region around Bulman. This will guarantee exclusive access to the country for the next five years.

The Agreement was ratified at the Northern Land Council's 83<sup>rd</sup> Full Council meeting on 14 November, which directed the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Land Trust to issue a licence to Gulin Gulin under section 19 of the Land Rights Act.

The future now looks bright for Gulin Gulin. The company is already profitable and earns most of its money from the export trade, specifically into the Brunei market. It will also now be able to put in place sustainable mustering strategies to ensure it can keep up with the demands of a growing marketplace.

In 2002 Gulin Gulin mustered around 1,500 head of buffalo, and in 2003 it

expects to repeat the performance. Any profit it makes is split equally between reinvesting in the business and making a return to the traditional owners.

However, although some 30,000 buffalo are thought to be running wild in the Bulman region - making it one of the biggest herds in Australia - Gulin Gulin has always had to contend with the impact of illegal operators both on the herd and on the price buffalo meat fetches at market.

Armed with its new agreement, Gulin Gulin will now be in a much better position to secure the help of landowners in tackling this problem. Gulin Gulin board member and Jawoyn Association Chief Executive Robert Lee said traditional owners were looking to the long term.

"They just don't want someone going in there and wrecking the whole place," he said. "They put conditions on the number of buffalo that can be taken from that location ... so (there are still buffalo) out in the field for every year that they want to muster."

And while Gulin Gulin's owners are keen to grow the business, they also want to limit the environmental damage caused by the buffalo.

"They do a lot of environmental damage, no doubt about that, on springs, riverbeds and all that sort of stuff," Mr Lee said.

"So what we are trying to do with all this mustering stuff is to try and focus on keeping the numbers at a sustainable level so they don't damage the country." ●

## Darla development takes off

**The advertising campaign promoting the new suburb of Darla in Darwin's Palmerston region has only barely begun but already close to half of the 57 residential lots on offer have been sold.**

The growing success of the first stage of the Larrakia Development Corporation project is testament to the hard work and detailed planning that has gone into the development since its inception 18 months ago.

At the end of November, 24 of the lots were under contract with work on schedule to allow titles to be issued in February next year.

LDC Executive Officer Greg Constantine said all the storm water and sewerage drains had been put in place and power was in the process of being installed.

"Owners should be able to start building in late February next year," he said.

Mr Constantine said a pleasing aspect of the project was the employment opportunities being given to Larrakia people.

"One of the prime reasons for undertaking this project was to create jobs

for Larrakia people, both during the construction phase and in the long term," he said.

Two Larrakia-owned contracting businesses - Saltwater Landscaping and Saltwater Nursery - have been established to provide landscaping and plants for Darla. Between them they will employ 10 Larrakia people.

Meanwhile, on the project itself, five Larrakia have already been employed in a variety of roles with recruitment continuing.

The project has begun to attract the attention of politicians, with the NT Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, the Hon. Kon Vatskalis, paying a visit to the site on 3 October. He was joined by other notables including ATSIC NT Northern Zone Commissioner Kim Hill and CLP politicians Denis Burke and Terry Mills.

NLC Chief Executive Norman Fry, who also attended the visit, said the development



Work is well underway at the Darla site

showed the practical benefits of the approach taken by the NLC and the Larrakia during their negotiations with the NT Government.

"This development illustrates the benefits of negotiated solutions to native title claims," Mr Fry said. "It will serve as a model for native title agreements throughout Australia, as it so clearly demonstrates that native title is not an impediment to development."

Members of the Federal House of Representatives were also briefed on the Darla development's progress during a visit

to Darwin by the House's Standing Committee on Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Affairs on 28 November. The Committee was visiting as part of its inquiry into Indigenous capacity building

Although their visit to the Darla site was cancelled due to a tropical thunderstorm, they were shown a model of the eventual three-stage, \$24 million project which will see up to 390 residential units constructed over the next three years on 50 hectares of land.

"Darla is a great example of capacity building in action," Mr Fry said. ●

# ADrail gives landowners a blast

**Traditional owners for the area west of the Devil's Marbles Leslie Foster Jampin, Mona Heywood Nungarrayi and Jorna Robertson Nampin (below right) donned safety gear to witness blasting along the railway corridor through their country.**



In July they travelled with CLC Railway Unit and ADrail staff to see the detonations, resulting in a fireworks-like display of rock and dust.

The area, about 13 kilometres in length, requires the use of explosives to "cut" a path through the rocky hills that characterise the terrain. Unlike cars, trains can't handle steep rises so hills and valleys along the corridor must be evened out to create a grade of no more than 1.1 degrees.

The ADrail rock cutting team have spent about three months clearing the area north west of the Wauchope roadhouse.

In September, traditional owners for the area north of Alice Springs, with CLC Railway Unit and Native Title staff, also visited the rock cutting near Wauchope. They were able to inspect the explosives placed in the ground, see the blast, and then return to the blast site to see the changes in the landscape.

The Alice Springs traditional owners also inspected other railway works such as the railway overpass near the Alekarenge turn-off and flood plain culverts near Mungkarta community.

These works are similar to the proposed overpass to be



constructed around 17 km north of Alice Springs and drainage culverts to be used around 50-60 km north of Alice Springs on Burt Plain. The ADrail rock cutting team has

now moved south to the rocky hills north of Alice Springs to begin work expected to last from mid-October 2002 to February 2003. This cut will be about 18 km in length. ●

## NLC to expand training and employment role

**The Northern Land Council is poised for a dramatic expansion of its role as an employment and training facilitator for Indigenous people.**

The move has already won the NLC a performance-based contract under the Structured Training and Employment Program (STEP) for up to 70 job placements from the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

The new contract builds on the NLC's successful employment and training initiative with the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link.

NLC Deputy Chief Executive John Berto, who has been driving the NLC's Employment and Training Strategy, said that under the agreement with DEWR the NLC would take responsibility for placing 70 Indigenous people in training and employment in the first year of the agreement.

"Because of our experience in representing Aboriginal people across the Top End and our extensive presence on the ground, we are perfectly placed to co-ordinate all stages of the career-building process from training through to employment," Mr Berto said.

"By the end of September we had already overseen 33 commencements by Indigenous people in a mix of both training and jobs. I am confident we can meet and even surpass our target of 70 placements by the end of the first year's contract with DEWR."

The placement process is being overseen by the NLC's Employment and Training Unit. While most of the work and training at this stage is related to the Alice Springs-Darwin rail link, Mr Berto said there were many other opportunities in the catering, hotel, transport, construction and infrastructure industries.



John Berto: confident of meeting DEWR targets

"DEWR has made it clear that if we are successful in the first year, they will give us another contract for subsequent years and possibly expand the resources made available to us," he said.

In the meantime the Employment and Training Unit continues to build its database, which has been used to such great effect on the railway project. Initiatives planned for the coming year include the expansion of the database

to take in details of Indigenous people living throughout the NLC's area, the placement of a downloadable registration form on the NLC's website and the listing of a toll-free 1800 centralised registration telephone number.

### Staff development

The NLC is also committed to expanding its capacity building program for executive and regional council members, and implementing an internal training and staff development program.

While some training has always been given to new council members, historically a lack of resources has placed limits on what could be provided. However, following a formal approach to ATSIC for capacity building funding, the NLC was recently given an undertaking from ATSIC that \$82,000 will be provided for this purpose.

This will allow the NLC to put in place comprehensive and ongoing training programs for council members within the next year, which will improve members' ability to fulfil their roles under both the Land Rights Act and the Native Title Act.

In terms of internal training and staff development, the NLC recently signed a three-year contract with DEWR under which resources will be provided to employ a dedicated Indigenous Employment and Training Coordinator and to fund a consultant to design the overall training and development program.

"For the first time the NLC will be able to draw up individual development plans for each employee and monitor them, and we will also be able to offer an additional cadetship to each branch," Mr Berto said.

"The program will be overseen by Human Resources staff, with a specific focus on improving the skills and job prospects of Indigenous staff members." ●





## The return of the Djan'kawu sisters

**As the storm clouds build over the remote east Arnhem Land coastline, the keepers of this land prepare for the climax of a ceremony almost as old as the land itself – and one that is vital to its health.**

It is mid-October on Elcho Island and the land is brown and dry, exhausted from the long Dry, crying out for the new life the approaching Wet Season will bring.

For months now, a series of ceremonies has been slowly building momentum through the eastern Yolngu heartlands, preparing for the arrival of the Djan'kawu Sisters and the cleansing they will bring.

The final weekend of the ceremony is always timed to coincide with the first thunder of the Wet Season, and this year it will take place at Richard Gandhuwuy's picturesque Elcho Island outstation of Dhambala Community, washed by the warm waters of the Arafura Sea.

But this is no ordinary time. Richard, Garrawurra clan elder and leader of the ngarra ceremony for the Dhuwa moiety as his father was, explains the ceremony has not taken place for 15 years.

"This is the first time after my father slept," he says. "It's very important for our dignity and the dignity of other clan people that we hold this ceremony."

"It is too important, this ngarra, to leave for so long. We need to wash physically and spiritually."

"This is very important, people wanted to live with their own dignity, (because)

you are honouring the other clans in the ceremony."

"When I was young that was the way it was, every year at the end of the Dry season but timed to when the Wet season came in."

"All the elders come together for the final ngarra. I ask for the specialists to come and help me do these things, to make sure everything is running properly. That's because this is cleansing all the Dhuwa land, it is very important we get it right, not just for Elcho but for everyone."

The ngarra ceremony on Elcho Island is a Dhuwa moiety ceremony, and was preceded by a Yirritja moiety ceremony at Milingimbi. Richard says both moieties are welcome to attend each other's ceremony – Richard went to the Milingimbi ngarra – but that only members of the moiety holding the ceremony can participate.

In total some 23 clans, or about half of the clans living in East Arnhem Land, have participated in this ceremony.

Richard explains that the Djan'kawu Sisters are two of the main creator beings across east Arnhem Land, responsible for much of the traditional law and order.

"As they travel they name the land, they give the clans their name, and they give the ownership to the land," he says. "They make the waterholes and everything we

need. They went right through this country from east to west and connect it together, past Darwin, past Daly River, right up to Perth."

Each evening of the final weekend there are dances and songs as the Sisters draw closer, with participants painted in the Sisters' Dreaming colours.

One of the key dances in the ngarra is the Bush Turkey dance, which the elders traditionally perform and which gives the elders authority over their land.

It is accompanied by the unmistakable ululating call of the turkey coming from the dancers' throats.

