1976 - 2016

40TH LAND RIGHTS ANNIVERSARY

WARNING: THIS ISSUE CONTAINS MANY IMAGES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE DECEASED

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Australia’s Longest Running Aboriginal Newspaper proudly published by Central Land Council
Bleakest or most exciting times for our mob?

The Northern Land Council has welcomed the election of the new Government, which has made First Nations rights a priority.

Mr Morrison implored Mr Turnbull “to find a new minister who has the interests of Indigenous people at heart and a commitment to work with the institutional architecture, not against it.”

He said the minister had always wanted to replace the Aboriginal Land Rights Act with inferior native title rights (see story p.12).

Ms Weste said the proposed laws would hit already vulnerable and disadvantaged Aboriginal children and impose an unnecessary cost on taxpayers.

Amnesty International said the changes would backfire by harming young people.

“There’s so much potential for solutions by setting justice outcomes,” Mr Giles told NITV.

The Australian Red Cross’ report “If the Land Rights Act is good enough for the Northern Territory, why isn’t it good enough for the rest of Australia?” continued on p.12

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THE NORTHERN Land Council has welcomed the Government’s review of sacred sites legislation as a missed chance to strengthen the law.

Among the review’s 39 recommendations are stop work powers that may improve sacred site protection.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) welcomed the recommendations but AAPA CEO Ben Scambary told the ABC he believed the Government’s review team did not consult custodians of sacred sites.

“I think that there could have been more comprehensive responses given by Aboriginal traditional owners and custodians, who in fact are very concerned about sacred site protection.”

Mr Morrison said he agreed with recommendations such as increased penalties for desecrating sites, but thought it did not improve the existing law in a meaningful way.

“There was a missed opportunity to strengthen the act,” he said.

“And that was because there were no recommendations covering measures such as mandatory sacred site clearances for major works.”

AAPA’s CEO Ben Scambary said stop work powers “might prevent issues such as the site damage that occurred at Bootu Creek.”

In 2013 mining company OM Manganese was fined $150,000 for desecrating a sacred site known as Two Women Sitting on Bootu Creek.

Dr Scambary said currently AAPA can’t stop mining if sacred sites are being damaged.

“Which has been a difficulty at times where we are aware on the spot that a sacred site has been damaged, but we don’t have the power to stop work, only to provide advice that an offence under the act might be committed,” he told the ABC.

But he said the recommended stop work power would change that.

(See p.4 for NT parties’ policies)

A W E A K E N E D Prime Minister has sacrificed together a narrow victory after an election campaign where Aboriginal interests barely rated a mention, leaving many wondering what the next parliament has in store for First Australians.

Despite a boring campaign and a widely acknowledged crisis in Aboriginal affairs, calls for change from indigenous leaders rarely cut through.

One of those moments came in June, when many of Australia’s peak indigenous bodies gathered in Sydney to demand a new standalone department to deliver programs that advance Aboriginal people.

The signatories of the Redfern Statement want responsibility for Aboriginal affairs to be removed from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and given to a standalone department managed and run by senior indigenous public servants.

Policy and an ideological campaign delivery must be brought together to ensure a central department of expertise, allowing Aboriginal people to manage their own services, the statement said.

It also called to restore more than $500 million cut from the portfolio under Prime Minister Tony Abbott, including funding for the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and new peak representative bodies for education, employment and housing “as a matter of national priority.”

The statement echoed the Northern Land Council’s Joe Morrison who, a week earlier, lamented that in Aboriginal affairs have “never been bleaker” since former PM Tony Abbott moved the portfolio to PM&C.

The CEO of the NLC caused a stir when he implored the new responsible minister, the hapless Senator Nigel Scullion.

In a speech to the National Native Title Conference Mr Morrison called the minister a “failure” and accused him of using an “international witch hunt” campaign against land councils and land rights.

He cited the “fiasco” of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the “ill-fated” work for the dole scheme (see story p.8) as proving that the “meddling and micro-managing” minister was “not up to the job.”

Mr Morrison implored Mr Turnbull “to find a new minister [who] has the interests of indigenous people at heart and a commitment to work with the institutional architecture, not against it.”

He said the minister had always wanted to replace the Aboriginal Land Rights Act with inferior native title rights (see story p.12).

Senator Scullion knows that the Native Title Act, by comparison, offers only a fragile bundle of rights that can readily be extinguished.

He suggested turning Mr Scullion’s campaign on its head.

“If the Land Rights Act is good enough for the Northern Territory, why isn’t it good enough for the rest of Australia?”

Missed opportunity to protect sacred sites

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(See p.4 for NT parties’ policies)
NT housing vote looms

THE HEAT of an election campaign may seem a strange time to start consulting about fixing the Territory’s public housing system.

Yet that’s just when Chief Minister Adam Giles wants to begin talks about outsourcing government responsibility for building, managing and maintaining remote houses to an “independent” new body.

If re-elected, he wants to set up a new Remote Housing Development Authority (RHDA) he says will give communities “more say”.

A steering committee including the land councils is scheduled to start consultations about the RHDA in August.

Aboriginal organisations were wary of the announcement’s pre-election timing and some said the time for talking is over.

“We cannot afford to wait until next year for the NT government to actually do something to address the critical housing shortage in town camps,” said Tjentetyre CEO Walter Shaw.

Others believe even a belated attempt at a solution is welcome, as long as it’s genuine.

“Both major parties share responsibility for the NT’s dysfunctional public housing model,” said CLC director David Ross.

“We want to work with whoever wins the election on replacing this failed system with real community control.”

Mr Ross said a new housing system must not leave communities with the liability for the run down housing stock.

But he questioned how giving control over remote houses to a board appointed by the NT government would result in independence and greater community control.

He asked the government to explain how the RHDA will be any more accountable than the Department of Housing.

For the consultation process to be fully transparent the government must share the data, particularly financial modelling, that Aboriginal people need to be able to genuinely participate in decisions about the future of Aboriginal housing said Mr Ross.

“This includes details of the new national partnership agreement, including where funds for new houses will be allocated and what the federal government’s requirements are.”

The federal government has not committed to fund any houses after 2018 and the Giles government will not accept subleases over houses beyond that date because it does not want to be stuck with a liability it cannot fund.

Meanwhile, its unfunded election promise of over $2 billion for new houses and upgrades came with a sting in the tail.

Ms Price said if she is re-elected new public housing tenants will be put on six months’ probation and face a tougher penalty system.

Tenants will be slapped with demerit points - from one point for making too much noise to three points for violence or vandalism. Once tenants have six demerit points they will be evicted.

Peggy Granites
Yuendumu
It means everything we know about our land and getting our land back. It is exciting that we can show our young ones what land means to us.

Raymond Palmer
Amoonguna
Land rights is really important for us, we need to fight for it. It is really hard but we need to stand up and keep on going forward, not backward. We need to do that all together. Once we do that, we can win.

Desley Rogers
Brumby Plains
It is good that we've got our own land back from our ancestors leaving the storylines safe. Where I come from, we claimed that land back and that's a good thing. It’s there for our children. When we are gone, they've got a land to call their own home.

Kelvin Morrison
Karangari
It means to look up at sacred sites, teaching how to live the life of old time days. I do that all the time, taking my kids out bush, get them away from town.

Valerie Martin,
Yuendumu
It means to put our input across to the ministers. Not only something to do with the land but something new to be done: to upgrade the education, the health and the housing system which is really going down.

Rameth Thomas
Mutitjulu
Lands rights to me is to hold our land and have proper law and culture and to educate our young so they can learn our culture harmoniously and not be offended by white people who degrade our sites and disrespect our land. To have a place for future generations to keep this land strong.

Shirleen Campbell
Alice Springs
Land rights is our knowledge, our culture our stories. It keeps us young people healthy if we understand and follow our old people. I have been following my aunty to land council meetings and parliament house and all that and I like the energy and passion. It’s strong, you can feel the power. It’s given me the opportunity to take on that power and pass it on at the same time as I’m listening to the elders.

Dianne Stokes
Karumpurlpa
Land rights means a lot to me because I was told by old people that our land is the country of our ancestors. That is why it is important to tell our stories for the people to see and know about what we learnt about the country.
## NT ELECTIONS - Who will you vote for on 27 August?

**Land Rights News asked the candidates of the NT’s main parties about their policies.**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Scott McConnell</strong>&lt;br&gt;Stuart</td>
<td><strong>Bess Price</strong>&lt;br&gt;Stuart</td>
<td><strong>The Greens</strong>&lt;br&gt;support Aboriginal people’s right to community controlled governance and services through representatives they’ve chosen themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gerry McCarthy</strong>&lt;br&gt;Barkly</td>
<td><strong>Tony Jack</strong>&lt;br&gt;Barkly</td>
<td><strong>Yes.</strong> We will do all we can to ensure land councils and the AAPA board are consulted regarding any amendments to the Sacred Sites Act. The Greens candidate for Namatjira says: “As far as I’m concerned, Sacred Sites belong to Aboriginal people. They don’t belong to anyone else. They are our sovereign right and claim.” The Greens support Aboriginal people’s right to practice and revitalise culture and have cultural property protected. We recognize that culture is country and country is culture. The Greens want to protect precious places like Sacred Sites, because this helps protect the health and wellbeing of our country and its people. Sacred Sites deserve the strongest level of protection possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chansey Paech</strong>&lt;br&gt;Namatjira</td>
<td><strong>Heidi Williams</strong>&lt;br&gt;Namatjira</td>
<td><strong>Yes.</strong> Territory Labor will amend the Sacred Sites legislation without amendment from the land councils and the AAPA Board. All legislation in the Northern Territory is created and amended through the Northern Territory Parliament processes. These processes include substantial public consultation with all stakeholders. The creation and amendment of laws is a carefully considered and robust process aimed at promoting and protecting the interest of all Territorians. The Sacred Sites Act is a good example in that it promotes and protects the cultural interest of Aboriginal Territorians. The Country Liberal Government supports the purpose of the SSA and as per normal will ensure that full consultation will be undertaken on any proposed amendments to the Sacred Sites Act. <strong>Yes.</strong> Labor will provide $1.1 billion to remote housing over the next 10 years. This will build 6500 additional living spaces. We will return tenancy management and repairs and maintenance to local control. We will re-invigorate the Housing Reference Groups and provide local housing officers. We will work with locals to determine how housing is to be devolved, when and to whom. Locals will determine housing arrangements in their area - whether it is to regional councils, local authorities or local or regional housing associations. We will provide support for those organisations to have the capacity to undertake this work. The CLP Government listens to Aboriginal people in remote communities – we have heard your need for Local Control. Consequently, we are establishing Remote Housing Development Authority (RHDA) to provide local control to local communities. Prior to commencement, we will complete a community engagement process to seek the advice on how the RHDA should operate. We will deliver an additional 152 new houses over the next two years under our revised National Partnership on Remote Housing. We will prioritise local Aboriginal people and businesses to deliver as much as possible of the construction, repairs and maintenance and associated services. <strong>Yes, the Greens want to give housing contracts to local providers, for building and maintenance. The Greens propose housing systems and management come under governance of local Aboriginal councils, with systems for appeal if people feel someone is taking advantage of them. The Greens want to build local capacity with effective training for Aboriginal people, and systems to ensure professionals who come to communities properly consult and engage in culturally appropriate ways. The Greens want a comprehensive consultation process about the best ways to develop Aboriginal employment and social enterprise in remote communities, and we want to implement the recommendations.</strong></td>
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### How will you support Aboriginal organisations in the NT, especially those based in remote communities, to achieve good governance?