On the final day of the ngarra, when the Djan'kawu Sisters arrive, the women hide under blankets and emerge as witchetty grubs, welcoming in the new Wet Season.

Then the entire community goes to the beach for ritual saltwater purification, an activity accompanied by much laughter and water play.

This is, without doubt, a joyful ngarra.

"We're hoping the new thunders come, new year, new life, new creation, people will be back at the beginning of their clean life and hoping for good things," Richard says. "Now we must continue. My sons must continue this ngarra, build it up, make it strong again."



# NT Mining Act needs changes

**CLC Director David Ross has called on the Northern Territory Government to update its Mining Act as part of efforts to streamline mining in the Territory.**

The Land Councils are still discussing with the NT Government ways of improving mining processes under the Land Rights Act but Mr Ross told ABC Radio: "That's to be done on condition that there need to be amendments to the NT's own mining legislation and it needs to be amended drastically in order to improve the situation on the ground".

The NT Government examines and approves all mining applications in the first instance before those covering Aboriginal land are referred to the Land Councils for processing under provisions of the Land Rights Act.

However Mr Ross said the NT Department of Business Industry and Resource Development needs to lift its performance.

"They need to assess who is applying and what is the ability of those people applying. Whether those people really have a fixed address. Some fairly basic things – do they have the skill and ability to do the job they are proposing to undertake? We are notified that so-and-so has been given an area that they can explore and we write

to the company and the letter comes back saying 'unable to deliver'. We'd like some very basic things sorted out in their processes before they send anyone to us saying we have approved these people to have the right to explore this piece of ground."

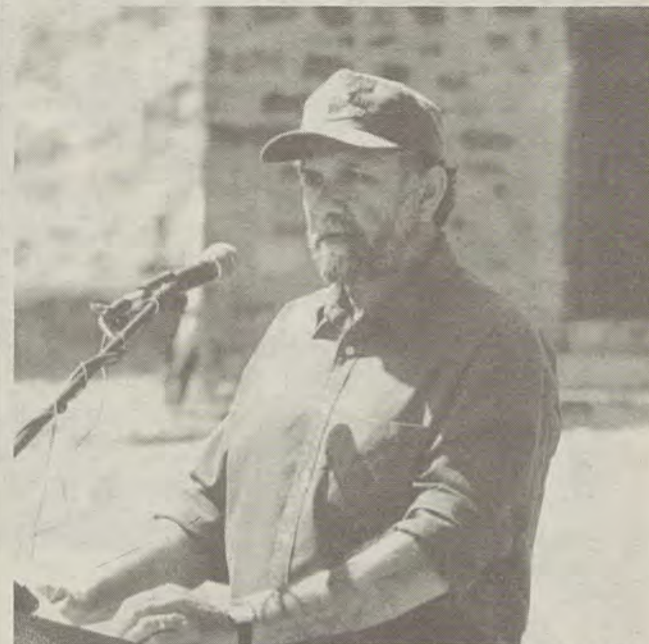
"It is just an absolute waste of time and resources of the Land Council - looking for people who don't exist."

"Any changes to the Land Rights Act which we have suggested are only going to be of value and an improvement if changes are made to the NT Mining Act."

"It will improve the system and the time lines and leave it really down to a commercial agreement," Mr Ross said.

Other suggested changes to the NT Mining Act include rationalising the number of types of mining and exploration tenements available, measures to ensure companies are actively pursuing exploration and mining opportunities and reducing the ability of companies to extend the term of exploration licences over 16 years.

Central Land Council would also like a government agency independent of the NT's Mining Branch to be



CLC Director David Ross

responsible for checking that companies are observing their environmental and rehabilitation requirements.

This would give land owners greater confidence in agreeing to mining and free land councils from trying to monitor the environmental aspects of mining. ●

## Land Councils make progress on mining reforms

**The Northern Land Council has continued to defend itself against unjustified accusations that it is "anti-mining", while at the same time agreeing to new exploration licences on Aboriginal land and proposed amendments to the Land Rights Act to free-up the Act's mining provisions.**

In a joint submission with the Central Land Council to the House of Representatives Industry and Resources Committee, which held hearings in Darwin on 9 October, the NLC refuted suggestions the Land Rights Act was holding up mining development and pointed out that 13 mineral leases had been approved by Land Councils since 1976.

The Land Councils told the hearing that this was a far greater number than those approved on land covered by pastoral leases.

Both Land Councils also told the Inquiry that the reason for the lack of activity on pastoral leases was due to the "political mess" created by the former Northern Territory administration, which had issued no exploration licences on pastoral leases for three years as part of its failed effort to force Native Title amendments through Federal Parliament.

However, the Land Councils said it was clear that many players in the mining industry had embraced "a change of culture".

"Some mining companies in particular have worked earnestly to turn around negative attitudes that historically were a feature of the mining industry," the Councils said in their submission.

Since the hearing the NLC has continued to make steady progress on mining issues.

Three new mineral exploration licences covering some 900 square kilometres of Aboriginal land were

ratified by Full Council on 14 November, adding to the 20 per cent of Aboriginal land in the Top End already under exploration.

At the same time, negotiations between the four NT Land Councils and the NT Government should soon result in a shared position on Land Rights Act reform, the most important element of which is freeing up the Act's mining provisions to provide for maximum freedom to contract between parties.

**In other news**, an independent review of the NT Government's environmental protection regime at the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium mine sites found that existing arrangements were "more than adequate to ensure the protection of the environment and the health of workers and the public".

However, the review also found that the NT Government needed to put extra effort into finalising new Working Arrangements between itself and the Commonwealth to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of environmental monitoring, with consideration given to expanding their scope beyond the original 1995 Arrangements.

The review also recommended policies be put in place to clarify what constituted an infringement of environmental regulations at the mine sites, and to develop more effective communication strategies to keep the public properly informed in relation to issues at the two mine sites. ●



Central Land Council's  
Alice Springs and Tennant  
Creek offices will be closed  
from  
Monday 23 December 2002  
to Wednesday 1 January  
2003

We will reopen for business  
Thursday 2 January 2003.



Northern Land Council's  
offices  
will be closed from  
Wednesday 25th December  
2002 to Wednesday 1  
January 2003

The Land Councils would like  
to take this opportunity of  
wishing everyone a safe and  
happy  
Christmas and New Year

# Cyanide kill still mystery

Ten months after liquid cyanide was dumped along the Tanami Highway, killing hundreds of birds and a dingo, we don't know why it happened and no one has been charged.



Central Land Council had hoped the NT Work Health Authority's report of their investigations into the incident and resulting recommendations would be worth the nine-month wait.

Instead the four-page report contains few new details and most of the recommendations have already been carried out.

The Minister responsible for the Authority, Syd Stirling, said he is disappointed with the time taken to produce the report and has ordered a review.

It seems likely that a driver for the former trucking subcontractors who delivered cyanide pellets to the Granites Mine was on the return trip with what should have been clean, empty cyanide tanks on the back.

Possibly due to a mix up at the mine with a new system for flushing out the cyanide from the tanks there may have been some cyanide mixed with water still in the tanks when the truck left the mine.

It is still not known why the tanks were then emptied by the Tanami Highway near Chilla Well about 400 km north west of Alice Springs.

Apparently drivers have not been interviewed about it yet.

Newmont, which own the Granites Mine, has already changed its procedures to ensure no vehicles transporting cyanide leave the mine with residues in them and that the tanks cannot be opened along the way.

New trucking contractors are now carrying the cyanide from the suppliers in Gladstone, Queensland to the mines.

Newmont's clean up of the spill site has been effective according to independent scientific testing done for Central Land Council.

Truckloads of contaminated soil were taken to the mine and chemicals and water were used to neutralise the cyanide.

The cyanide levels in the soil are now near the normal background levels.

CLC will have more testing done of ground water at the site after rain to check that no residue rises to the surface. ●

Emergency workers at the Tanami spill this year



# Solid Gold Jobs

There are smiles all round as the number of local Aboriginal people from bush communities working at the Tanami gold mines is rapidly growing.



Proud graduates of the Newmont training course now working in the Tanami mines - standing Marshall Poulson (from Nyirrpi), Teddy Gibson (Nyirrpi), John (Roche Trainer), Nathan Williams (Hermannsburg), Johnny Pepperill (Laramba), Geoffrey Shaw (Alice Springs), Arron Esplin (Roche site boss), Graham Woods (Alice Springs), Daniel Gallagher (Nyirrpi), Barry Charles (Santa Teresa), kneeling in front Keith Walker (Willowra) and Michael Michael (Nyirrpi).



The Tanami gold province, one of the richest in Australia, is about 400 km west of Tennant Creek and is made up of several mines including the Granites and Groundrush. Until recently few people from bush communities had ever worked out there.

However, Newmont mining company bought the main interests in the mines over a year ago. Since then they have worked closely with the CLC, the Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Institute for Aboriginal Development to get the balance right so that the bush recruits and the company's needs are met.

The latest intake of Aboriginal workers at the mines (see photo) shows that the recruitment, training and employment system is now working well. Of the 10 men recruited all passed the training course in September and October and have begun work in the Tanami.

When asked what they enjoyed about the course the men said making friends, doing all the jobs, meeting all the workers and managers, learning new things, learning to operate a front end loader, fork lift, backhoe, the digger, first aid, sampling, driving vehicles and working in dump trucks.

Workers are recruited both through the CLC Mining Employment Unit and regular career days held in communities about mining industry jobs.

Trainees have to pass medical, police and drug tests before entering the pre-vocational course held at the Tanami mines. There they live and eat with the other miners and work the same 12-hour, 6am to 6 pm daytime shift.

While the course lasts three weeks, the trainees, like the miners, have a week off after two weeks at the mine. After the break the trainees go back to finish the course.

Once they finish the course successfully they are guaranteed a job in one of the many locations and types of work at the mines. For the first year they will still be paid trainees but once they complete it they will become fulltime employees.

Contractor Roche Mining has taken on eight of the trainees and Newmont has taken two. The trainees will be working as blast crew, production crew, and in the mechanical workshop.

At the start of December five of the men had started work with Roche based at Groundrush mine. Due to a shortage of accommodation at the mines the other five are still waiting for a place to stay before they can start.

Now about 120 Aboriginal people work at the mines, about 20% of the total workforce, and numbers of people from Central Australian bush communities will continue to grow under the new training for jobs deal.