**Territory Labor** will undertake the Territory’s most comprehensive ever devolution of decision making to local communities. We will be devolving local government, education, housing, aspects of the justice system and health over ten years. We will be at the pace and to the degree that local people wish allowing time for capacity building of local organisations. We will work with local organisations to understand workforce development needs and undertake agreed training plans. We will provide outposted public sector employees to help organisations. We will also provide extensive leadership courses for younger indigenous people to develop long term skills.

**In partnership with land councils and peak bodies. Our initiatives include:**

1. **Community Champions Program:** 14 Officers (all Aboriginal) to identify needs and support community aspirations.
2. **Our Indigenous Business Development Officers:** 18 Officers provide direct access to a panel of governance experts. For example the Urupunga Aboriginal Corporation at Arnhara.
3. **First Circles Program:** direct policy access to Cabinet for 30 emerging Aboriginal leaders. Including paying for members to undertake Certificates II and IV in Leadership and Governance.
4. **Our Local Authority Initiative:** A direct say for Aboriginal people in remote communities in the delivery of policies and programs in their communities.

**The Greens support Aboriginal people’s right to community controlled governance and services through representatives they’ve chosen themselves. The Greens will support good governance by providing long-term funding to Aboriginal organisations, helping them create strong plans and business structures. When anyone works alongside Aboriginal people to do this, we insist they must use processes of genuine participation, engagement and consultation with Aboriginal people. We want an independent board that Aboriginal people can appeal to if they feel like someone is taking advantage of them. We propose removing the shires and replacing them with Aboriginal community councils, reinstating remote Indigenous communities and governance training of local representatives. The Greens support long-term funding to help make this happen.**

### Will you ensure that the Sacred Sites Act is not amended without the consent of the four territory land councils and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) board?

**Yes.** Territory Labor will not amend the Sacred Sites legislation without agreement from the land councils and the AAPA Board.

**All legislation in the Northern Territory is created and amended through the Northern Territory Parliament processes. These processes include substantial public consultation with all stakeholders. The creation and amendment of laws is a carefully considered and robust process aimed at promoting and protecting the interest of all Territorians. The Sacred Sites Act is a good example in that it promotes and protects the cultural interest of Aboriginal Territorians. The Country Liberal Government supports the purpose of the SSA and as per normal will ensure that full consultation will be undertaken on any proposed amendments to the Sacred Sites Act.**

**The Greens support Aboriginal people’s right to community controlled governance and services through representatives they’ve chosen themselves. The Greens want Aboriginal people to have a say in the management of Sacred Sites.**

### Will you reform the NT’s remote housing system to ensure that housing management is handed over to local or regional community housing organisations? If so, how?

**Yes.** Labor will provide $1.1 billion to remote housing over the next 10 years. This will build 6500 additional living spaces. We will return tenancy management and repairs and maintenance to local control. We will re-invigorate the Housing Reference Groups and provide local housing officers. We will work with locals to determine how housing is to be devolved, when and to whom. Locals will determine housing arrangements in their area - whether it is to regional councils, local authorities or local or regional housing associations. We will provide support for those organisations to have the capacity to undertake this work.

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Australian Labor Party (ALP)  
Country Liberal Party (CLP)  
The Greens

Will you ensure that outstations and homelands continue to receive a minimum of $20 million per year for municipal services, and commit new funds to increase service delivery?

Yes. Our commitment to new funds includes increasing the Homelands Extra funding and being prepared to work jointly with local outstation / homelands organisations to provide new housing in jointly funded arrangements. Labor is open to new commitments in outstations and homelands on a case by case basis.

Yes. The CLP Government has invested $155m from the Commonwealth into housing, such as Arlparra large project. We have invested $22m p.a. to deliver services to homelands and outstations. Our Homelands Extra Program has successfully delivered $8 million into outstation houses, $20m in Municipal and Essential Services, along with $7.3m in Housing Maintenance Programs. There are also $4m Special Purpose Grants major projects or local outstation solutions.

Vincent Forrester says: “An equitable share of the NT’s infrastructure budget of around $1.5bn would be a lot more than $20m. I am standing up for an equal distribution of wealth, no matter where we live. It is our right to live on country. So we must support services on homelands.

“The homelands movement has been really important for returning people to country. It has been shown to improve people’s health and wellbeing.”

The Greens support increasing funds for service provision and the right of all people to determine what and how services are delivered. This includes government services such as health, early childhood development, education, housing, community infrastructure, employment support and policing. This will support “closing the gap”

What is your position on bilingual education and promoting Aboriginal languages and teachers in NT schools?

We support bilingual education and promoting Aboriginal languages in schools. Labor will stop the current CLP Indigenous Education Review actions except where they are supported locally.

Together with communities we will establish key short, medium and long term goals for education outcomes in each region or cluster of schools. We will create community led schools with local boards allowing locals to determine the pathway schools can take to achieve agreed goals. If locals want this to include bilingual education or education in language this will be their decision and it will be backed by a Labor Government.

The Country Liberals Government currently supports nine schools to deliver bilingual education. The CLP Government is implementing the recommendations from the “A Share in the Future” indigenous education review. This includes developing and implementing policy to guide Languages and Cultures programs and increasing indigenous workforce and capacity, through scholarships and early careers programs.

The Country Liberals Government has also developed an Indigenous Employment and Workforce Strategy to provide a framework for recruiting, developing and retaining Indigenous employees at all levels in schools, regions and work units of Department of Education. This strategy was launched in May 2016.

“We are the sovereign people,” says Vincent Forrester. “Bilingual education is our right. Indigenous language is an indigenous people’s right and should be recognised for their skills. To stop education in our and our kid’s language is to stop their education.”

The Greens support Aboriginal people’s right to bilingual education and cultural programs in schools. We support Aboriginal peoples’ right to spiritual traditions, histories and ways of thinking about the world.

The Greens support Aboriginal people to establish and control education systems, if they choose to. This includes long-term funding for processes of planning and consultation, and for training and employment of Aboriginal teachers.

What will you do to improve both early years and secondary education for children in remote communities?

Children will be at the centre of government. We will develop an early childhood plan led by the Deputy Chief Minister. We aim to have every child ready for school day one. We will:

• provide an additional $8 million for nurse home visits.
• expand Families as First Teachers.
• allow local communities to decide how to focus locally on children.

Labor will support parent choice in secondary education. We will provide all schools with additional $124 million including:

• $80 million for more teachers.
• $32 million for bilingual support.
• $8 million for an active life, health and arts curriculum program.

The Greens will invest $19m towards “A Great Share in the Future” plan to provide a whole-of-government framework for improving the health, education and wellbeing.

This program will provide greater coordination of early years services by catalysing investment and identifying priority areas for action.

The government’s “A Share in the Future” indigenous education review found that secondary education outcomes in remote communities in the NT were unacceptable.

The Country Liberals strategy will improve Indigenous secondary education outcomes by providing options and support for Indigenous students and their families to make the best choices to maximise student opportunities in the secondary years.

“We need to rework the system so that teachers use the language skills and codes of students so that they can emerge from school with bi or multilingual competence,” says Vincent Forrester.

The Greens recognise poor education outcomes are often the result of poverty, dislocation, marginalisation, health and housing worries and a loss of control of schools at the individual and community level.

So to improve outcomes, we need to work broadly.

The Greens want long term support for wellbeing programs alongside schools.

We want to train and employ more Aboriginal teachers. We want bilingual and cultural programs and we want to support Aboriginal people to determine how schools teach their children.

How will you address the high imprisonment rates of NT Aboriginal people, especially young people?

• Invest in children through our early childhood strategy, an additional $124 million in education and $1.1 billion in remote housing to tackle underlying causes of crime.
• Invest in youth engagement strategies, to provide healthy activities all year round.
• Target primary health and provide services as close to home as possible.
• Scrap the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment system, reintroduce the Banned Drinker’s Register and allow TBLs to be determined by Police.
• Provide court diversion into treatment and rehabilitation for people where the underlying cause is alcohol abuse, mental illness, drug use or disability.
• Repeal the paperless arrest system.

Let us have an honest conversation about this. There are lots of conversations about the high rates of imprisonment but no-one talks about why Territorians are in prison.

The most common sentencing offences in 2014 were Acts intended to cause injury 50%, followed by Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations at 22% and Traffic and vehicle officers at 10%.

Successful programs such as the Sentenced to a Future program have been operating for 3 years and have provided vocational training with real world work opportunities linked to a job in the community. It has reduced the return to jail rate to 17% against the rest of the general prison population of 49%.

A dramatic drop!

It provides skills that are useful and transferable to a wide range of work settings in the community, attaches prisoners to a connected network focused on the outcome of transitioning them successfully, many for the first time, to a mainstream living experience that includes paid work and strengthens them to avoid returning to prison.

The Greens say it’s a national priority to reduce the number of Aboriginal people in prison.

“We are building prisons instead of looking at the issues,” says Vincent Forrester.

The Greens want “justice reinvestment”.

We want more funding for legal aid services, more support for Aboriginal people to access legal aid.

We want more funding for programs that help keep Aboriginal people out of jail, like cultural leadership programs on country.

We want an inquiry to find out which laws are unfairly targeting Aboriginal people.

Then we want a process of community engagement and consultation to see those laws changed.

What steps will you take to increase training, employment and enterprise opportunities in remote communities?

• Expand skills training programs in schools.
• Utilise school facilities for adult education, especially in literacy and numeracy for working life.
• Work with Aboriginal organisations to develop an economic prospectus for regions.
• Expand business grants to ensure Indigenous people get an opportunity to get support.
• Provide capital grants to assist the development of Aboriginal tourism, arts and culture operations.
• Ensure infrastructure works go local.
• Support land and sea rangers and caring for country programs.
• Expand the number of Aboriginal workers in health and education.
• Grow Aboriginal involvement in the fishing industry.
• Support Aboriginal agribusiness, especially pastoralism and horticulture efforts.

The Country Liberals believes that education and jobs provides opportunities, choice and improved quality of life.

A strong economy will directly support education and employment of Aboriginal teachers.

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“I propose we reintroduce CDEP in areas where it has been removed,” says Greens candidate, Vincent Forrester.