The next pre-vocational course is planned for February 2003. ●

The trainees inspecting a haulpack truck that some may work on later.



# Tangentyere means Business



Lucky Derrington, Justin Presley and Chris Bird of Indigenous Landscapes with the Tangentyere tub grinder. Garden clippings, leaves and branches are dropped into the tub at the top of the photo for grinding. The conveyor belt then drops the ground-up mulch on the row in the background. Then it is watered and turned as needed to make the perfect mulch for gardens. Mulch protects the roots of plants from drying out and improves soil.

## Tangentyere Council in partnership with the Alice Springs Town Council has launched an organic recycling business at the Alice Springs Landfill.

The business, Indigenous Landscapes NT, employs five staff of which three are Aboriginal. They are trained to use and maintain heavy machinery such as trucks and graders and are learning manufacturing and business skills.

When garden clippings are left by the public at a special depot at the landfill the staff use a tubgrinder (see picture) to reduce it to small chips.

These are then placed in huge rows and watered and turned as needed to break them down to produce mulch for gardens. This mulch is then bagged and sold back to the public.

It will also be available in truckloads to bush communities that may be preparing a community garden or a citrus plantation for example.

The business was started with a grant of \$600,000 from the Federal Government to cover equipment and start up costs.

Executive Director of Tangentyere Council William Tilmouth said: "I am very proud of the achievements of Tangentyere staff in setting up this business and making this centre operational. What gives me a

special sense of achievement about this project is that it has come about because of the developing partnership between Tangentyere Council and the Town Council."

In the 1990s the two councils were locked in a court battle over whether the 18 town camps around Alice Springs should pay council rates.

Tangentyere, as the resource centre for the camps, argued successfully after many years that they were public benevolent institutions and didn't have to pay rates.

In 2000 the Councils settled their differences and signed a memorandum of understanding providing for regular meetings and cooperation on projects.

The Town Council's former CEO, Nick Scarvelis, who worked hard to encourage his council to improve relations with Tangentyere and other Aboriginal organisations in Alice, did not have his contract renewed this year.

He has since been appointed southern region director of the NT Department for Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs under Minister Ah Kit. ●



Reedy Creek Nursery Manager Gail Quarmbly and Tangentyere Indigenous Food Farms Supervisor Glen Oliver launching 'Outback Pride' products

## 'Outback Pride' hits supermarket shelves

Locally grown bush tucker from pilot plots around Alice Springs has reached supermarket shelves thanks to the newly launched product 'Outback Pride'.

This new bush tucker commercial venture has reached fruition after 18 months of hard work by a joint partnership between Tangentyere Council CDEP and Reedy Creek Nursery (Kingston, SA).

Tangentyere Council has been working closely with the South Australian nursery to capitalise on the growing demand for Australian Native foods and sees it as a great opportunity to provide training and employment opportunities to Aboriginal communities.

"The revenue that's generated off it will go back into the community but also there's work involved and community pride involved and this thing about welfare dependency. This is a way that Aboriginal people can create an industry for themselves," Tangentyere Executive Officer William Tilmouth said.

Originally two pilot plots were established at Alice Springs town camps Hidden Valley and Larapinta Valley to trial native species and methods of cultivation.

Due to the success of these plots and increased demands for the fresh produce an additional plot has been established for commercial cultivation.

The locally grown products include bush bananas (*langua*), bush tomatoes (*kutjera*), onions (*yalka*), cucumbers (*Ilkurta*) and desert raisins.

Local Indigenous horticulture workers Glen Oliver and Ralph Prior will continue experimenting with other native foods like native lemon grass, desert passionfruit and conkerberries to market.

Tangentyere Indigenous Food Farms Supervisor Glen Oliver has been working

on the project since its inception and is proud of its development.

"It feels great because we have worked really hard and now you go to the supermarket and see the products on the shelf and you can say I grew that stuff," Glen said.

If the 'Outback Pride' products are successful in the marketplace this project could be a model for other remote Indigenous communities to get involved in the multimillion dollar primary industry of native bush tucker.

In the long term distributors are hoping to supply supermarkets around the country with considerable interest already coming from overseas markets. ●

Guests tasting the delicious range of 'Outback Pride' products at the launch in Alice Springs





Yirrkala women dancers celebrate Dhimurru's 10th anniversary



Langani Marika Yunupingu, Kon Vatskalis and Djini Gondarra

# Dhimurru turns ten in style

**"...All of us together looking after country..."**

An Aboriginal land management group in the Northern Territory's East Arnhem Land region is setting the national standard for resource management in Australia.

Since its inception 10 years ago, Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation has instituted a comprehensive and inclusive approach to conservation and resource management planning. Planning exercises undertaken by Dhimurru have addressed such diverse issues as soil, fauna and flora conservation, visitor management and cultural resource conservation.

The need for these programs was created by 20 years of uncontrolled recreation access by the residents and visitors to the township of Nhulunbuy. This access has resulted in severe localised land degradation impacts, and posed major threats to the maintenance of natural cultural values.

To address these obstacles Dhimurru sought to develop a "two-way" approach to many management issues, with final decision-making resting with the relevant traditional owners.

"It (Dhimurru) was given life after a long period of concern and consultation with land owners wanting to try and reign in some of the damage that was being done to the coastal

areas. Now Dhimurru has grown to be much more than just a land management agency," Executive Officer Steve Roeger said.

Employing traditional Yolngu owners as rangers, Dhimurru undertakes activities and engages in planning with senior community members to develop and implement management strategies.

And now, on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Dhimurru has progressed a step further, venturing into a collaborative partnership with the NT Government, the Northern Land Council and Environment Australia in the administration of an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program over a large portion of traditional Yolngu lands.

The IPA involves a voluntary declaration

by the traditional owners to dedicate a defined area of their land to the national conservation effort. The Dhimurru IPA incorporates a land area of some 92,000 hectares and includes areas that have acknowledged biodiversity and cultural values of a very high order.

This means that specific areas identified by Dhimurru are recognised by the Commonwealth as part of the National Reserve System of protected conservation areas and are therefore acknowledged as being managed to World Conservation Union standards.

The international acknowledgment is well deserved, according to NLC Chairperson Galurrwy Yunupingu.

"Dhimurru has set the standard for natural resource management since its inception in 1992, not just on Yolngu land, but on Aboriginal-owned land across Australia," Mr Yunupingu said.

## Land and Learning program

**Children in bush communities are learning both traditional and 'western' natural science in Tangentyere Landcare's Land and Learning program.**

Two biologists from Tangentyere work closely with Aboriginal community members and schools in several communities running the program.

They also develop educational resources to support schools in other communities. The two-way program fits into the NT schools curriculum.

Sarah Entata at Titjikala shows the children bush coconuts — *anguru* — and tells them how her mother and aunts would make seed cakes from *wangunu*, woollybutt grass.

Later that day, the children are spellbound as Ginger Mick shows them his hunting and killing spears. While he chews some kangaroo sinew, Mick constantly talks to the children, telling them which plants the spears are made from and how the wood is

prepared.

Then he shows them how he uses the stretched sinew to tie a mulga barb on to a spear.

Ginger Tjikaliri, senior mole *tjukurrpa* (dreaming) man at Uluru comes into the classroom at Mutitjulu High School to talk to boys about *itjaritjari*, marsupial moles.

Joe Benshemesh, a mole research scientist, tells the boys how he and the *anangu* he works with dig trenches to look for mole holes and uses geophones to listen for them.

Marsupial moles are the size of a man's thumb, blind, covered in creamy fur and spend most of their life underground. Not much is known about their life history.

Mutitjulu High School girls follow a ranger through the mala enclosure at Watarrka at night, and spot a mala before the ranger does.

There are no mala left in the wild. The last colony of these small wallabies was destroyed by fire in the Tanami in the 1980s.

Titjikala schoolchildren run excitedly to a waterhole with the nets brought by the Land and Learning workers.

They soon learn what they can find by sweeping through the waterweed and carefully picking through the contents of their nets: small, transparent shrimps, dark dragonfly larvae, tiny red mites and worms, back swimmers and other water beetles.

They collect some of these animals in aquariums and shallow trays.

The children colour in the water animals they've found on worksheets and draw the stages of the dragonfly life cycle.

Mutitjulu children write down the numbers of hopping mice, house mice, sandy mice and mulgaras caught in the traps they helped set the previous afternoon.

They learn to transfer these animals to cloth bags, weigh and release them.

The girls have never seen the carnivorous, fat-tailed mulgara before, and Mutitjulu elders tell the children where these animals live, what they eat and other stories about them.

At Mutitjulu, Land and Learning works with the Parks Australia junior ranger program.

These activities are all part of Tangentyere Landcare's Land and Learning program run by its Landcare and Environmental Health Unit.

In 2003, Tangentyere plans to expand and evaluate the program by employing an educator to work on the Land and Learning team. For more details on the Land and Learning program contact Tangentyere Landcare, Alice Springs on 08-89533120; tanglc@octa4.net.au.

## NLC recognised for work in quarantine battle



Ranger groups have begun collecting blood and tissue samples

**The Northern Land Council's Caring for Country Unit has won the Northern Territory Quarantine Award for 2002 for its work in coordinating Aboriginal ranger groups to conduct quarantine surveillance activities.**

The award was announced by the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss, on 27 November as part of the national awards presentation.

Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) Darwin co-ordinator Andrew Moss said that ranger groups were "exceeding expectations" with the outcomes of co-operative work with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

Now they are set to make an even bigger contribution following initial field training in scientific animal sampling procedures. Ranger groups have been contracted to provide blood and tissue samples twice a year from their own hunting activities.

These samples are then sent to NAQS for laboratory testing.

"What we are looking for is any sign of exotic animal diseases that might have

entered Australia," Dr Moss said. "For the rangers this is also an opportunity to check the health status of animals they are killing for food. The ranger groups have a lot to contribute in our joint work because of their knowledge of their own land."

NAQS Aboriginal Liaison Officer Ray Petherick is the NAQS contact for the ranger groups. "We've started getting the first unsupervised samples now," Mr Petherick said. "They are excellent."