The Greens want to support Aboriginal communities to develop an economic base.

We want contracts for bush work to stay in the bush, with training if necessary.

Forrester . “Bilingual education is our right. Indigenous language is an indigenous people’s right and should be recognised for their skills.”

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Treaty push gathers more strength

MOMENTUM for treaties is gathering everywhere, despite Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s warning that treaty talk could derail the proposed constitutional recognition referendum.

NAIDOC person of the year, educator Cheryl Axleby, told the PM: “When you have the courage and you are bold enough, my people [Queensland’s Gurung Gurung and Tarrhi Bunga] are ready to speak with you about a treaty.”

Victorian Aboriginal leaders are hoping to sign one or more treaties with their state government within two years.

Two days of discussions in Melbourne in late May ended with tentative agreement on the process.

“Today marks the end of phase one,” Jason Mifsud, executive director for Aboriginal Victoria, who moderated the talks, told The Age newspaper.

“We’ve come an enormous way and we’ve got a long way to go.”

Aboriginal Victoria, who moderated the meeting, will take place at Uluru.

After an initial meeting early in 2016 and regional meetings in four Victorian country towns, the group decided to appoint a steering committee and meet again in November.

Within days of the consensus, a national conference in Darwin called constitutional change referendum faces uphill battle

DOUBTS about whether a weakened Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will be able to deliver the promise to recognise Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution are growing in the wake of the close election result.

Many conservative Liberal and National Party MPs are not convinced of the need to change the nation’s founding document or are actively resisting and prepared to break ranks with a leader they despise.

The ABC and Sky TV’s commentator Patricia Karvelas reported that one MP told her the promise had “never” gone through the party room and that ordinary party members would never accept even the most superficial and basic change to the Constitution.

The PM is torn between this group and Aboriginal people who will never accept tokenistic changes.

Unlike his predecessor Tony Abbott, Mr Turnbull has not made a referendum on constitutional recognition his signature issue.

Ms Karvelas wrote in The Australian newspaper that conservative MPs could campaign against the referendum once a bill is presented.

But Mr Turnbull used the 40th anniversary of the 1967 and discrimination referendum to reject reports about division in his ranks.

“My party, my government, is committed to that constitutional recognition,” he said.

“But we obviously have to have the form of words, the amendment, coming from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because it has to be an amendment that is not only acceptable and supported by the broader Australian community in the referendum, but it also has to be an amendment that is meaningful, that sings, that speaks to the First Australians.”

Former member of the referendum council and now Labor senator Pat Dodson wants a series of conventions to settle on a proposal that has wide support before the referendum goes ahead.

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“But we obviously have to have the form of words, the amendment, coming from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because it has to be an amendment that is not only acceptable and supported by the broader Australian community in the referendum, but it also has to be an amendment that is meaningful, that sings, that speaks to the First Australians.”

Former member of the referendum council and now Labor senator Pat Dodson wants a series of conventions to settle on a proposal that has wide support before the referendum goes ahead.

However, May next year, the date suggested by Mr Abbott because it coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, looks like a deadline that is unlikely to be met.

Indigenous consultations about recognition have started - but what about the Territory?

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN Aboriginal people will get a chance to have their say about constitutional recognition before the government decides what the referendum question will actually be.

But at the time of writing it was unclear how many meetings will be held in Central Australia later this year.

It is expected that there will be at least two and that one, possibly the last meeting, will take place at Uluru.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, which is paying for the meetings, said “regional dialogues” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians will take place in “up to 18 locations” around the country.

The Referendum Council wants these meetings to “discuss options for a referendum proposal that could be supported by indigenous people”.

The regional meetings follow three indigenous leadership meetings in Broome, Thursday Island and Melbourne in June and July.

Representatives of land councils, native title holding and other peak bodies discussed referendum options and the process for the second round of regional meetings around Australia.

One of them was Tasmanian Aboriginal leader Michael Mansell.

“The view expressed at the Melbourne meeting of 100 people is that a treaty capable of delivering land, empowerment, guaranteed resources and forms of self-determination is far more beneficial than any constitutional recognition could possibly be,” Mr Mansell told NTIV.

The Referendum Council is considering the outcome of the leadership meetings before organising the regional meetings.

Once those meetings have wrapped up, the council plans to submit a final report to the government and the opposition.
Mt Denison and Narwietooma native title recognised at last

TRADITIONAL OWNERS of two adjoining pastoral stations north of Alice Springs have received recognition of their right to hunt, gather, fish and conduct ceremonies on their land.

The almost 15,000 square kilometre determination area covers the whole of Stirling Station and parts of Neutral Junction Station.

Justice Reeves made the native title consent determination at a special sitting of the Federal Court on the Hanlon River on Stirling Station in April.

“The determination also secures traditional owners’ right to negotiate over future exploration and mining,” Mr Bookie said.

“Now our country is right, there’s no need to take our country away anywhere else,” Mr Bookie said.

The Central Land Council filed the native title application in 2011.

“Because we have the country and we know the stories and songs. People have got to keep the country clean and not chuck their rubbish around like some travellers have done,” Mr Bookie said.

Another piece of Simpson puzzle returned

EASTERN ARRENRTE traditional owners have received Aboriginal freehold title to a missing piece of their vast Simpson Desert land claim.

The grant concluded one of the largest and longest running land claims in the Central Land Council region, almost four decades after it was first lodged.

Senator Nigel Scullion handed title to the 110,000 hectare area, also known as NT Portion 4208, back to the Atteneye Aboriginal Land Trust in a ceremony at Santa Teresa in June.

Federal member for Lingiari Warren Snowdon also joined the traditional owners from the Uleperte and Uleralkwe estate groups for the ceremony.

“It’s a 36 year long history with the sad effect that a lot of the people who should have been here to collect the title, the original claimants, aren’t here today. God bless them,” said CLC director David Ross.

Former Aboriginal Land Commissioner Howard Olney heard the Simpson Desert Land Claim in 2009. NT Portion 4208 was not included in the title to 18,000 square kilometres of the Simpson Desert returned by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2011.

Following representations from the Central Land Council, Senator Scullion agreed in May 2014 to hand the area back to the traditional owners.

“There’s plenty of sacred sites there and we still have plenty of ceremony and pass the knowledge on,” the late former CLC chair Lindsay Bookie said during the 2011 Simpson Desert handback ceremony.

“Our culture has stayed really strong and we know all the places and all the stories and songs,” Mr Bookie was one of the claimants who gave evidence about their cultural and spiritual links to country in hearings held in the Simpson Desert, but not a traditional owner of the land to be handed back on Monday.

He said even though the Simpson Desert was remote, people were still strongly connected to their country.

“The traditional owners already look after that country but now it’s ours we can control visitors’ behaviour a bit better because they will have to have a permit.

“We want them to keep our country clean and not chuck their rubbish around like some travellers have done,” Mr Bookie said.

“They’ve got to look after the country, we’ve all got to do it.”

Mt Denison and Narwietooma native title celebrations

SPECIAL SITTINGS of the Federal Court at two remote Central Australian outstations have confirmed native title for traditional owners of two pastoral properties near Alice Springs.

Justice Rangiah handed down two non-exclusive native title consent determinations at Cockatoo Creek and M’Bunghara outstations in June.

During a sitting at Cockatoo Creek, east of Yuendumu, he recognised native title over the whole of Mt Denison Station, more than 2,700 square kilometres.

The determination at M’Bunghara outstation, one day earlier, was in relation to an area covering the whole of Narwietooma Station, almost 2,700 square kilometres, and a portion of the Dashwood Creek where the claimants proved exclusive possession.

CLC chair Francis Kelly said he hopes the Mt Denison determination will improve the relationship between the traditional owners and the pastoral lease holders.

“It will make it easier to share the country,” he said.

Mr Kelly said the court’s determinations recognise the groups’ rights to hunt, gather and fish, as well as to conduct cultural activities and ceremonies on their land.

“It also gives them the right to negotiate about exploration and mining.”

Their native title rights and interests will be held by their Registered Native Title Body Corporate, the Mt Denison Aboriginal Corporation.

The Narwietooma native title holders are Western Arrernte and Anmatyerr speakers and belong to the Impilngku, Uralurrerreke, Parerrerre, Yarerlppe, Uralampa, Lwekerreye and Ilewerr landholding groups.

“It also gives them the right to negotiate about exploration and mining.”

NEWS

August 2016

Errene/Warlekerlange, Errweltyle, Kwerrekpenyte, Rtrererrepe, Tyarrre Tyarre and Wake – attended the court sitting.

The Central Land Council filed the native title application in 2011.

“They’ve got to look after the country, we’ve all got to do it.”

“The traditional owners were concerned about the protection of sites and wanted to have a say over exploration on their country,” CLC director David Ross said.

The native title rights co-exist with the pastoral leases, which will continue to be run as cattle stations.

The Eynewantheye Aboriginal Corporation will become the Registered Native Title Body Corporate that holds the rights and interests on behalf of its members.
Nuke dump: our gain, their pain?

Hokkina is the name of the spring near the proposed dump site – a very special place for Adnyamathanha women. Photo: Friends of the Earth

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN Aboriginal communities may have dodged the bullet of a nuclear waste dump but spare a thought for the Adnyamathanha traditional owners of the Flinders Ranges.

A pastoral property near Hawker in South Australia is now the only site left on the list. The property was also on the federal government’s shortlist of six possible sites for low and medium level radioactive waste.

Adnyamathanha traditional owners, near the Arid Gold Date Farm close to Alice Springs and they are just as upset when it comes to fighting the plans for the dump. 

He said his people were not consulted before the shortlist was whittled down to a site on their country and had been shown “no respect”.

The members of his association own the Wilpena Pound Resort and welcome around 160,000 tourists a year.

Like much of the Flinders Ranges, the area has great cultural and spiritual significance for the association, which strongly opposed the Beverley uranium mine in the eastern Flinders Ranges.

“We have long memories. We remember the atomic weapons tests at Maralinga and Emu Fields and the ongoing denial around the lost lives and health impacts for Aboriginal people,” Arabunna elder Kevin Buzzacott told AAP.

He said his people are still traumatised from atomic weapons testing in the 1950s and don’t want any more nuclear projects forced on them.

“It means people are going without food, they’re going without the essentials and the minister needs to urgently investigate these deeply concerning statistics. It’s clear to us when this scheme was proposed that it would be harsh, that it would be unworkable in remote communities. We advised the government prior to proceeding with it, as did many Aboriginal organisations and leaders.”

Job providers, such as the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Association (ALPA), reported that a rise in welfare penalties under the program was hurting people.

“We’re seeing more friction between families, an increase in fighting in and around the store. We’ve even had an assault of one of our managers,” ALPA CEO Alastair King told the ABC.

ALPA runs work for the dole programs and supermarkets in Top End communities, Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Mr King said fresh food sales at ALPA stores had dropped 10 per cent since the federal government tightened rules on penalties for CDP participants.

Sales of baby food and meat had dropped more than 20 per cent and people were buying cheaper tinned and processed food.

He also said people were arriving at work for the dole activities hungry.

Mr King said he was confident the sales figures were connected to CDP penalties because the two trends started at the same time.

Senator Scullion denied the penalties were causing harm.

“It’s false and misleading to claim that this had some sort of an impact on the remote economy,” he said.

Senator Scullion said financial penalties only applied until a person agreed to return to CDP activities.

“[Then] the payments are resumed and the back payments are made,” he said, adding that claims people were getting less money were “false and inaccurate” and that payments had been delayed “at worst”.

He backtracked when the Department of Human Services confirmed that short term penalties were not repaid.

People on CDP must take part in activities such as landscaping, cleaning rubbish, walking children to school and fixing houses for 25 hours a week, five days a week, or risk having their payment cut or suspended.

Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion has defended the program.

He said the number of jobseekers in remote communities with suspended payments was probably closer to 4,000 and the overall number of those turning up for work for the dole activities had gone up.

The ABC has reported that approximately 45,000 penalties were handed out in remote Australia in the second half of last year.

“These penalties are harsh,” said Cassandra Goldie, CEO of the Australian Council for Social Services.

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Is the work for the dole scheme hurting Aboriginal jobseekers?

AFTER just one year of the Community Development Program (CDP) researchers, welfare organisations and job providers say the work for the dole scheme is failing remote communities and creating hardship for jobseekers.

Like much of the Flinders Ranges, the area has great cultural and spiritual significance for the association, which strongly opposed the Beverley uranium mine in the eastern Flinders Ranges.

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continued on p.12
JUNE OSCAR AO, one of Australia’s most energetic Aboriginal advocates, has won the Desmond Tutu Reconciliation Fellowship. The prestigious international award, named after South Africa’s Bishop Tutu, celebrates individuals doing extraordinary work in reconciliation.

Ms Oscar, from Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley, received the honour for her outstanding community health achievements and for advancing Aboriginal policy at all levels of government.

Indigenous children born in the Fitzroy Valley suffer from the highest rate of alcohol-related diseases in the world. With the Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women’s Resource Centre Ms Oscar helped to uncover the exceptionally high number of children afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

Her strength and determination helped her community win a landmark legal ruling that stopped the flood of alcohol in the area.

Among Ms. Oscar’s remarkable strengths is getting often angry groups that are at odds with each other to talk constructively. “That’s what I do …and I think this is what everybody should be doing”, she said on being nominated for the award.

Past winners of the Desmond Tutu Reconciliation Fellowship include Myanmar leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mother of Reconciliation?

DAWN ROSS and Marilyn Smith are passionate about the importance of breast screening for Aboriginal women.

Both Arrernte women were diagnosed with cancer and are sharing their stories to encourage other women to have regular breast screens.

Dawn was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997. She had taken her sick daughter to the Alukura Women’s Health Service in Alice Springs, where BreastScreen Australia offered Dawn a free test. The diagnosis shocked her, but she felt lucky that she had been tested.

After undergoing treatment in Adelaide she’s been declared clear of the disease and now stresses how vital screening is. "Breast screening is really important even when you are feeling well because sometimes you can’t feel it and the breast screening machine will catch it,” she says.

“I was really feeling healthy. I didn’t feel sick,” Marilyn was diagnosed on her 59th birthday.

She says the benefits of screening outweigh any worry women may have about having the test, particularly because catching it early can mean you’re around to spend more time with your family and friends.

“Don’t be shy because it will save your life if you can get it early, the staff are all women and you can take a friend or family member with you” she says.

“Please go and get yourselves checked.” After her experience, she is adamant that her family and friends get breast screens. "You know it can happen to anybody,” she says. “I said to my kids, you need to go get tested all of you. And I said to my sisters, you mob need to go and get tested’.

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer for women in Australia, and the second most common cause of cancer related deaths. This means it is particularly important for women to make an appointment when they receive the invitation letter from BreastScreen Australia.

BreastScreen Australia has expanded the invitation for free breast screening to include all women aged 70 to 74. Adding five years to the screening means an additional 600 breast cancers may be detected each year, with the potential to save many lives. Having a free BreastScreen test every two years is the best way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to detect breast cancer early.

To get a test, call 13 20 50 and make an appointment at the nearest BreastScreen Australia clinic, or visit one of the mobile clinics when it comes to your community or for more information, visit australia.gov.au/breastscreen.
In the wash at Alyuen

A TINY community east of Tennant Creek has become a permanent home for traditional owners and inspired larger communities to follow suit, thanks to a deal that saw it replace diesel generators with leased solar panels.

Despite having money in the bank members of the Munungurra Aboriginal Corporation could not afford to live and work on their country because the cost of diesel power was just too high.

Graeme Smith, the corporation’s CEO, told the ABC they paid for two generators to run power to two permanently occupied houses out of eight.

“We’d be going through $600 to $700 a week in diesel,” he said.

Because we have no employment on community, people weren’t able to pay for the diesel. So they decided to live in town, people weren’t able to pay the rent.

The community switched off the generators, with dramatic results.

Its power bill halved over a three month period, the population grew from three to four and now there are local jobs and people in the community who have jobs.

IBA bought the Allgrid solar system at a cost of more than $200,000 and leased it to the Munungurra Aboriginal Corporation.

Leasing meant the corporation didn’t have to withdraw lots of capital and could change systems as technology improves.

“We can go back and renew our lease upon the latest technology that comes in, so we’re not stuck with the system we’ve got,” Mr Smith told the ABC.

The corporation pays the leasing costs from its investment income until it owns the system outright.

The promise of cheaper power has transformed the community.

“With solar and with [population] numbers we were able to get services. We’ve got School of the Air now because we’ve got 15 kids,” Mr Smith said.

The corporation has also won government contracts to repair and maintain houses, and to run work for the dole programs.

“Munungurra certainly created a bit of a buzz,” said the IBA’s Ray McInnes.

He is now working to repeat the success of larger Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

Writing off the stereotypes, one chapter at a time

WHEN YOU’RE doing research it can feel like it’s never going to end,” laughs Dr Josie Douglas as she recalls how her four “amazing and very patient” children supported the thesis that has earned her a PhD.

“I had my youngest son saying: ‘Have you finished that chapter yet?’ He was celebrating every time another chapter was done.”

Josie’s husband Richard Foster also provided great support.

“I could not have gotten through without having him by my side every step of the way. He was so encouraging and supported my dream from the very beginning,” the Central Land Council’s senior policy officer remembers.

Surrounded by family and friends, Josie received her doctorate at a graduation ceremony at Charles Darwin University (CDU) in May.

After many years working alongside linguists and researchers in collaboration with older people on knowledge projects, Josie came to the “slow realisation that young people’s voices were missing in the discussion about keeping Aboriginal knowledge strong”.

“In the community a lot of the assumptions were really negative and stereotypical about young people not being interested and not wanting to learn.

Some of these concerns were very real.”

Josie acknowledges all those who embraced her research with open hearts and minds.

“People were so welcoming and I’m so indebted to everyone who took part in the research and told their stories with me. I wouldn’t have a PhD without that.”

“I’m incredibly grateful for that and I hope that I’ve done justice to their stories.”

She started by trialling her survey questions with a group of young people.

They told Josie, “People always tell us what they want us to learn, nobody ever asks us what we want to learn about”.

“And what they most wanted to learn about was family history, land and its stories, bush foods, songs and dance and hunting,” she says.

The research left Josie feeling more optimistic about the future.

“Young people have less time to learn and fewer people to learn from, yet traditional knowledge is still highly valued and part of their belief system. It’s a big part of young peoples’ identity.”

“The tricky bit is how to ensure that when learning opportunities are available that they’re presented in a way that will interest young people. They are really discerning learners, they’ve got high expectations of how they learn and who they are learning from.”

“In doing a PhD about young people I didn’t forget about old people who are really a central part of it all. I also included their thoughts and views.”

Josie acknowledges those who embraced her research with open hearts and minds.

CAT encouraged the group to fix up an existing building and design a laundry with a shower and a toilet at the back.

Mr Glenn was one of three locals employed on the $90,000 project, along with Stanley Tilmouth and Trevor Glenn.

“It was very good to work on it,” Mr Glenn said. “I worked with Neil the plumber, got some money for the kids,” he said.

Nola Glenn was another community member to get involved in the project.

She organised a painting for the laundry door and will help plant shrubs and flowers around the building.

The new Alyuen laundry is one of 12 community development projects the Nolan’s Bore Community Development Working Group has funded since 2014.
Yapa have their say on the WETT road ahead

THE WARLPIRI Education and Training Trust (WETT) wants Yapa to help review its community driven programs and to guide their future development. Ten years after WETT was launched with the support of the Central Land Council, it’s started surveying residents of Willoowra, Yuendumu, Nyirripi and Lajamanu about the programs.

“It’s good to look back at how WETT started, how it’s going, what’s been successful and how to make things stronger,” said Valerie Patterson, a founding member of the WETT Advisory Committee.

“It’s a good time to think up new programs, too, that will work and make our communities happy.”

WETT uses royalties from Newmont’s Gravites gold mine to improve education programs, too, that will work and make founding member of the WETT Advisory Committee, Lajamanu about the programs.

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Looking after little kids with disabilities and fundraising are among the ideas Laramba child carers took back home.

“One lady shared her story about starting up a new Aboriginal service in Canberra to support children, youth and families.

There was no government funding, so the women needed to work out ways to run the program. They were busy fundraising,” she said.

“We also talked about Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and thought we could learn more for my community and the children who might be affected by this.”

Laramba’s trip to the child care conference.

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“The conference was all about caring for young children, celebrating stories, growing and taking action to inspire each other to strengthen culture,” said Ms Stafford.

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Child care ideas

CLC’s community development model resonates overseas

THE CENTRAL Land Council has become the first Australian organisation to present to a high powered international forum on community driven development.

The Australian government invited CLC director David Ross and his team to a conference in Vietnam’s mountainous north to showcase the CLC’s community development program.

The presentation laid the groundwork for closer collaboration with policy makers and community development practitioners from 15 countries around the Asia Pacific region.

Remote Aboriginal communities used to top down government policies may be surprised to learn that Australia is a big supporter of community driven development in other countries.

Between them, they support community driven initiatives estimated to benefit up to 500 million people. They gather once a year to talk about what is working and how to deal with common challenges facing programs that empower communities to take charge of their own development.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has helped the World Bank, a major financier of the global fight against poverty, to organise an international forum on community driven development in other countries.

“That makes us unique because the others rely mostly on money from their governments or international donors,” he said.

This year’s conference theme of inclusion of indigenous peoples created an opportunity for the Australian government to share the CLC’s “highly relevant” development model, according to a DFAT spokesperson.