So far the following ranger groups have had quarantine surveillance training: Asrikaarak (Peppimenarti); Malak Malak (Daly River); Adjumarllarl (Oenpelli); Garngi (Crocker Island); Yugal Mangi (Ngukurr); Mubunji (Borroloola); Balma (Blue Mud Bay); Wanga Djakamirr (Ramingining); Djelk (Maningrida); and Dhimurru (Nhulunbuy). Asrikaarak, Malak Malak and Adjumarllarl Rangers have already begun bringing in blood samples and the other groups will begin this work



Tangentyere Night Patrol members with their award

## Tangentyere Night Patrol wins award

**The Tangentyere Council Night Patrol in Alice Springs has won the 2002 State/Territory National Crime Prevention Award.**

NT Attorney General Peter Toyne presented the award and the \$5,000 prize in October at Tangentyere Council. He said: "Tangentyere Night Patrol has been rewarded for their efforts to reduce the impact of alcohol-related problems affecting Central Australia."

The Patrol's main role is patrolling the 18 Alice Springs town camps and intervening where needed. With funding

provided to support the Alice Springs trial of community alcohol controls, Tangentyere has also been able to start a day patrol concentrating mainly on the centre of Alice Springs.

It was set up in 1990 with the assistance of Julalikari Night Patrol from Tennant Creek, the first such patrol in the NT. The NT Police Juvenile Pre-court Diversionary Scheme also won a merit award.

## Yidaki masters take their craft to the world

**The Yirrkala Arts Centre at Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory has initiated an aggressive internet sales campaign in recent years - and is now reaping the rewards.**

Yidaki (didgeridoo) export sales through the Arts Centre have increased fivefold over the past two years.

The campaign has been so successful, that the local art centre - whose Yolngu name is Buku-Larrnggay Mulka - was awarded first prize in the Art and Entertainment category at the Northern Territory Export Awards for 2002. The prize was accepted by the Centre's Assistant Art Co-ordinator Jeremy Cloake and Yolngu Yidaki craftsman Ngongu Ganambarr, who thrilled the audience with a traditional piece played on a meticulously crafted yidaki.

The worldwide web has been an integral component in the Centre's success, allowing all corners of the globe to access its products. It requires ongoing maintenance and an ability to distinguish exactly what the customer wants. There are many other considerations, especially when English is a second language for many of its clients.

Ngongu is one of the Yidaki makers of the Yirrkala region whose popularity among overseas customers has grown sharply in the past few years.

Residing at a remote outstation, Ngongu,



Ngongu Ganambarr with the award

along with a group of talented young Yidaki craftsmen that includes Gurraramawuy Munyarryun, Mirrwatnga Munyarryun, and Yali Munungurr, have been working together for a few years. Their names are now synonymous with high-quality instruments.

Other Yidaki masters whose works are available through the Centre include Yidaki legend Djalul Gurruwiwi and senior Galpu men Badikupa Gurruwiwi and Datjirri#1 Wunungmurra.

Yirrkala Art Centre Assistant Art Co-ordinator Jeremy Cloake described the award as "a proud moment".

"It is great that the traditional owners of this instrument are finally getting the recognition they rightfully deserve," Jeremy said.

For further information, visit the Art Centre's website at [www.aboriginalart.org/buku](http://www.aboriginalart.org/buku) or phone 08-8987 1701.

## Mt Theo Can Do Community

**The success of the Mt Theo Outstation near Yuendumu in dealing with petrol sniffers has won it the NT "Can Do Community" award from the Federal Department of Family and Community Services.**

The \$4,000 prize is for communities that develop new ways of solving their problems.

There were about 70 young sniffers in Yuendumu in 1993, when community meetings about the crisis led to the setting up of the outstation. It has operated with the support of Warlpiri elders since then, giving young people time away from their problems and the chance to go hunting

among a range of other activities.

As another part of the Mt Theo Yuendumu Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation's project, the Yuendumu Youth Centre has arranged youth activities every day giving a positive alternative to sniffing. The benefits include better health, less crime and vandalism, and young people with a sense of pride in themselves and the community.

## Saltwater Land Councils speak with one voice

**A new Saltwater Working Group has been formed by the Northern Territory's three saltwater Land Councils to work collectively on sea rights issues with Top End saltwater communities and the NT and Commonwealth Governments.**

The group was formed following a recent meeting of executive members of the four NT Land Councils to discuss the Land Rights Act. During this meeting the issue of sea rights came up for discussion, and the three Land Councils with sea country - the Northern, the Tiwi and the Anindilyakwa - all spoke about common concerns with things that are happening to their sea country.

These concerns included:

- Ensuring governments understand the nature and extent of Aboriginal sea rights;
- Developing new management frameworks that recognise and protect traditional management practices;
- Providing for Aboriginal management, based on traditional ecological knowledge, of dugongs, turtles and fisheries;
- Ensuring traditional owners can manage fisheries within their sea country;
- Controlling the environmental impacts from the dumping of ballast waters and dredging and land management.

The members of the Saltwater Working Group are Matthew Wonaeamirri from the Tiwi Land Council, Thomas Amagula from the Anindilyakwa Land Council, and Kevin Rogers, Bunug Galaminda, Dhuwarrwarr Marika, and Max Finlay from the Northern Land Council. The Working Group has requested a meeting with the NT Government early next year.

### Kids saltwater drawing competition

The new Saltwater Working Group invites school kids from the saltwater communities to design a logo to be used on the Working Group's newsletter and letterhead.

The design has to be related to sea country and saltwater people. Remember to also write a few sentences to tell us what your design is about. We think it's best to keep it simple so it's easy to print.

The winner will take home art materials to the value of \$100, while a further \$200-worth of art materials will be donated to the school that the winner comes from.

Entries can be sent to Rebecca Cooper at the NLC, PO Box 42921, Casuarina NT 0811 by 1 March. Good luck!

## Larrakia assist with Dugong Research



**A number of Larrakia people have been getting their feet wet lately as part of a dugong research project in Darwin Harbour.**

Members of the Larrakia Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) have been working with Territory dugong expert Dr Scott Whiting to see which areas around Darwin are favoured by dugongs. Although dugong are plentiful in some parts of the Northern Territory, the numbers in the Darwin region have been declining.

With the assistance of the CDEP members, the research team has managed to capture a number of dugong for recruitment into a satellite-tracking program.

Receivers are placed around the mammal's tail fluke and a signal is beamed up to an orbiting satellite, which then relays the information on the dugong's position over a period of time back to a computer map. This information is processed and the

mammals' travel patterns are mapped out.

With the aid of this system Dr Whiting has been able to track and monitor the movements of individuals. This is an invaluable process in identifying locations visited and distances travelled, particularly when one individual animal undertook a 250-kilometre journey down the west coast of the NT before eventually slipping the tag.

But tagging the mammals is no easy feat!

Waiting until the dugong is in shallow waters, team members leap out of the boat restraining the mammal by the tail, while another member places the satellite tag in position.

By actively taking part in the research program the Larrakia are fulfilling their responsibilities to their saltwater country around Darwin.

As the Darwin region is one of the most



Tagging a dugong is no easy feat! heavily impacted areas of the Northern Territory coastline, the Larrakia are keen to see that it is managed sustainably for the longer term.

Working with researchers like Dr Whiting is a small but positive step in the right direction.

The Northern Land Council supports Dr Whiting's work and is exploring options for traditional owner management of turtle and dugong in coastal communities throughout the Northern Territory.

## Saltwater sherrifs on coastal patrol



The Wanga-Djakamirr rangers approach a fishing boat to record its name



**Like other Indigenous saltwater groups active in the Top End, the Wanga-Djakamirr rangers want to have a say in who can fish in their seas.**

Many people from other places fish along the coast of the Arafura Sea - some have commercial fishing permits, some are recreational fishers and some have no right to be there at all.

The Wanga-Djakamirr rangers have been around for several years now. Last year, after receiving an ATSIIC grant for a boat, the rangers began a weekly coastal patrol for illegal fishers between the Glyde River and Crocodile Islands. They also respond to requests from Millingimbi, which doesn't have a ranger program, when they have concerns about outside people fishing in

their waters. The rangers have done a coxswains course, and are hoping to enrol in a Fisheries Compliance course.

The sea patrol involves travelling along the coast and keeping an eye out for fishing boats in the wrong waters. This can include people without a licence fishing in a 'sea closure area', barramundi fishers going beyond the barra fishing line, or boats anchored in or fishing in sacred sites such as Sandy Point and the mouth of the Glyde River. These are the rules recognised under white law - the Aboriginal Lands Act, the Fisheries Act and the Sacred Sites Act, which direct where boats can go.

However, there are Aboriginal laws for these seas too - traditional owners own and are responsible for coastal waters. The rangers and traditional owners do not necessarily wish to prevent outsiders fishing in these waters, but as a sign of respect, understanding and courtesy they would like visitors to ask traditional owners permission before taking fish from their waters.

Alan Mace, the senior Wanga-Djakamirr ranger, said: "We want fishermen to talk to landowners every time and see that it's alright...maybe the landowner will say the fisherman can stay for a week and fish, maybe they will say they don't want them this week."

Alan Eustace, a ranger for several years now, describes the situation as "the fishermen get everything and the landowner nothing".

"We should get a royalty from the catch these fishermen are taking," he said.

If fishing is taking place in the wrong spot, it is important to have the facts carefully recorded. Although the rangers do not have powers to book someone fishing illegally, they can collect evidence and inform the Fisheries police who can press charges.

Alan Eustace believes that the weekly sea patrol by the rangers will make a difference.

"If we keep doing it the Fisheries will take notice and traditional owners will think the rangers are doing a good job protecting the sacred sites," he said.

# Country Visits – making young ones strong for tomorrow



Elders take children to traditional country, Janjipi near Mt Barkly

**For the first time since 1995 the Willowra School and community closed up office and went bush to visit surrounding traditional country as part of a unique Country Visits program in the school curriculum.**

The program is a result of a strong two-way learning program run by the school to equip children for the future through teaching of both Warlpiri and English language skills and cultures.

To ensure the young people learn their cultural heritage, senior Warlpiri community members felt it important to graft a country visit program into the school calendar.

In response the school organised a four-day camping trip with the whole Willowra community.

Some 180 people from the community participated in the week-long country visit which included visiting Panma-Parnta (Smokey Bore), Janjipi (Mt Barkly) and Patlirri (Rabbit Bore).

During the camp everyone was divided into their kinship groups where they travelled with elders to their Jukurrpa sites.

Warlpiri elders taught the young people about their culture through story telling, dancing, painting and sand drawing.

The camping trip also provided the opportunity for teaching young people about other life skills like hunting, cooking, collecting bush tucker, bush medicines and how to find water in the bush.

After spending the week learning about the richness of their culture the children headed back to school for a 'follow up' week where they remained in their kinship groups and did school work, reinforcing what they learnt while on their traditional country with their elders.