“DFAT reached out to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to seek the participation of policy makers and practitioners from community driven development practitioners around the world.

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FRANCIS KELLY and Sammy Butcher have secured second terms as Central Land Council chair and deputy chair respectively, but members put a few new faces on the Executive Committee.

“You’re grateful to the delegates for allowing me to finish the job I began in 2014,” Mr Kelly said after the vote at the April council meeting at Yulara Pulka near Uluru.

The new executive team are Ngark Kunoth-Monké, Robert Patrick, Teddy Long, Sid Anderson, Michael Liddle, Leo Petrick, Jasper Haines, Sammy Wilson and Owen Torres.

Delegates also chose five members for the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) Advisory Committee which makes recommendations about $500 million of ‘royalty equivalent’ funds.

Valerie Martin, Barbara Shaw, Philip Wilyuka, Harry Nelson and Kelvin Morrison were all elected. But not all of them may get to serve their full three-year terms.

Minister Nigel Scullion wants to cut the number of CLC and NLC representatives on the committee by two per land council in November and add two hand-picked members. CLC and NLC delegates have strongly condemned the minister’s proposed changes as yet more top-down control over a less than transparent process.

NLC chair Sam Bush-Blanasi accused Senator Scullion of hijacking the ABA.

“Delegates for allowing me to finish the job I began in 2014,” he told the NT News. “It’s time he handed responsibility for Aboriginal money back to the elected representatives of Aboriginal people.”

Not happy with Senator Scullion’s planned changes to the Aboriginals Benefit Account: CLC delegates at the Yulara Pulka council meeting in April.

"He declined most of the recommendations of the advisory committee and has picked his own projects,” he said.

Mr Kelly said. "It should be our priorities that count, not the government’s.”

Call for native title veto right

CAPE YORK Land Council chair Richie Ah Mat wants native title holders to be able to veto development.

Mr Ah Mat said this would ensure the benefits were properly shared and help streamline negotiations over developing Australia’s north.

Mr Ah Mat told the Developing Northern Australia 2016 conference in Darwin in June that Aboriginal people could make or break the government driven northern development agenda.

He said native title holder consent should be an “ironclad, non-negotiable condition for development.”

“Consent will not be given unless there are reasonable benefits from the development for traditional owners,” Mr Ah Mat said.

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Adding a veto right to the law would give native title holders similar power over their land to that of traditional owners who hold land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT).

Northern Land Council CEO Joe Morrison earlier told the National Native Title Conference Aboriginal people were still not being treated as partners in development.

He blamed Northern Territory and federal government hostility to land councils for creating problems.

Mr Ah Mat said a veto right in the Native Title Act would improve the situation and simplify the process for investors while ensuring locals have more say over development.

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SINCE THE WAVE HILL WALK OFF

From little things big things grow

KEV CARMODY need look no further than Quintaysha Thompson for proof that his land rights anthem still rings true in Kalkaringi.

As a little thing Ms Thompson showed early promise. “She was very bright and used her initiative to have her own little discos and create her own performances,” her mum Roslyn Frith said. “I always believed that she was going to do something special with her life and would be very successful.”

Sure enough, Ms Thompson became one of the community’s first students to finish high school. Now the young mother is pursuing her Masters Degree in Public Health and works among world class researchers at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin.

She said loving what you do always makes a difference. “I also have a good routine and try not to let anything get in my way because I’m doing this for myself and my family,” she said. “I wanted my kids to achieve what I didn’t,” her mother added. “Family support is the key. If they miss out on that they won’t go anywhere.” Ms Thompson agrees. “If it wasn’t for my family’s support I wouldn’t have made it this far. With the right support anything is possible.”

Vincent Lingiari at Wattie Creek (Daguragu), Northern Territory when they had water on tap, 1977. Photo Michael Jensen. Source National Library of Australia


WAVE HILL: ‘IT’S UP TO GOVT.’

Australian Associated Press

LONDON, Tues.—The Australian Government will have to settle the land claim by Gurindji tribesmen squatting on part of the Wave Hill station lease in the Northern Territory.

The Government is building 29 homes valued at $118,000 for aboriginal area as an aboriginal reserve. Then, under new NT legislation given effect by the Governor-General recently, the Gurindji granted a long or miscellaneous lease.

Vincent Lingiari at Wattie Creek (Daguragu), Northern Territory when they had water on tap, 1977. Photo Michael Jensen. Source National Library of Australia
Land Rights

1975
Charlie Perkins and Wenten Rubuntja elected CLC’s first chair and deputy chair.

1976
The Australian parliament passes the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the CLC publishes the first issue of Land Rights News.

1978
The Warlpiri Kartangaruru-Gurindji claim becomes the CLC’s first successful land claim.

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1983
Aboriginal custodians protest against a dam that would have flooded sacred sites north of Alice Springs.

1985
Uluru Kata Tjuta is handed back to traditional owners who lease the area back to the federal government for 99 years. Patrick Dodson becomes the CLC’s first director.

1988
Wenten Rubuntja (CLC) and Galarrwuy Yunupingu (NLC) present Prime Minister Bob Hawke with the Barunga Statement calling for a treaty. Mr Hawke promises a treaty by 1990.

1993
The Australian parliament passes the Native Title Act. One year later, the CLC becomes a Native Title Representative Body.

1997
The sunset clause in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act takes effect. No more new land claims can be lodged.
1976 - 2016

2005
The Warlpiri Education and Training Trust and the Uluru Rent Money projects kick off the CLC’s community development program.
Since then, the program has helped Aboriginal groups to drive their own development by investing $58 million of their royalty, compensation and rent income in many hundreds of community projects.

2004
The CLC negotiates the joint management of 20 national parks leased back to the NT government.
Since 2012 members have invested all rent income from the park leases in community development projects.

2000
Lajamanu’s Wulaiign Rangers (now North Tanami Rangers) become the CLC’s first ranger group.
Today the CLC’s ranger program supports 10 ranger groups managing more than 300,000 square km of Indigenous Protected Area and other Aboriginal land.

2015
The CLC marks its 40th birthday with the launch of the oral history collection Every Hill Got A Story.
It celebrates winning back more than 417,000 square km of Aboriginal freehold land.

2016
A joint meeting of Territory land councils at Kalkaringi celebrates 40 years of Land Rights and half a century since the Wave Hill Walk Off.

2008
Traditional owners commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Coniston Massacre.

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FRI AUGUST 19th
9.30am
Grand Opening of National Heritage Listed
Wave Hill Walk-Off Track
11am
Land Rights March
11.30am
50th Anniversary of
Freedom Day Ceremony
BYO Picnic
3pm
Book launch - Yijarni:
True Tales from Gurindji Country
4pm
Karungkarni Art Exhibition Opening
5pm
Wajarra Dance Ceremony
7pm
Freedom Day Music Concert & Fireworks

SAT AUGUST 20th
9am
Sports Carnival Commences
Football, Basketball, Softball
Film Festival
Book Launch: A Handful of Sand
Special Guest Speakers
Frank Hardy Exhibition
Brenda Croft Exhibition
Guided Tours
Children’s Activities
Panel Discussions:
(NT Election, Collective Action,
Indigenous Health in the 21st Century)
3pm
Billy Bunter memorial trophy
Gurindji vs Lajamanu AFL
7pm
Freedom Day Music Concert

SUN AUGUST 21st
9am
Sports Carnival Commences
Football, Basketball, Softball
Church Service
Film Festival
Walk-Off Film Script
Special Guest Speakers
Frank Hardy Exhibition
Brenda Croft Exhibition
Guided Tours
Children’s Activities
Panel Discussions:
(Two Way Law, Indigenous Arts,
Indigenous Education)
7pm
Freedom Day Music Concert & Fireworks
12.30am
Festival Closes
Turnbull government denies ranger program changes, ignores good news

The Turnbull government has denied reports that it plans to radically change the Aboriginal ranger program but has kept very quiet about an independent review that confirms the program’s success.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion admitted he was reviewing the ranger program but said he had no plans to force ranger groups to only hire participants of the controversial work for the dole scheme or cut the time anyone can be a ranger.

He denied knowledge of a leaked presentation from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet published by the Crikey news web site in July that discussed a major overhaul of the program.

The presentation appeared to fly in the face of a federal government review which shows Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and Aboriginal ranger programs smashing disadvantage and creating meaningful employment in remote communities while also protecting the environment.

The review found that every dollar the federal government spent on these programs creates almost three dollars in social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits.

It also listed program benefits such as low cost land management, higher tax income and fewer welfare payments.

Other benefits included community members gaining jobs and qualifications, stronger communities and less violence.

The glowing review should have given the Turnbull government bragging rights during the federal election campaign.

Instead, it quietly buried the good news after it. They were rangers before our time and have persisted been asking for them for a very long time.

Federal Labor promised to double Aboriginal ranger jobs before it lost the July election, while the Greens went one better by committing to extend the ranger program for 15 years.

Central Land Council director David Ross said the commitments backed “one of Australia’s biggest Aboriginal success stories”.

“It’s a sound investment in our future generations, our shared environment and is a long overdue example of politicians listening to Aboriginal people when they tell them what’s working,” he said.

“Voters in remote communities, no doubt, expected more from the Prime Minister’s ‘jobs and growth’ slogan than work for the dole,” Mr Ross said.

The opposition commitments would have seen the number of ranger jobs double from the current 100 to 200 and allowed the CLC to set up ranger groups in communities that have persistently been asking for them for a very long time.

“The men and women in our group were really happy about the election announcements because if the opposition had won more of their families would have gotten proper jobs and training looking after country, together with our elders and children,” said Benji Kenny.

The co-ordinator of the CLC’sKaljukatjara rangers last year travelled to Canberra to lobby politicians for more ranger group funding.

Mr Kenny’s team of only six rangers operates on the smell of an oily rag to manage feral animals, weeds and fire across the five million hectare Katlti Petermann IPA.

Australia’s newest IPA completely surrounds and dwarfs Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park.

“Most of our kids want to be rangers when they grow up. That helps to keep them at school.”

Josephine’s double delight

IF WINNERS are grinners Josephine Grant’s trademark cheeky smile must have been twice as wide when she found out that she bagged two awards in one month.

The Central Land Council’s ranger support officer took out the award for leadership in protected areas management in the NT Rangers Awards, as well as a photography prize.

The CLC often relies on Ms Grant to co-ordinate its five northern ranger groups and nominated her for the NT Rangers Award because of her great communication skills, experience and resourcefulness.

“Josephine has been a wonderful mentor for our rangers and has built strong relationships with her colleagues and traditional owners,” CLC director David Ross said.

“She leads by example and has inspired many younger women to pursue ranger careers.”

Ms Grant, who joined Tennant Creek’s Muru-warinyi Ankkul Rangers and a helicopter, undertook ground burning and passed on knowledge of sites and country to younger people,” she said.

“The rangers also graded an old road to improve access to sites which can now be visited and managed.”
Ranger Camp

MORE THAN 80 CLC rangers took part in intensive professional development at this year’s ranger camp at Blue Bush Station, an Aboriginal cattle property north west of Tennant Creek.

The camp’s hosts, Gina and Chongy Howard, are old friends of the CLC. After working at the CLC for decades the couple now train high school students in station skills.

A group of their young VET students had a chance to watch the rangers in action as they undertook accredited training in 4WD, all terrain vehicle and chainsaw operations.

Over the three days of the camp, students observed as the rangers also learnt to identify and kill weeds and handle chemicals.

Project management and multimedia workshops were also part of the packed program.

At night ranger groups honed their presentation skills by speaking in front of everyone about their work.

“Buffel grass is a big thing. It just grows back and grows back worse”, said North Tanami ranger, Anthony Rex.

“Buffel burns hotter than most native grass. It just burns the seeds altogether so the native grass can’t grow back. Birds would have to move to another spot to find seeds,” said Anthony.

The rangers use tablet computers they call cyber trackers to record where they find threatened species, ferals and weeds.

“We can mark the areas where the weeds are so next time we can go back and see how it has gone, if we kill them off or if there is new [buffel] grass,” said Cleveland Kantawara from the Tjuwanpa ranger group.

CyberTracker is a picture-based software on the tablets that was developed in Africa. It allows expert trackers to collect GPS data and other information about plants and animals even if they have low levels of literacy.

The 10 CLC ranger groups use the tablets for anything from weed mapping and control, burning, waterhole monitoring and threatened animal surveys.

They feature maps to help them navigate country and can be used to download books in Aboriginal languages.

The rangers gave the tablets a good workout when they monitored a wetland with the traditional owners of Blue Bush.

This year’s camp kicked off with a visit by Lingiari MP Warren Snowdon, who thanked the rangers for their work and foreshadowed a Labor Party announcement about ranger funding.

(Opposition leader Bill Shorten followed up a few weeks later with a promise to double the number of ranger jobs if Labor won the July election it lost).

Next up, senior policy officer Josie Douglas facilitated the ranger forum.

A regular feature of every ranger camp, the forum is an important opportunity for the groups to share their experience about what’s working well and what needs improving.

“It would be great to do something like that at Parks [the Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC)], to see other people’s perception, see what other rangers think and if it’s working out for them” said Alex Hanley, who looks after the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Reserve.

One of three Aboriginal PWC rangers at this year’s camp, Alex said he had a great time.

“It feels more comfortable because you’re with your own people. We speak language, laugh and tease each other. ‘Culture is a big thing.’

CLC chair Francis Kelly noticed how confidently many of the rangers spoke up and praised them for looking after country.

“They’re proud of what they do and they are keen on more training,” he said.

“One thing I’m really proud of is that some of them got certificates. That is important for their communities because they teach others on the side.

“It’s not only for themselves. They take the kids out on excursions so they can experience the work and activities of ranger groups.”

Ranger groups are relatively small in size compared to the vast areas of land for which they are responsible.

Part of this daily work is the battle of controlling buffel grass.

Buffel grass is a big thing. It overgrows and takes over some of the native grass. Birds eat seeds of the native grass and buffel grass comes and kills native grass which the birds need,” said North Tanami ranger, Anthony Rex.

“It feels more comfortable because you’re with your own people. We speak language, laugh and tease each other. Culture is a big thing.”

Cleveland Kantawara, Richie Williams and Ainsley Gorey record animal tracks with the Cybertracker.
THE 2016 burning season is in full swing from the APY lands to the Tanami, thanks to some great planning earlier this year. A visit to Willie Rockhole has kicked off monthly burning trips around Kintore. The seven trips planned for this year provide casual employment for families and a chance to visit country. There are never enough cars to fit in all willing workers. Further south, Agangu elders from South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory met with ranger groups and organisations from the cross border area in Docker River to plan three collaborative burns around the vast Kajiti Petermann IPA. Country visits with the elders organised by the Kaltukatjara rangers were a highlight of this year’s Waru Committee gathering.

MURNKURRUMURNKURRU ranger Willemina Johnson from Kalkarindji has Gurindji and Warlpiri heritage and spends most of her spare time fishing. “The elders tell us stories from the Wave Hill Walk Off, an important story. This year’s 50th anniversary is a really big one. We’ll be working through the weekend. There will be a lot of people and the Northern Land Council will be meeting with the Central Land Council. Since I started with the rangers I learned about weeds, water monitoring and fencing around important springs. We’re also looking after bush graves. There were five or six different tribes living and working all over Wave Hill Station and they used to bury their deceased all over the country. They’re hard to find now but we can still find where they are buried. It’s very emotional, especially for the old people. They cry and make us feel a bit sad but we have to be strong as rangers because we’re the ones working on the grave sites.” Arltulpita Inelye ranger Barbara Petrick lives with her family at an outstation south of Atitjere, close to an important water hole.

“I learned both ways about the land and that’s what I want to do as a ranger now. To pass on what I’ve been taught by the elders to the younger generation, especially to the teenagers, getting them away from technology.”

“The inspiration and love for my land came from my grandfather, a hard working stockman and also from my grandmother, a very had working Christian lady. I learned both ways about the land and that’s what I want to do as a ranger now. To pass on what I’ve been taught by the elders to the younger generation, especially to the teenagers, getting them away from technology. I’m still learning from the elders. We took the young girls out to a sacred place where a lot of us had been taken as we went through puberty and turned into women. We teach them how to respect the land and how they are connected to the land and the relationships. Last year I took my 14 year old here. We do see differences in the teenagers when we take them back on country.”

This is my second ranger camp. I love it. When I applied I wrote that it was my dream job as a little girl. I wanted to protect my land and keep it safe, like the elders have done for thousands of years. Being a ranger is the best thing you can ever be. This is my dream job. I’ll never give up the ranger’s job for another job. You can chuck a million dollars at me, I don’t want that, because my land is more precious to me than anything else.”

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Ranger forum: groups discuss changes to the program.

Rangers check the professional development plan for the camp.

Warlpiri ranger Christine Ellis revs up her chainsaw.

Why I’m a CLC ranger

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Ranger Barbara Petrick. Photo: ABC Lateline

Ranger Barbara Petrick. Photo: ABC Lateline

Ranger Helen Wilson and Christine Ellis learn to maintain a chainsaw.

Willemina Johnson cares for bush graves.

Barbara Petrick lives with her family at an outstation south of Atitjere, close to an important water hole.

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Willemina Johnson cares for bush graves.
“IT IS WITH immeasurable sadness that we write to let people know that Napangardi died peacefully last night in her beloved home town of Yuendumu. She was much loved by all of us. We will all miss her and her formidable talent very much.” Warlukurlangu Artists Facebook message, May 18, 2016

Judy Napangardi Watson was indeed formidable. I first met her at Yuendumu sometime in 2005.

She was tiny – perhaps all of five feet tall, with stove-pipe legs and arms and an elfin face, but you took her on at your peril.

Napangardi was born around 1925 at Yarungkanji on Mount Doreen Station, west of Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert. Her ancestral country was far to the west at Mina Mina, the subject of and inspiration for many of her paintings.

Not long after she started painting in the mid-1980s she developed her distinctive style of painting using contrasting bands of colour with heavily textured surfaces worked in a vigorous “dragged dotting” style.

Napangardi was a colourist almost without match. The best of her canvases are exemplars of the vivid and explosive use of colour adopted by many artists working at Warlukurlangu – a Warlpiri word for a “place of fire” just west of Yuendumu.

In 2004 Gloria Morales, who’d trained as a curator at the National Gallery in Canberra, joined Warlukurlangu and helped to refine Napangardi’s use of colour beyond what had been a relatively limited palette.

Soon Napangardi was mixing her own colours and helping to explode the myth that, as curator Judith Ryan put it, “Indigenous art is concerned only with colours of earth and desert.”

Author and former Lajamanu school principal Christine Nicholls wrote that the availability of new colours afforded Warlpiri artists “a means of innovation, enabling them to expand their repertoire in their contemporary visual re-creations of country.

“Many Warlpiri, like Judy and her late sister Maggie Napangardi, elected to use the wildest, most inventive of palettes to represent their country and as a means of re-affirming their relationship with it. Artists like Judy and Maggie Napangardi have therefore frequently made use of bands of bright colour as a means of activating the surface of their canvases to create an illusion of motion, so important as a means of simulating body painting and depicting Warlpiri narratives of travel through large tracts of country, and particularly necessary to portray the Women’s Dreaming with accuracy.”

Success, however it is measured, always comes with a price though and for Napangardi, support of her very extended family meant that on occasion she was literally hit upon. She was also pressured to participate in the sweat-shop art trade in Alice Springs.

Cecilia Alfonso, manager of Warlukurlangu Artists, says many, if not most of Napangardi’s works for sale online, are fakes that she had minimal involvement in making.

Often she was posed for a photo holding a painting made by someone else “in her style”. Alfonso warns potential buyers to carefully check the provenance of any paintings attributed to Napangardi, and indeed many central Australian artists, that are offered online.

Napangardi was more than just an artist and an impressively supportive champion of family and clan. She was also a formidable hunter. As Alfonso told me: “When we would go hunting the other ladies would come back with one goanna. Judy would come back with six fat ones and a cheeky grin.”

By Bob Gosford
Vale Kunmanara Baker, dignified genius who left lasting treasures

KUNMANARA BAKER was a person of great dignity and good sense, and a genius as an artist and creative maker. She passed away on the 17th of April and will be missed greatly by family and friends, colleagues and admirers.

Kunmanara was born on the 13th of November 1943 at Pukatja (Ernabella), on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY) in South Australia.

Her mother’s country is near Wingellina in Western Australia and her father’s near Kanpi in South Australia. Kunmanara was a traditional owner for Uluru Kata Tjuta.

She attended the Ernabella Mission School set up in 1940 by the Presbyterian Board of Missions and began working in the art centre or ‘craft room’ as it was first known, while still at school.

From 1963 she worked there continuously as a fulltime artist until she moved to Alice Springs for dialysis treatment in 2002.

Kunmanara did not marry but ‘grew up’ three daughters of close family.

She was chairperson of Ernabella Arts from 1994 to 2003 and later continued her contribution as Anangu Mayatja [manager], assisting the art centre coordinator.

Her lifelong friendship with the late Deaconess Winifred Hilliard, craft room advisor of 32 years at Ernabella, was seminal.

Hilliard recognised immediately that Kunmanara had unusual ability and imagination and gave her every encouragement and opportunity to explore a wider world.

Kunmanara was also a long serving member of the Pukatja Community Council, helped to found the APY artists’ advocacy body KU Arts and was an active member of NPY Women’s Council from its beginnings.