The week's cultural experiences concluded with traditional dancing and a school open day for relatives to read and look through school work and displays done by the kids from their country visit.

The Willowra community hopes to make the school country visit program an ongoing community event.



Above: Ruby Nampijinpa painting up Netta Napanangka with ceremonial design after a visit to their traditional country. Below: Children painted up with traditional designs for dancing.



## Return of Women's Cultural Material

**Borrooloola and Tennant Creek women can now put their minds at rest following a week of ceremony to return sacred objects to the rightful custodians.**

The sacred objects had been in Tennant Creek for a number of years, however since the passing of a senior female traditional landowner five years ago, senior women from both Borrooloola and Tennant Creek have been in discussions concerning the return of the sacred objects.

The lack of financial and mechanical resources had made it difficult to return the sacred women's objects.

In late August, a group of senior women approached the Central Land Council to assist with the return of these objects.

Following consultations with these women, the CLC allocated staff, five vehicles and trailers to help transport women from Hodson Downs and Tennant Creek and transport food for this significant occasion.

Thirty-five women travelled approximately 3000km, return, between Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Hodson Downs to participate in the cultural exchange.

Ceremonies were performed over a four day period, with all ladies involved.

CLC women's officer, Barbara Cox said the trip was very important to ensure the preservation and maintenance of Women's Culture.

"All the ladies were really happy to finally see the materials returned to their rightful place and custodians. Both the Borrooloola and Tennant Creek women have been really worried for these sacred items and now are happy they are back where they belong," said Barb.

The women used this trip as a cultural exchange opportunity and also took time out to talk together about their concerns with the lack of support for women's ceremonial or cultural activities.

Over the past five years, women from Borrooloola have been strong participants at the annual Central Australian Women's Law and Culture meetings. This year's meeting was postponed due to too much sorry business at Papunya. However, all ladies said they were looking forward to the next Law and Culture meeting being hosted by Papunya women in April next year.

The CLC has been organising the Women's Law and Culture meeting for the past 10 years, with very limited funding from ABA, the Alice Springs and Central Regional ATSIC Councils and occasionally the Yapakulangu Regional Council.



# New NT vegetation clearing rules to impact on Aboriginal land

**Aboriginal landowners in the Top End have been warned that the Northern Territory Government's new interim vegetation clearance controls will affect all land in the NT - including theirs.**

The Labor Government promised to put in place controls on native vegetation clearance as part of its 2001 election campaign, and the fact that it has done so has been welcomed by many in the community concerned by the effects of large-scale clearing elsewhere in Australia.

At this stage the NT is still in a relatively pristine condition with less than 2 per cent so far affected by clearing. However, a number of future developments - including broadacre irrigation schemes in the Daly River Basin - are likely to see an increase in the rate of clearing.

Despite needing to move swiftly to implement the controls to prevent 'panic clearing' by landholders - as has happened elsewhere in Australia - the Government

has consulted with Aboriginal people to make sure they understand what the controls will mean for them.

The interim controls under the NT Planning Act will be in place for two years, after which they will be reviewed by Parliament and finalised.

A permit to clear vegetation will not be required if the clearing is for mining, house construction or other buildings, fences, firebreaks, railways or roads.

However, a permit will be required for any other proposal to clear more than one hectare of native vegetation.

Aboriginal people are likely to benefit from the controls by being given more information on the environmental impacts of clearing on their land, as well as the impacts of clearing on nearby land that could have the potential to degrade their land (for instance by the build-up of sediment and nutrients in river systems).

A good case in point are the proposed developments in

the Daly River catchment, which will need to pump water from both the river system and bores during the Dry Season to keep plants watered.

Permits will be needed before any native vegetation clearance can begin, and Northern Land Council officers will use the information contained in the permit applications as well as in the various land management plans to keep traditional owners in the region informed.

However, the new clearance regime will also mean Aboriginal landowners' decision-making powers over their own land as set out in the Land Rights Act could be compromised, although this is yet to be tested in court.

At the NLC's 83<sup>rd</sup> Full Council meeting members said that while such a conflict was unlikely, it was important to maintain the rights of traditional owners over their land. Council resolved to note the new clearing controls and looked forward to taking part in further consultations. ●

## Ngatbuk join war against mimosa



Ngatbuk rangers with mimosa in background

**The Ngatbuk Aboriginal Corporation is the latest group to start a *Mimosa pigra* control program on traditional land, near the community of Bulgul at the western end of Wagait Aboriginal Land Trust, about 180 kilometres from Darwin.**

This program started in June this year as part of the Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES) which is a partnership between traditional owners, NLC, Indigenous Land Corporation, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Department of Employment and Work Place Relations.

Rosetta Smith is the chairperson of the Ngatbuk Aboriginal Corporation and it was through her efforts that the CDEP program, under which the mimosa control program operates, was established. Rosetta explains that Ngatbuk was set up to develop projects and enterprises that will help provide the community a secure foundation for the future. Rosetta said: "This provides us with a means to maintain our culture, traditions, heritage and the land to which we are integrally connected."

Ricky Cubillo (Rosetta's brother) is the supervisor of the program. "We're very excited about being able to go

to work and bring back the land the way it used to be," Ricky said. "It will make it easier for people to go hunting along the creeks and floodplain."

Ricky explained that this is the first time they have been able to tackle the mimosa problem on their land since it took off after buffalo were removed as part of the Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 20 years ago. Ricky says that this presents them with the opportunity to clean up their country to allow better access for hunting and for options such as establishing a small-scale cattle enterprise.

Workers contributing to the mimosa control program at Ngatbuk include Lenny Burbur, Gus Bigfoot, Brett Young, Michael Fitzgerald and Gavin Rioli. Gus says he is excited to have some work to do and is enjoying the work. Lenny and Gus explain that they are both pleased that the Indigenous Land Corporation has provided vehicles, quad bikes, spray equipment and chemicals which allow them to take care of their country. ●

## Cane toads hit Top End hard

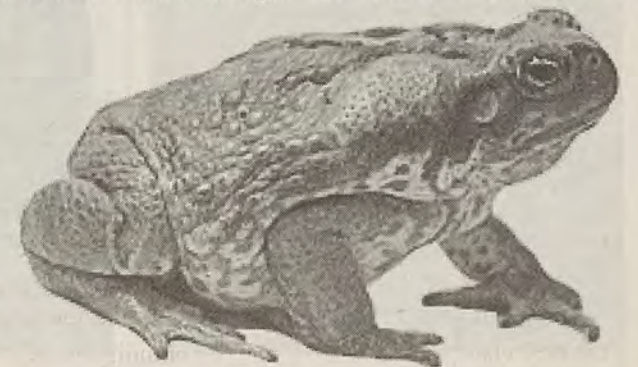
**The Cane Toad continues its spread across northern Australia. Over the last year or two it has reached much of Arnhem Land, and it is likely to reach Darwin in 2003.**

Scientists have tried to come up with ways to stop it, but without success. Most likely, there is no way of stopping the toads before they conquer all of north Australia.

Many different animals suffer from the toad's arrival. Toads are big eaters, and big numbers consume masses of insects, other frogs and small lizards. But it is the animals that try to eat toads that are in the most trouble. The big glands at the back of the neck are full of poison that quickly kills most animals that come in contact with it. Snakes, goannas, crocodiles, some fish, turtles, quolls, other small carnivorous mammals and some birds may be killed if they try to eat toads.

Because it is likely that toads will get to all parts of the mainland of north Australia, the islands off the coast become very important for conservation. To help protect our wildlife, and traditional culture, it is important that we look out for toads on boats travelling to islands; and get rid of them before they reach these islands.

We may be able to help some wildlife escape toads by moving some populations of the most affected animals onto islands. Consultations about whether this plan should be done are about to begin with traditional owners. ●





Here Artepe Chairperson, Brian Stirling addressing the crowd at the new office opening

# Lhere Artepe opens new office

It was a proud day for family and friends who gathered to celebrate another milestone for the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation at their official office opening last month.

The office opening was attended by native title holders, the Minister for Central Australia Peter Toyne, Alice Springs Mayor Fran Kilgariff, Arrernte native title holder and Deputy Administrator of the NT Ms Pat Miller, and many departmental representatives.

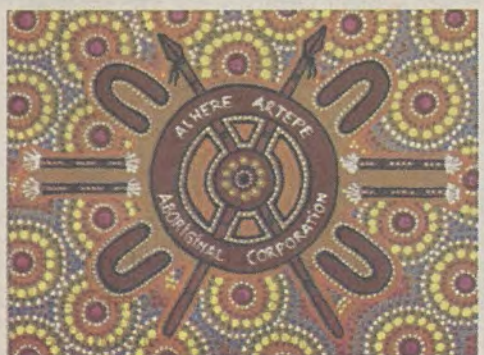
Native Title holders invited a number of important guests and organisations that the corporation will be working with to commemorate the occasion, which included lots of good tucker for all to enjoy catered by 'Kunga's Can Cook'.

Arrernte native title holders said it had been a long and hard journey but now to finally have their own office meant they could work directly with organisations and people to resolve many land issues in and around the town of Alice Springs.

The office has been funded for 12 months thanks to the Northern Territory Government.

The Lhere Artepe Corporation also held its first six monthly general meeting for all Arrernte native titleholders since its incorporation earlier this year.

A new logo designed by Arrernte native title holder Raelene Smith has also been officially chosen to represent the Lhere Artepe Corporation (see below).



Rosie Furber



Above: Arrernte dancers having a rest after performing at the new office.

Below: Jenny Lake



# Itinerants Project in grand finale to 2002

The Larrakia people's Itinerants Project came of age in 2002, with funding allowing the roll out of many programs by year's end.



Fred Masters beside one of the Day Patrol vehicles

In September *Land Rights News* reported that \$500,000 had been provided by the Northern Territory Government to fund the four-pronged strategy aimed at solving the social problems associated with the itinerants' lifestyle.

Since then Project officers have consulted further with the Northern Land Council - including addressing the NLC's 83<sup>rd</sup> Full Council meeting - to ensure remote Top End communities are fully aware of the Project's work.

In November and December the Project made significant strides towards meeting its goals, with a Community Day Patrol launched, the opening of an Information and Referrals Office and the completion of a canoe building project as part of the Project's Cultural and Tourism strategy.

The Day Patrol, which was officially launched on 2 December by Community Development Minister John Ah Kit, is aimed at resolving itinerant anti-social behaviour in the greater Darwin area.

It will operate Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm, complementing the existing Night Patrol service which runs from 4pm to 11pm.

"Patrol staff with language and cultural skills will operate the service, which is much more oriented towards countrymen looking after countrymen, and language groups talking to language groups," Mr Ah Kit said. "It will work to discourage anti-social behaviour by encouraging respect for Aboriginal law."

A key component of the program includes the extension of hours at Mission Australia's Sobering-Up Shelter, which will now operate on an "as needs" basis as a 24 hour service.



Larrakia Nation's Kelvin Costello

Minister Ah Kit also presided over the opening of Larrakia Nation's new Information and Referrals Office in Casuarina on 9 December.

The permanently staffed office, which is located at the back of Centrelink's Casuarina office at 50 Bradshaw Terrace, operates from 8.15am to 11am Monday to Friday.

Its key function is to act as a first point of contact for itinerant people needing assistance in Darwin. As well as referring clients on to appropriate agencies - such as health, welfare and banks - the office also offers an ID service for those lacking formal identity papers such as birth or marriage certificates.

The Information and Referral office can be reached on 8945 5211.

Meanwhile, in November the Larrakia launched their first traditionally-made canoe in more than 60 years. Cut and sculpted from a solid trunk by local Darwin men Robert Mills and Kenny Reid, the 3.5 metre-long canoe was constructed in accordance with a traditional Larrakia design over more than four weeks.

# Aboriginal health workers succeed

Thirteen determined Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW) celebrated their great achievement at a recent graduation ceremony in Alice Springs where they were awarded the Certificate III Aboriginal Health Worker (Clinical).



All graduates were registered and practising AHW's prior to the implementation of the new Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Worker career structure.

The career structure is tied to the National Aboriginal Health Worker Competency Standards and Australian Qualifications Framework, which govern education and training guidelines within Australia.

While the team of AHW's fulfilled their normal duties at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, in-service training and skill assessment was also occurring in their workplace.

Although the added pressures of training and assessment competed with their work, the AHW's managed both in a competent manner with long-term benefits for their career development and their workplace.

The graduates look forward to returning to their normal work routines and focusing on improving Aboriginal peoples' health. ●



Top: Terry Braun, Eileen Campbell, Veronica Campbell, Margie Lankin, Alicia Ross, Lesley Warrior, Norman Dulvarie  
Front: Teresa Dodd, Cindy Loolmatrie, Sharon Milera, Karina Penhall

## Long-grass HIV sparks community concerns

The recent discovery of two HIV cases among Darwin's long-grass community has sparked health concerns, with authorities worried the virus could spread further among this transient population and out to regional communities.



The concern comes after two Aboriginal women were diagnosed with the virus. Authorities believe the women were infected after heterosexual contact with a man also living among the long-grassers.

Doctor Jan Savage, Head of the Department of Health and Community Services AIDS/STD program, said that the diagnosis required an urgent coordinated response from local health providers to prevent any further spreading of the virus.

Part of this response is the recommendation that people have regularly scheduled check-ups for sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

"There is a range of clinical services available to this group," Dr Savage said. "Unfortunately, it seems that these services are under-used."

Dr Savage warned that, along with other factors, the presence of other infectious diseases also assisted with the transmission

of the HIV virus. At 1800 infected persons per 100,000, the Territory's Indigenous population already has an alarmingly high rate of the sexually transmitted gonorrhoea infection, compared with the national average of 30 per 100,000.

However, a solution could be at hand with a close working relationship recently established with the Larrakia people's Itinerants Project in Darwin. This relationship has resulted in the introduction of a needs-based service, identifying the type of health work required among Darwin's itinerant population.

"The long-grass people are a unique group and we have to develop new responses in regard to prevention and care," Dr Savage said.

AIDS/STD program workers in Darwin are following up the sexual contact of the HIV positive individuals and are providing clinical care, support and education to those newly diagnosed with HIV. Work is also well under way on the development of a broad community awareness campaign. ●

## Video promotes safe sex message to youth

Just released, *Cover your Tracks* is the story of nine Aboriginal youths whose lives are connected through family, community and sexual relationships.

The new video is part of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' educational campaign targeting young people and tackling the issue of sexually transmitted infections in the Aboriginal community.

The moral of the story is for Aboriginal youth to cover their tracks and use a condom.

Congress Alukura's Young Women's Community Health Education Program (YWCHEP) Project Officer, Isabella Tusa, has been working with young people from the local Aboriginal community since the beginning of the year to develop a dramatic video to both educate and entertain.

"There was a recognised need for an educational resource that would appeal to the Aboriginal young people of Alice Springs and surrounding regions, as well as making them aware of the risk and prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI's)," Ms Tusa said.

Throughout the film the characters discuss their views on safe sex and relationships. It shows the four main characters Rhys, Nadia, Karla and Valerie dealing with the consequences of having unprotected sex.

The film is a joint Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and CAAMA Productions production. ●



Cast and crew during the production of the short film shot in Alice Springs, town camps and surrounding communities

# New dialysis booklets targets remote communities



The Western Desert Dialysis Appeal (WDDA) committee has produced three booklets designed to help families on remote communities better understand kidney disease and treatment.

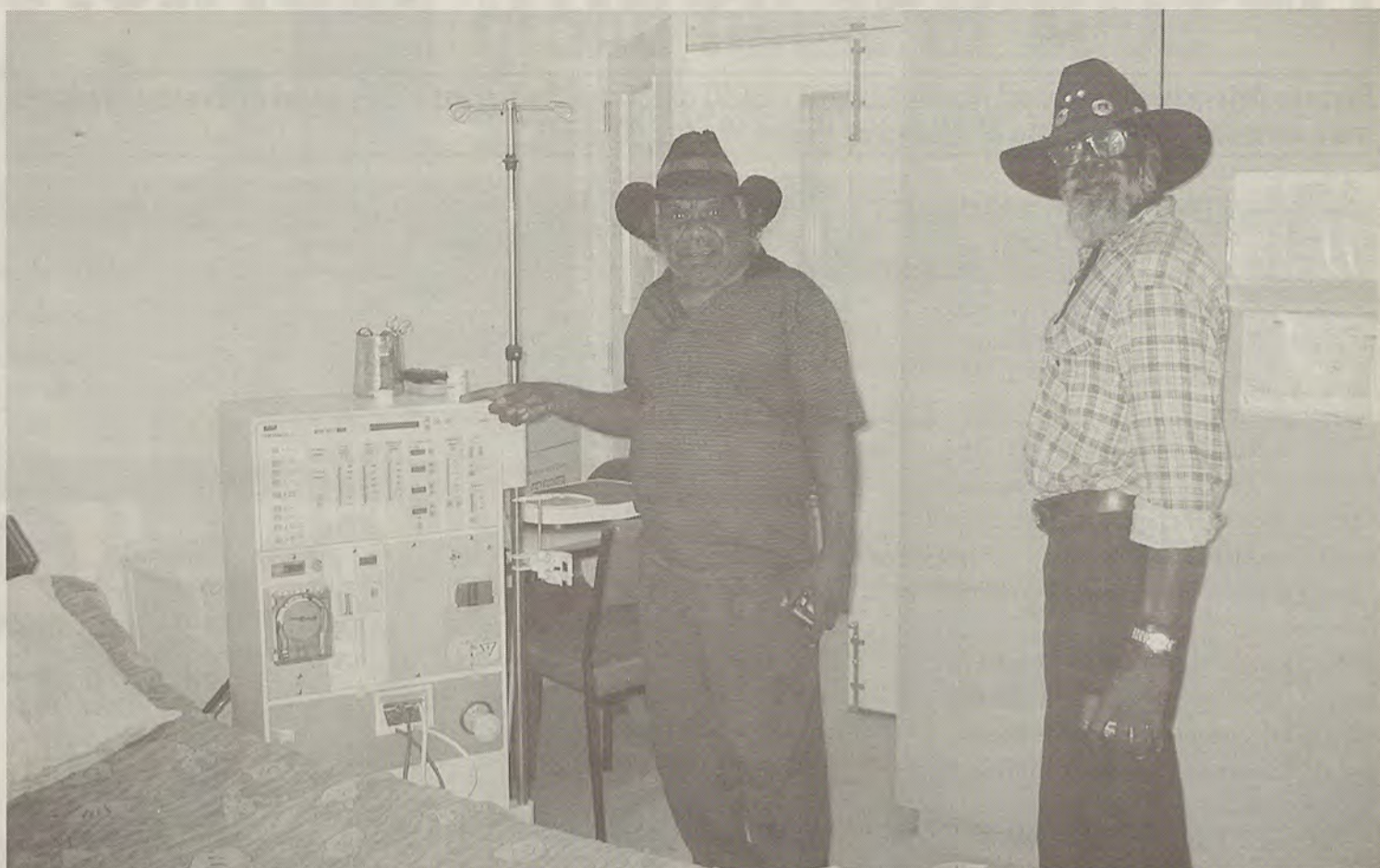
These booklets have been specifically written for Central Australian Aboriginal communities, but most remote places should find them useful.

Although they have been written as simply as possible, assistance may be needed from community bodies such as clinics and councils to read through the information with patients.

The booklets provide detailed information on renal dialysis and talk about alternate ways of treatment for people in remote communities. In particular it talks about ways of doing dialysis yourself – 'self-care'.

How and where you get treatment is very important. If you have to move to town, it is very costly not just in terms of money but the effect it has on the patient, their families and the community.

These booklets tackle these issues and discuss the pros and cons of the various options for remote areas.



Cameron Tjapaltjarri and Bundy Rowe Tjupurrula check out the haemodialysis machine on their visit to Bidadanga in WA

The vision of Kumanyjayi Zimran Tjampitjinpa, founder of the WDDA continues to direct the aspirations of the committee which includes developing appropriate resources to inform Yanangu themselves, patients and their families about treatment options so Yanangu can stay on their communities and take control of their lives.

Since early this year the WDDA committee, whose 11 members come from several Western Desert communities,

expressed a strong interest in finding out about self-care dialysis.

In July the committee travelled to Bidadanga near Broome to see first hand Indigenous people practising self-care on their community, using 'the bag' or on 'the machine'. The committee was impressed by the self-care facility and support structure at Bidadanga by patients and the community.

As a result of this visit WDDA are in the process of setting up a training and

support plan for renal patients from the Western Desert to enable them to return to their communities for three week periods.

The idea is that this period will lengthen over time with the ultimate aim being for as many patients as possible to go home to their communities, practising self-care.