In 2000 Kunmanara was part of the group of women who performed the Seven Sisters Inma [ceremony] during the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games.

The Ernabella Choir, of which she was also a founding member, was close to Kunmanara’s heart. She performed with it around Australia and in Fiji.

In Alice Springs she regularly attended the Flynn Memorial Church and sang there enthusiastically until the end of her life.

Kunmanara made her living as a professional artist in a career spanning 50 unbroken years as one of Australia’s most gifted contemporary Aboriginal creators.

She worked first with textile and fibre, making hand spun and hand woven fabrics of superior quality.

She provided the original urula [designs] for the hand pulled woven floor rugs which she and the other young Ernabella artists made, which are now collectors’ items.

When batik, the Javanese technique for decorating cloth using wax and dye, was introduced to the Ernabella artists in 1971 Kunmanara became a leading exponent.

She produced countless original works on cotton and silk including scarves and clothing.

In 1975 she visited Indonesia with two other Ernabella artists to refine her technique at the Jogjakarta Batik Institute, and later gave batik workshops at the National Museum of Ethnology at Osaka, Japan.

Her first print on paper was editioned in Osaka.

As a print maker, from 1983 she created many limited edition prints on paper using solar and metal plate etching, lithographic and linocut techniques.

Her two different print images of the Minyma Mulilanga [the woman Malila] story are superb works.

One of the sites associated with this story is close to her father’s country and she enjoyed taking people to see the ererie underground cave where this particular mamu [evil spirit] lived.

Both prints are in national collections.

Kunmanara worked as a ceramicist from 1998, first at the JamFactory workshops in Adelaide and from 2003 in the Ernabella Arts ceramic studio.

She used underglaze decoration on a variety of vases, platters and bowl forms and pioneered a variation on the ‘lost wax’ batik technique using a tjantji [applicator] and wax to decorate terracotta forms.

As a young painter she produced jewel-like small works in gouache on paper and as a mature artist she moved to major acrylic works on canvas.

Kunmanara created five original designs for a suite of terracotta platters, which were mass produced and sold nationally under the Adelaide JamFactory label.

Her series of fabric designs, screen printed at Ernabella, were landmark achievements that were both commercially successful and collected by major institutions.

After moving to Alice Springs Kunmanara collaborated with fellow ceramicist Robin Best. Their work - Settlement - was shown at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum in 2005. Writing a Painting was a keynote exhibition at the 2006 Adelaide Festival of Arts.

Alongside her use of Western materials she also adapted her own cultural practices.

In Alice Springs she made some of the most refined and sophisticated tjapin [woven grass] baskets, carved and painted woodwork decorated punu [wooden artefacts], hand spun woolen mukata [beanies and other head coverings], as well as art on a string: hand painted and threaded gum nuts and iinti [bean tree seeds], liriku [necklaces] and minaku [bracelets].

Kunmanara had a profound influence on everyone who knew her. She set the highest standards for herself in her work and her life, and quietly without judgement, expected it of others.

A great teacher, she patiently and carefully showed younger artists the new, Western, art making techniques.

Kunmanara moved gracefully in two worlds. The great works she created from the fusion of these worlds of her lived experience are a lasting treasure.

By Hilary Furlong
Wave Hill station lives on in song and dance

KALKARINDJI community will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk Off with traditional songs and dances performed half a century ago.

The performances are part of a language project trying to keep the ceremonies of one of the defining periods of the land rights movement alive.

Elders Ronnie Wave Hill Wirrpa Jangala and Toppy Dodd Ngarnjal learnt them as children on Wave Hill Station.

The two senior ceremonial hosts, both in their late 70s, are the only people left who remember some of the older songs.

“The Mungamunga [spirit women] gave my jawiiji [mother’s father] the Freedom Day Wajarra [ceremonies],” said Samuel Smiler, the granddaughter of one of the ceremonies’ composers.

“We sing them on Freedom Day for kids and adults to dance to and to show kartipa [white people] our culture. It makes me feel proud and happy when I watch them dancing.”

The songs tell stories about the lives of Gurindji people who worked at the station - owned at the time by British Lord William Vestey - before they left the protest against poor conditions in 1966.

Gurindji elders feel a sense of urgency about passing their knowledge on to children in the community.

“When they’re grown big, we mob might have passed away, you know?” Ms Dodd Ngarnjal said.

“We’re just learning the young girls to know culture.”

Elder Violet Wadrill said: “We’ve got to help the community record more than 80 Gurindji songs, including public ceremonial songs and private women’s songs.

She said most songs dated back to the 1940s and 1950s - including a song called ‘Freedom Day’. Although Wave Hill Station has become known for its brutal treatment of Aboriginal station workers, it was also a meeting place of cultures.

Station workers from many different language groups travelled a lot between cattle stations, teaching the Gurindji songs from across a vast region.

“Wave Hill station was a real hub of multiculturalism - we’re finding songs in Mudburra, we’re finding songs in Nyininy, so songs coming from the west, songs coming from the east and songs from the north and Warlpiri songs coming from the south,” Dr Meakins said.

She believes performing ceremonies in the evenings made the harsh station life more bearable.

“Many of these songs have never been heard by a lot of adults in the community. These songs probably haven’t been performed for a long time,” Dr Turpin said.

The songs are being recorded on DVDs and in a film for the community. A documentary about the project will air on NITV later this year.

Oral history book brings Gurindji stories to life

WHEN AUSTRALIANS hear ‘Gurindji’ most think about Vincent Lingiari leading the workers and their families from Wave Hill Station, 50 years ago this August.

The 1966 Wave Hill Walk Off helped to bring on the equal wages case in the pastoral industry and Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory.

Much fewer would know about the time before the walk off - the decades of massacres, stolen children and other abuses of power by the early settlers.

Yijarni: True Stories from Gurindji Country is one of the first books to bring these tales to life in the words of Gurindji elders.

To be launched by singer Dan Sultan during this year’s Freedom Day Festival, the Gurindji oral history book also tells tales of co-operation, with many funny anecdotes of every day life, and fascinating stories of life in the bush before Europeans arrived.

Ronnie Wave Hill said he was telling stories handed down to him by his father and his grandfathers.

“They told me ‘keep these stories here and pass them on to anyone, whitefellas and all. Tell the stories! Don’t keep them to yourself!’ So it’s true what I’m telling you here, it’s still true today.”

The oral histories are accompanied by historical and contemporary photos, paintings, police records, newspapers, biographies of early settlers and other published oral histories of the Victoria River District.

“Tell the stories! Don’t keep them to yourself!”

Yijarni: True Stories from Gurindji Country

Edited by Erika Charrapa and Felicity Meakins

“Powerful and compelling; essential reading for anyone with an interest in the history of modern Australia.”

Henry Reynolds, Historian

Midnight Oil frontman and former federal education minister Peter Garrett said that even though the Wave Hill Walk Off was a seminal moment in Australia’s history Gurindji voices have been notably absent.

“Up to now, few Gurindji voices have been heard, especially on the period preceding the walk off. The ‘new’ history contained here does much to fill the chasm in our understanding of the circumstances preceding that fateful moment when Lingiari and Gurindji stood their ground,” he said.

“I highly commend this intimate, heart wrenching, and informative account of one of the single most important events in our recent past.”

Yijarni: True Stories from Gurindji Country

Aboriginal Studies Press
http://goo.gl/XesuOq
MEMBERS of the Central Land Council will be the first to choose a winner from the art works shortlisted for the Vincent Lingiari Art Award.

Between them, Aboriginal artists from the CLC region and beyond submitted one work for every year of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, which celebrates its 40th birthday this year.

Judges Brenda Croft and Stephen Gilchrist have put together a shortlist from collaborative works and creations by individual artists in a range of media. Land Rights News Central Australia has published a sneak peak of a few entries below.

The CLC delegates will vote for the $2,000 Delegates’ Choice Award when they gather in Kalkaringi in August to celebrate the anniversary with the other Territory land councils.

But they’ll have to be a little patient to find out who has won the main $15,000 prize.

A closely guarded secret, the winner of the Vincent Lingiari Art Award will be chosen by art curator Hetti Perkins.

Charlie Perkins’ daughter Hetti will chose the winner of the main prize.

Desart and the Central Land Council will announce the winner at the opening of the Our Land Our Life Our Future exhibition at Tangentyere Artists Gallery in Alice Springs on the 7th of September, leading into a packed weekend of Desert Mob events.

The choice of exhibition venue is a nod to the important role town campers played in the early days of the land rights history.

The exhibition, which will run for a month, is also an opportunity for Aboriginal workers from Desart member centres to gain on the job experience in all aspects of curatorial practice.

The CLC and Desart created the award to commemorate the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Still the high water mark when it comes to Aboriginal rights in Australia, the law was passed in 1976, one year after traditional owners elected Hetti’s dad, the late Charlie Perkins, as the first CLC chair.

Financial support from the Peter Kittle Motor Company and Newmont Australia made the award and the exhibition possible.

Picking winners in the Vincent Lingiari Art Award

Vincent Namatjira’s painting pays homage to his namesake, who “made Australia and the politicians sit up and hear the truth about this country: that this land belongs to us and it also owns us.”

Margaret Boko painted a land rights demonstration: “We all marched through town, biggest mob of Aboriginal people, while all the whitefellas locked themselves in their houses. We was angry! We was sick of all that humbug from whitefellas, just telling stories about who owns country. We always knew who owned it! We always knew where we belonged. And in the end, government said so too when they made that new piece of paper [the Aboriginal Land Rights Act].”

Dianne Ungukalpi Golding’s work Helicopter chasing camels celebrates Aboriginal rangers. “The rangers use the helicopters to muster the camels into yards. The camels are then herded onto big trucks and into town for meat.”

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Canada adopts United Nations Indigenous Rights Declaration

CANADA has agreed to support, without qualification, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett said the decision means the new Canadian government will adopt and implement the declaration in accordance with the Canadian constitution.

At the time of the announcement, Ms Bennett said the decision is “an important step in the vital work of reconciliation. Adopting and implementing the Declaration means that we will be breathing life into Section 35 of Canada’s constitution, which provides a full box of rights for indigenous peoples.”

The minister also said Canada will work with indigenous groups on how to implement the principles of the declaration including engagement with provinces and territories to advance the vital work of reconciliation with indigenous peoples in the country.

Canada’s Human Rights Commission welcomed it as an important moment in the nation’s history.

“The commission applauds Canada for its decision to adopt and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within the laws of Canada,” chief commissioner Marie-Claude Landry said.

“This important moment in history is a key step towards supporting and rebuilding the nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples. “Canada’s decision to acknowledge the unique and inherent rights of Canada’s indigenous peoples sends a strong message to Canadians and the world. It will contribute to reconciliation and help to set out a path to eliminate individual and systemic discrimination facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada.”

The former conservative Canadian government, along with the former conservative Australian government of John Howard were joined by the United States and New Zealand as the only four countries to vote against the declaration in 2007.

Australia’s Labor government reversed that decision in 2009. At the time, Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner, Mick Gooda, said, “The declaration is comprehensive and as you go through this document you will see the 46 articles provide guidance for every aspect of our lives.

“It is only when we can see these articles being translated from abstract concepts to practical improvements in our lives that the spirit and intent of the declaration will be realised. “The declaration is the most comprehensive tool we have available to advance the rights of indigenous peoples,” he said.

The declaration describes both the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples around the world.

“Canada’s decision to acknowledge the unique and inherent rights of Canada’s indigenous peoples sends a strong message to the world.”

Vietnam’s ‘hill tribes’ fight for rights and against poverty

OFFICIALLY at least, they don’t exist.

The Vietnamese government prefers to call the indigenous people living in the country’s northern and central highland minority groups.

Tourists know them as hill tribes or montagnards [mountain people].

International human rights organisations say some of the estimated 50 minority groups that make up around 14 per cent of Vietnam’s population of 90 million face state persecution.

They campaign for the groups’ recognition and for their rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Both Vietnam and Australia have signed up to the UN declaration and have been subjected to international criticism for their treatment of their indigenous peoples.

The UN declaration includes the right of indigenous people to be educated in their indigenous mother tongues.

But the languages of groups such as the Red Dao, Dega and Kimer Krom are not taught in Vietnamese schools.

“The government has outlawed the use of tribal languages in schools.”

It covers co-operative relationships between indigenous peoples and states, the United Nations, and other international organisations, based on the principles of equality, partnership, good faith and mutual respect.

It addresses the rights of indigenous peoples on issues such as culture, identity, religion, language, health, education and community.

A United Nations declaration is not legally binding however, unlike a treaty or a covenant, and they are not signed or ratified by states.

Declarations only represent political commitment from the states that adopt them.

We can learn from projects in Papua New Guinea because there are indigenous groups dealing with mining on their land.”

“Or from Afghanistan, another desert country where women are often left out of decision making and which made real progress on including women in community driven development,” she said.

Mr Ross has taken a step towards greater international collaboration.

Indigenous children around Sapa help their families to survive by selling handicrafts to tourists.
Justice for activists incomplete without land rights: UN

ONE INDIGENOUS person was killed almost every week last year because of their environmental activism. That’s 40 percent of the 116 people killed for such protests, according to the anti corruption organisation Global Witness.

All around the world, indigenous people are murdered, raped and kidnapped when their lands fall in the path of deforestation, mining and construction.

The murder of Honduran indigenous woman Berta Cáceres is only too familiar to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the United Nation’s Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“We shouldn’t forget that the death of Berta is because of the protest that she had against the destruction of the territory of her people,” Tauli-Corpuz told the Inter Press Service.

Caceres, who was murdered at the beginning of March, had long known her life was in danger. She experienced violence and intimidation as a leader of the Lenca people of Rio Blanco who protested the construction of the Agua Zarca dam on the traditional lands.

Caceres’ activism received international recognition, including through the 2015 Goldman Prize, however this was not enough to protect her.

She knew she was going to die, she had even written her own obituary, said Tauli-Corpuz who met with Caceres during a visit to Honduras in 2015. Four men were arrested in relation to Caceres death.

Tauli-Corpuz has witnessed accounts of violence against many other indigenous activists around the world.

Their experiences have startling similarity. Indigenous peoples are subjected to rape, murder and kidnap, whenever they stand in the way of access to lands or natural resources.

“You cannot delink the fight of indigenous people for their lands, territories and resources from the violence that’s committed against indigenous women (and men), especially if this is a violence that is perpetrated by state authorities or by corporate security,” said Tauli-Corpuz.

She also said that a look at the bigger picture reveals the increasingly international nature of the problems experienced by indigenous peoples.

“A very crucial part of the problems that indigenous peoples face is that many of the things happening in their communities are happening because of the investments that are coming in from these richer countries,” she said.

“You see a situation where the state is meant to be the main duty bearer for protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, but at the same time you see investors having strong rights being protected and that is really where a lot of conflicts come up,” she said.

Tauli-Corpuz also noted that for Indigenous peoples, justice is incomplete if their lands are protected but they are denied access to them.

(‘The land) is the source of their identities, their cultures and their livelihoods,” she said. If the forest is preserved but people are kicked off their lands, “then that’s another problem that has to be protected at all costs”.

In other cases, indigenous peoples are forced off their lands when their food sources are destroyed. Tauli-Corpuz said that it is important to remember that indigenous peoples are contributing to environmental solutions for challenges such as climate change by continuing their traditional ways of forest and ecosystem management.

Ancient DNA shows settlers wiped out early Americans

RESEARCH that may change how we study the impact of settlers on Aboriginal Australians has confirmed that European colonisation devastated America’s first peoples.

The research is the first large scale study of ancient DNA from early American people and was led by the University of Adelaide’s Australian Centre for Ancient DNA (ACAD).

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is a molecule (building block of cells) that carries most of the genetic information about the growth, development, function and reproduction of all beings.

Researchers reconstructed a genetic history of indigenous American populations by looking at the DNA of human remains aged between 500 and 8,600 years – before the Spaniard Christopher Columbus ‘discovered’ America.

The study shows that modern indigenous Americans have none of the genetic lines found in the ancient remains.

This suggests that these lines died out after the Spanish arrived in the late 1400s.

For around 2400 to 9000 years the small group of founding people was isolated on the land bridge. This long isolation brewed the unique genetic diversity observed in the early Americans, according to the researchers.

They believe the methods used in the South American study could be applied to research into the first Australians and what happened to them following European settlement.

Suicidal thoughts by 1 in 5

A new study which enlisted the help of almost 18,000 Britons has found that one in five people are struggling with suicidal thoughts.

The study, by mental health charity Mind, found that one in five people have had suicidal thoughts at some stage of their life.

One in four employees also said that feelings of suicide are a problem at work.

Mind chief executive Paul Farmer said: “We are under no illusion that mental health problems are on the rise. It is essential that we help people find the support system which is currently not available to them.”

August 2016

Berta Cáceres. Photo: Goldman Environmental Prize

The DNA of the Duncela [maiden] Incan mummy, found in Argentina in 1999, was used in the study. Photo: Johan Reinhard

Surprisingly, none of the genetic lineages we found in almost 100 ancient humans were present, or showed evidence of descendants, in today’s indigenous populations,” says joint lead author Dr Bastien Llamas, Senior Research Associate with ACAD.

“This separation appears to have been established as early as 9,000 years ago and was completely unexpected, so we examined many demographic scenarios to try and explain the pattern.”

“Shortly after the initial colonisation, populations were established that subsequently stayed geographically isolated from one another and a major portion of these populations later became extinct following European contact.

This closely matches the historical reports of a major demographic collapse immediately after the Spaniards arrived.

The research team used bone and teeth samples from 92 mainly South American pre-contact mummies and skeletons to study their maternal genetic lines.

The ancient people they studied came during the last Ice Age from Asia over a land bridge between the Asian and American continents.

“The first Americans entered around 16,000 years ago via the Pacific coast, skirting around the massive ice sheets that blocked an inland corridor route,” says Professor Alan Cooper, Director of ACAD.

“They spread southward remarkably swiftly, reaching southern Chile by 14,600 years ago.”

During the ice age global sea levels dropped as much as 100-150 metres, revealing the floor of the Bering Sea and creating a connection of land between Alaska and Siberia. Source: The New York Times.

Berta Cáceres - 1973 - 2016

TAKE ACTION. “WE HAVE NO OTHER SPARE OR REPLACEMENT PLANET WE HAVE ONLY THIS ONE, AND WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTION.”

Berta Cáceres - Goldman Environmental Prize

The DNA of the Duncela [maiden] Incan mummy, found in Argentina in 1999, was used in the study. Photo: Johan Reinhard
Mighty Roosters kick goals for ‘No More’

Into the breach stepped the traditional owners of the Nolan’s Bore mine, who chose the club as one of 12 community development projects to benefit from income from the proposed rare earths mine.

“We want to stand behind mums, daughters, sisters and grandmothers. Good to support them for a change,” coach Scrutton said.

He said there are early signs that the players and fans have taken the No More message to heart.

“The young fellas involved are not seen fighting on the football field or outside.”

The Nolan’s Bore project began when traditional owners decided to spend $360,000 of their mining exploration compensation on community projects, with support from the CLC’s community development unit.

The working group chose the Central Desert Regional Council to manage the footy project.
The cross border Waru Committee met at Kaltukatjara. The CLC’s fire project has supported it since 2011.

Vincent Lingiari’s granddaughter Desley Rogers (left) brought her family to the CLC’s April council meeting.

Juanita Rogers and baby James from Bamboo Springs.

Rangers Lisa Rex and Shirley Lewis camped together at Blue Bush.

Rangers and VET students had a ball.

Blue Bush Station’s VET students felt right at home at the ranger camp.

Information services officer Kymberley Ellis shares out the cakes to celebrate eDIS, the CLC’s new electronic data management system.

David Ross congratulates CLC records officer Teresa McCarthy on winning the 2016 Loris Williams Memorial Scholarship which includes mentoring from a professional archivist.

Gina and Chongy Howard from Blue Bush Station were the fabulous hosts of this year’s CLC ranger camp.

CLC chair Francis Kelly farewells Danielle Campbell and Amiuus Lennie.

Trephina Presley and her baby Kealan.
I bin working out there all my life at Wave Hill Station, Jinparrak. After our boss he got crippled ankle, he went to Darwin and he sit there for a couple of week. Then Dexter Daniels, from Roper, run into him in Darwin and Dexter Daniels bin ask question of Vincent Lingiari. ‘How Vetsey bin treating all you mob at Wave Hill Station?’

We bin work, work, work until Vincent Lingiari came back from Darwin. Old Vincent, my brother-in-law, get us and have a meeting in camp and Vincent said, ‘I got a good news. Tomorrow we going to walk up to the manager and tell that manager, “we finished from Wave Hill Station, we walk off from Wave Hill Station”. Because kartiya [whitefellas] never give us fair go, that’s why we bin walk off from Wave Hill Station.

Then next morning they bin load up and get all the swag and everything and follow the fence line right up to Gordy Creek. Little bit of water was there, and then we came from there right to Victoria River Downs. And when we get on that old crossing out there, then a lot of bloke come up and ask us to go back and work on the station, but old Vincent said to them, ‘No, we had enough with all you mob now, we bin working real hard with all you mob, but never get pay. We only bin work for tea, flour and sugar, and sick of tobacco, that’s all.’

~ Jimmy Wave Hill ~

Excerpt from Every hill got a story

“BECAUSE KARTIYA NEVER GIVE US FAIR GO, THAT’S WHY WE BIN WALK OFF FROM WAVE HILL STATION.”