If you would like to get copies of the renal dialysis booklets or want to know more about the WDDA please contact Paul Rivalland on 8983 3367 or email [kidney@octa4.net.au](mailto:kidney@octa4.net.au)

## Communities tackle suicide prevention

Central Australian remote Aboriginal communities are concerned with the alarming rise of Aboriginal youth suicides on communities as a result of low self-esteem, isolation, boredom and substance abuse.

In response to these concerns the Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Association in Alice Springs recently received funding from the Federal Government for a suicide prevention strategy aimed at Aborigines in central Australia.

The funding will go towards hiring a coordinator for the project who will work in collaboration with communities seeking help for suicide prevention strategies for their kids.

Waltja Reconnect coordinator Stewart Blyth says Waltja will act like a brokerage where communities actually bring their ideas of programs or diversionary activities aimed at helping improve their young peoples' self esteem and profile in the community.

"It is up to the communities to come

to us if they are concerned with suicide issues in their community and we can offer assistance," he said.

"The activities need to be community

**“Often they are seen as that mob petrol sniffers or trouble makers and often it's because they are bored and don't feel a sense of ownership in their community”**

WALTJA RECONNECT COORDINATOR, STEWART BLYTH

ideas targeting their young people's interests and helping improve their self esteem and if possible give them the opportunity to learn some skills and do positive things so they get a positive profile in the community.”

“Often they are seen as 'that mob petrol sniffers' or trouble makers and often it's because they are bored and don't feel a sense of ownership in their community.”

After years of trying to attract permanent funding to help communities with suicide prevention strategies, Waltja can continue its work in this area with proper staffing to

coordinate activities for the next two years.

“The suicide problem in communities has been increasing from 10-15 years ago, when it wasn't really heard of, to now where just about 70% of the communities we work with have had some suicides or suicide attempts in the last 4-5 years,” Stewart said.

“What's common in suicide is generally low self esteem and general isolation so our

programs are aimed at working on both of these with the community, family, kids at risk and peer groups as well.”

Many of Waltja's programs focus on young people and are strongly driven and supported by communities themselves.

“Firstly we negotiate with the community, the elders and parents about some ideas of what they want us to do and then we must agree,” Stewart said.

“Each community can tailor activities to their community's needs. Some communities may want to get some more training for their young people on CDEP as long as the kids agree that's what they want to do.”

For more information about Suicide Prevention in your community contact Waltja in Alice Springs on 89534488 or email [waltja@octa4.net.au](mailto:waltja@octa4.net.au)

# The Tracker



DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY ROLF DE HEER

**Five men against a stark landscape, four on horseback and one – a black Aboriginal tracker – on foot. It's 1922, somewhere in Australia, and the group is hunting down an escaped felon charged with the rape and murder of a white woman. The felon is also Aboriginal.**

This archetypal scene recurs again and again in De Heer's sparse, spare film, where music, facial expressions and the raw red country stand in for the conspicuous lack of dialogue between the main characters. Thus the tone is set for a strangely oppressive cinematic experience in which, bit by bit, the hunters become the hunted.

All we know of the characters is given in the opening few minutes of the film. Gary Sweet plays the unnamed white racist Fanatic, the leader of the group and hell-bent on meting out justice to the escapee. David Gulpilil is the Tracker, at once servile and menacing as he leads the group deeper and deeper into the trackless wilds. Damon Gameau is the naïve young Follower, a raw ukelele-playing police

cadet treated with contempt by his brutal superior. Rounding off the cast is Grant Page, the world-weary Veteran who would rather be anywhere else but in the hunting party.

Ostensibly the film is about racism and the institutional savagery that lies at the heart of so-called civilized societies. But at a deeper level the film is more concerned with the nature of power and the way it is exercised.

For most of the film the escapee remains maddeningly out of reach, "alf a day ahead, boss!" as the Tracker keeps reminding his companions. As the party progresses they come into contact with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the land, on whom the Fanatic wreaks his bloody vengeance out of frustration with his inability to catch his quarry.



While the Veteran has seen it all before, for the Follower the casual massacres and the ensuing fear of reprisals lead on to a collapse of his youthful innocence, symbolised by the burning of his ukelele in the campfire one night.

All the while, the Tracker's influence grows ever more steadily, moving from cheeky remarks about "them black fellahs" and slapstick imitations of the escapee stopping for sex, to deciding which track to follow and when to call rest halts. Soon the Tracker's quiet usurpation of authority turns to outright rebellion, which reaches its climax when he tries to drown the Fanatic in a waterhole.

David Gulpilil shines in his performance as the Tracker, a rich portrayal of a man masking his true feelings and loyalties beneath the veneer of servant. While his voice says one thing, his eyes and his gestures say another. His is the one character in the film that carries any conviction or depth, and it is without doubt one of his finest roles in a career spanning more than 30 years. No surprise then that he won Best Actor for his performance at the 2002 Australian Film Institute Awards, as well as a Best Actor and Living Legend award at the Lexus Inside Film Awards.

The other performances are flat, especially that of Gary Sweet. Although De Heer's film is purposefully minimalist and the characters are intended to be stereotypes, no-one can match Gulpilil's mesmeric screen presence – and the film suffers as a result.

However, the haunting slide guitar and voice of Archie Roach and the huge, rugged landscape of South Australia's northern Flinders Ranges give the film a unique quality that lingers in the memory. Combined with Gulpilil's performance, they make this a film well worth watching. ●

## Rabbit Proof Fence wins AFI

**The story of three young Aboriginal girls taken from their mother to the Moore River Aboriginal Mission in Western Australia in the 1930s and their epic trek home along the rabbit proof fence has won the Australian Film Institute Best Film Award.**

The film is based on the story of one of the girls, Molly Craig, as told to her daughter.

The feature film, reviewed in the March edition of *Land Rights News*, has stirred Australia's conscience about the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children.

Just as it has been well received by members of the Stolen Generations it has also caused a backlash among defenders of the old assimilationist policies.

They were especially upset about the poster prepared by distributors Miramax for the film's American release.

It read: "What if the government kidnapped your daughter? It happened every week in Australia from 1905 to 1971."

The senior Tasmanian Liberal Senator Eric Abetz felt so strongly that he paid for the printing of a pamphlet attacking the film.

Titled "Rabbit Proof Fence Full of Holes", it was

largely a reprint of an article from *The Australian* by John Howson, former Liberal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs from 1971 to 1972, and Des Moore, director of the conservative Institute for Public Affairs.

The article attacked the dramatisation of events in the film and made the startling claim that "Film viewers, however, should recognise that major claims of forcible removal of half-caste children have been comprehensively rejected in three court cases".

In fact Justice O'Loughlin in the most prominent stolen generation case, with applicants Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner, said: "Neither the evidence in this trial, nor the reasons for judgement, deny the existence of the Stolen Generations".

The attacks on the film obviously didn't stop it winning the AFI best film award nor its release in Britain and America where it is currently showing. ●

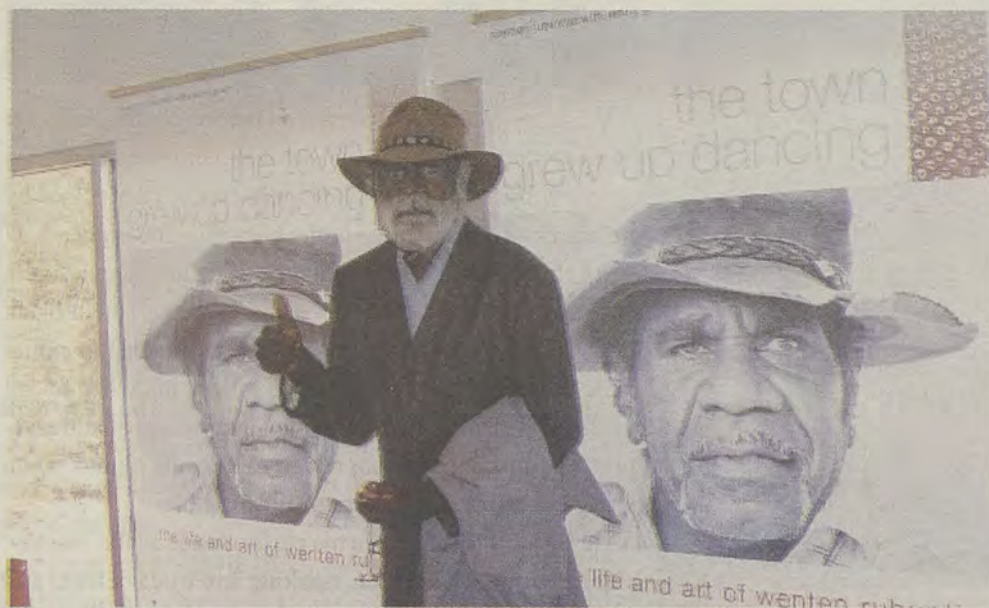


**This children's colouring book features 23 simple drawings by Jenny Taylor of Central Australian people and animals.**

Veronica Dobson has added short sentences in Arrernte with translations to English to accompany each drawing.

It's a fun learning tool published by Jukurrpa Books, based at IAD in Alice Springs, and retails for \$6.95. It's available from IAD and good book stores. ●

# The town grew up dancing – the life and art of Wenten Rubuntja



**A senior Arrernte man, Wenten Rubuntja has been a central figure in the movements that have shaped life in Central Australia and beyond.**

Born in the 1920s at Burt Creek, 50 kilometres north of Alice Springs, he grew up in and around the town learning the country's songs and dances while the town grew too.

The book's title comes from a quote from Wenten: "The town grew up dancing and still the dancing is there under the town. Subdivisions spread, but we still keep going. We still have the culture, still singing the song."

This 200-page book weaves together Wenten's commentary on his remarkable life and art through interviews conducted over many years in Arrernte and English.

Co-author Jenny Green, a linguist who has worked in Central Australia for over 25 years, links Wenten's words and art with thoroughly researched passages giving the

historical and cultural context.

Wenten (as he is universally known) fought for the development of land rights in the 1970s and was the chair of the Central Land Council from 1976 to 1980 and from 1985 to 1988.

He helped found such important Alice Springs organisations as Congress, Tangentyere Council and Yeperenye School. He was a member of the first board of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in 1979 and remained a member of its successor the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and chairs its Alice Springs Committee.

He was a founding member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991 along with journalist Ray Martin who spoke at the book launch.

He was named as NAIDOC artist of the year in 1999 in recognition of his body of work over a lifetime in traditional and European styles.

His works hang in many collections, including the Australian National Gallery's, and are featured throughout the book. He has considerable cross-cultural skills, dignity, style and a cheeky sense of humour that shows in the book.

CLC Director David Ross speaks of his uncle Wenten's unique abilities during the land rights struggles of the 1970s. "It was very unusual at that time to be such an up-front, outspoken person who also had the skill and ability to be able to bring people along with them. It wasn't just him leading

the charge – but bringing people along with him and being able to command respect in the Aboriginal community and in the non-Aboriginal community."

His influence was shown in the range of people who spoke with much affection and humour about Wenten at the book launch in Alice Springs including the Chief Minister Clare Martin, Ray Martin, Geoff Shaw, Minister John Ah Kit, Warren Snowdon MP, CLC Director David Ross and former Director Pat Dodson.

This fascinating book is the story of an amazing life reflecting his times, his culture and the forces of change.

It is published by Jukurpa Books in Alice Springs and retails for \$59.95.



At the launch of the new book on Wenten Rubuntja: former chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Ray Martin, Tangentyere's Geoff Shaw OAM, Minister John Ah Kit, Wenten Rubuntja, Co-author Jenny Green, Eileen Shaw, Chief Minister Clare Martin, Warren Snowdon MP, Deputy NT Administrator Pat Miller, CLC Director David Ross and the first CLC Director Pat Dodson.

## Milingimbi Festival

**Now 17 years old, the Milingimbi Gattjirrk Festival continues to showcase Yolngu culture through music, song and dance.**

The highlight on the community's event calendar, the festival brings together Yolngu people from throughout north-east Arnhem Land. Musically, this year's festival was enhanced with the spice of variety.

Indigenous broadcasters CAAMA, TEABBA and Kakadu Studios joined forces to broadcast the sounds of local bands live across the airwaves. To complement the broadcast a CD will be produced highlighting songs from each of the bands represented.

As always, sporting events and dance

competitions were also popular. The Northern Land Council chipped in with sponsorship of the spear throwing competition and a variety of dance performances.

Jason Mewala proved his accuracy was better than most when he won the spear throwing competition.

Elsewhere, Milingimbi performed the "double" in the basketball competition, walking away with the men's and women's trophies. No such luck in the football final however – Maningrida proved too strong for the local team.



Milingimbi kids get into the spirit of things

# Exhibition celebrates Human Rights Day



Judges Julie Milton and Anthony Duwun Lee with Andrew Marrgululu Wanambi's award-winning *Wagilag Sisters*

**An exhibition of more than 70 artworks dealing with issues of human rights have gone on show in the foyer of Darwin's Supreme Court, among them several relating to the theme of Aboriginal dispossession.**

This is the eighth year in succession that the Darwin Community Legal Service has mounted its 'Human Rights On Show' exhibition to mark Human Rights Day on 10 December.

On the opening night seven prizes were presented to winners in different categories, with the Northern Land Council-sponsored Bill Neidjie Indigenous Art Award being presented for the first time to Darwin artist and prominent Aboriginal activist June Mills for her acrylic work *Miyama gorawora*.

The winner of the overall prize went to Andrew Marrgululu Wanambi for his traditional ochre painting of the *Wagilag Sisters*, sacred to the Yolngu people across Arnhem Land.

Indigenous artist Eunice Napangardi took out the NT Law Society Award for her work *Bush Banana Dreaming*, while long-grass activist Johnny Balaiya was the subject of Peter Eve's black and white photograph which took out the NT Attorney-General Significant Achievement Award.

Many of the works on display paid tribute to the Territory's abundant natural charms as part of this year's show's Ecotourism theme, while others tackled thornier issues such as the plight of refugees, long-grass living and the issue of mandatory detention.

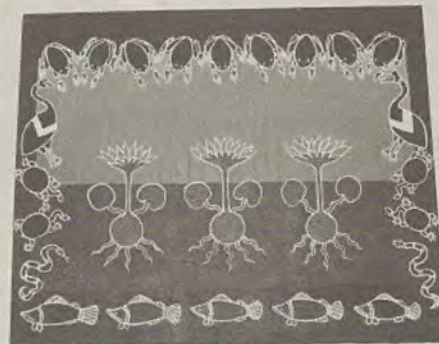
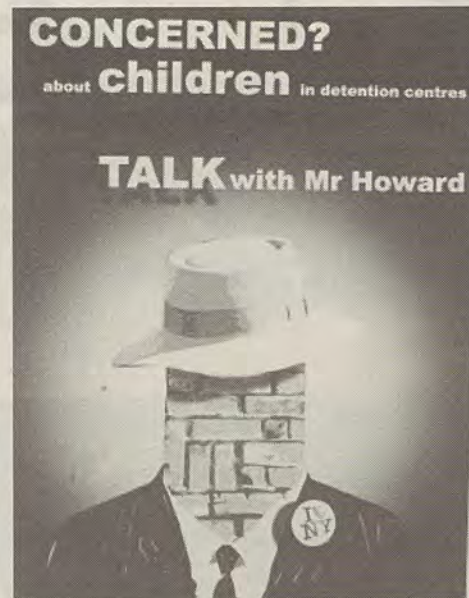
Larrakia artist Anthony Duwun Lee and NT University Art Collection Coordinator Julie Milton had many difficult choices to make during the award selection process,

in the book. Northern Territory readers will be interested to see accounts of Yanyuwa, Yolngu and Larrakia saltwater people among others in Northern Australia and overseas.

She draws strongly on the work of researchers looking at saltwater cultures but importantly includes many first-hand accounts from saltwater people to illustrate the deep connections Indigenous coastal people have with their sea-country.

In particular Sharp examines systems of customary marine tenure and the associated law that supports it. The impact of European colonisation on Australia and the way this changed the management of seas is explained in a way that allows the reader to better understand the huge implications for saltwater people.

Sharp notes that while the judge in the Croker Island Seas case determined that the customary marine tenure system of Aboriginal people that had worked successfully for thousands of years should not apply to non-Aboriginal people because there was a 'public right to fish', there was and is an increasing tendency to allow



Top: Therese Ritchie's *Heart of Brick*  
Bottom: June Mills' *Miyama gorawora*

with the final winners selected just hours before the official awards function.

Acting DCLS Coordinator Wendy Morton paid tribute to the judges' selection, saying: "The artistic perspectives on offer here – personal, political, local/global, ironic and celebratory – reaffirm and extend the notion of human rights, even for those of us who work in the field."

All the works on display are for sale. The exhibition will close on 20 December.

privatisation of seas through means such as aquaculture leases and private property rights for commercial fisheries.

While supporting the right and need of Aboriginal people to develop commercial enterprises in the sea, Sharp cautions about adopting existing fisheries models unquestioningly. "The power of market-oriented aspiration is enormous," she says. "Hence there is no guarantee that obligations to others or to place will survive present market pressures."

The challenge for Aboriginal communities is to find methods for using and managing their saltwater country which do not undermine culture, community or the saltwater environment.

In this respect the book does not disappoint. It reviews a number of methods of fisheries management that are based around accountability to particular areas in the sea and to the resident communities that live there and depend on it.

Overall the book is a great read for anyone interested in saltwater people and the need to keep both saltwater country and culture healthy for the future.

## THE BARRUMBI KIDS



By Leonie Norrington  
Published by Omnibus Books  
for Scholastic Australia  
RRP: \$16.95

**"The Barrumbi Kids" is a lively and interesting book that follows the trials and tribulations of two young boys, one white, the other black, growing up in a remote Aboriginal community.**

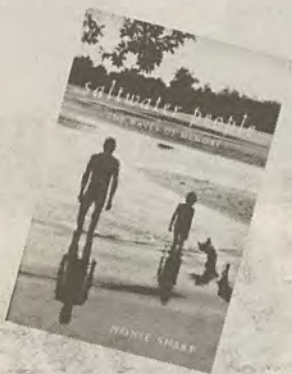
Leonie Norrington is a local author who has written several children's and other general interest books. Her life experiences growing up in Barunga, south of Katherine, and then Darwin in the 1970s have given her great insight into the Aboriginal and indeed Territorian way of life - so much so, that she decided to become a full time author in order to capture and share these experiences with others.

The book focuses mainly on two young boys, Dale and Tomias, who are both 12 years old. Like most young boys, trouble seems to follow them wherever they go. Dale is a white boy whose family has lived within Long Hole Community for many years while Tomias' ancestors have been there since the "Dreaming". The book follows the two boys' struggle throughout their last year of primary school, and the hardships involved in growing up and surviving in the Bush.

Some of the stories captured by the book are really funny, so much so you can almost imagine yourself being there. Things such as escaping from wild bushfires that burn in the "late dry season", or fishing and swimming in "croc-infested rivers", are all very familiar to us. As Territorians we deal with all of these things on a daily/yearly basis and it is really refreshing to actually read about these through the eyes of a fellow Territorian and to be able to relate to them.

In short this book is a great source of entertainment that offers a little bit of escapism for everyone. Highly recommended for older children and young adolescents and even adults, if you just want a little bit of light relief.

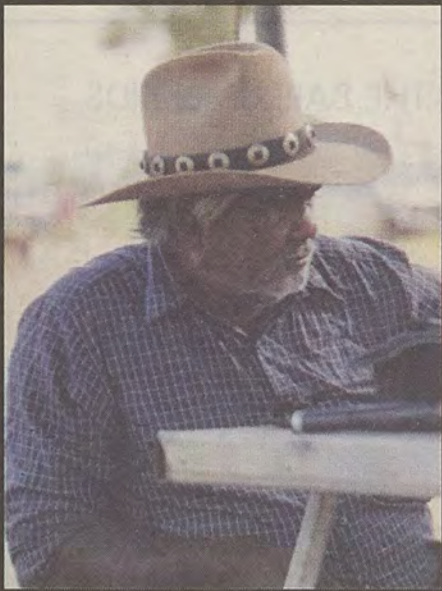
## SALTWATER PEOPLE - THE WAVES OF MEMORY



By Nonie Sharp  
Published by Allen & Unwin  
RRP: \$27.95

**This book takes a wide-ranging look at Indigenous use and management of the sea in Northern Australia and asks some important questions about what this can tell us about sustainable management for the future.**

Nonie Sharp has a long history of working with saltwater people in Northern Australia and this comes through strongly



*The CLC and NLC wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas and New Year, and we look forward to another challenging year ahead in 2003*

