

Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of the Department of Indigenous Affairs newsletter. After many years of publishing *Tarwagin*, our stakeholders have told us they would like more in-depth stories about Aboriginal leaders, successful programs and partnerships.

We now publish the newsletter quarterly and it will still be sent to you in an online format, that can be printed easily.

In this edition we examine the work of DIA's new on-the-ground Chief Operating Officer and some of the great things primary and secondary students are doing as PALS projects and DIA's sponsorship of the One Movement for Music scholarship.

We're looking forward to bringing you more inspiring stories of achievement and I encourage you to share these with your friends and colleagues. If you have any ideas for news, please contact our Public Affairs team 9235 8000.

Patrick Walker
DIRECTOR GENERAL

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Blackstone MFPF officially opened

WA Police, the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) officially opened the Blackstone Multi-Functional Police Facility (MFPF) last month.

Blackstone is a Central Desert community between Jameson and Wingellina. There are about 520 permanent residents living in the three communities.

The MFPF will also accommodate officers from the Department of Child Protection and the Department of Attorney General.

DIA Director General Patrick Walker said the Blackstone MFPF was the first of three such facilities to be established under a Memorandum of Understanding between FaHCSIA and DIA.

"The Commonwealth Government allocated \$20 million for capital works, DIA program-managed its construction and the Western Australian Government will fund its ongoing operating costs," he said.

"Through this collaborative effort with the Indigenous residents, Western Australia is investing in safe and secure communities, an essential aspect of closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage."





Students empowered to promote Reconciliation

Students and educators from throughout the metropolitan area gathered to celebrate Reconciliation and learn more about Indigenous culture at the PALS Ambassador Workshop.

Guest speakers included the first full-time and first Aboriginal Magistrate in the Children's Court of WA, Dr Sue Gordon AM, PALS Program Ambassador Troy Cook and Western Australian Youth of the Year Leadership Award Winner Thierra Clanton.

PALS (Partnership, Acceptance, Learning, Sharing) is an initiative of the Department of Indigenous Affairs in partnership with BHP Billiton that encourages young Western Australians to develop projects that promote and advance Reconciliation.

Nearly 40 secondary students and 19 educators attended the Ambassador Workshop, and all came away with an array of ideas on practical Reconciliation and verve to put these into action.

Department of Indigenous Affairs Director General Patrick Walker said the focus of the day was to get students to start thinking about turning the concept of Reconciliation into action.

"They gained leadership skills and greatly improved their understanding about Indigenous culture.

"This will help these students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to become ambassadors for Reconciliation in the community."

There were a range of activities organised for students to participate in, including a Question and Answer panel featuring Dr Gordon and Ms Clanton.

Mr Walker and Vice President Sustainability BHP Billiton Iron Ore Carl Binning spoke at the workshop and Noongar Elder Marie Taylor offered a Welcome to Country.



Top Left: Students enjoy the PALS Ambassador workshop. Top Right: Director General Patrick Walker with Thierra Clanton and BHP Vice President Sustainability Carl Binning.



On the ground – Chief Operating Officer Brian Wilkinson

With the Department's new focus on coordinating the services of other agencies where they directly affect Indigenous people, the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, chaired by the Department of Indigenous Affairs' Director General, Patrick Walker, has created a new position of Chief Operating Officer.

The Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee comprises the Directors General of Departments of Education, Training, Health, Child Protection, Housing, Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance and the Western Australian Police Service, and is charged with implementing practical improvements to the social and physical infrastructure of remote Aboriginal communities.

With three specific areas of focus – Armadale, Roebourne and Oombulgurri – the Chief Operating Officer role is all about rolling up the shirtsleeves and fixing things.

Chief Operating Officer Brian Wilkinson comes armed with 28 years experience as a police officer, much of that served in Aboriginal communities.

Brian's experience has included key roles in the delivery of policing in the Kimberley, with responsibility for planning, performance and evaluation in areas like child abuse, domestic violence and alcohol-related crime.

The role is extremely hands-on, with a lot of community consultation. This means that solutions put forward are at only one remove from the community, and need to reflect community needs and concerns.

This is quite a departure from action models used in the past, with the eight Directors General to whom Brian reports, prepared to embrace new ways to achieve results.

One Movement Music Scholarship

In October, One Movement for Music Perth (OMFM) announced the final winner of the Australian Indigenous Music Scholarship. Victoria's Lee Morgan was proclaimed the winner in front of 7,500 festival-goers at the One Movement Showcase Music Festival.

Department of Indigenous Affairs Director General Patrick Walker congratulated Lee on his selection as the scholarship recipient. "The opportunities the One Movement for Music scholarship brings are the sort most musicians can only dream about. I wish Lee the very best of luck making the most of this brilliant kick-start to his career," Mr Walker said.

As the scholarship winner Lee will receive major development opportunities including the chance to record a full album with a professional producer and

manufacturing, distribution and marketing. Album distribution is supported by Skinnyfish Music and MGM Distribution.

Lee was chosen from five Indigenous artists/bands by a selection panel that included Mark Grose (Managing Director, Skinnyfish Music and manager of Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu), Alan Pigram (Pigram Brothers), Shane Howard (Goanna Music) and Rhoda Roberts (Artistic Director The Dreaming Festival).

As part of its commitment to fostering new talent, OMFM, in partnership with the Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs, founded the Australian Indigenous Music Scholarship. State winners for this ground-breaking program for Australian Indigenous musicians included: Western Australia – Thaylia Skopellos, Queensland – Max Judo, New South Wales – Brothabblack, Victoria – Lee Morgan and South Australia – The MERRg. Each act performed at the One Movement Showcase Music Festival and received studio mentorship by a professional producer.



Top left: Derbarl Yerrigan Committee Chair Richard Wilkes accepts the grant to help build the Yagan Memorial Park from the Premier Colin Barnett.
Right Photo: Dancers perform at the Lotterywest breakfast before the grant presentation.

Yagan Memorial Park

Earlier this year, representatives of 10 recipients were invited to attend a breakfast presentation of Lotterywest funding at Government House in Perth.

As a partner in the Yagan Memorial Park project, the Department of Indigenous Affairs sent some representatives to support project proponents the City of Swan, who also represented the Derbarl Yerrigan Committee for the reburial of Yagan's Kaat (head).

The grant provided by Lotterywest will go a long way to the works needed to build a place of peace, remembering and contemplation in Middle Swan.

The Yagan Memorial Park will provide some healing for more than 170 years of grief for the Noongar people.

It is generally accepted that Yagan was killed in 1833 at a site now delineated as Lot 39 West Swan Road, Belhus.

Yagan's head was severed at the scene of his death, preserved by smoking, and later sent to Great Britain as a curio and artefact.

After many years of negotiations, Yagan's kaat was returned to Western Australia, and all that remains is to bury his head according to local lore and tradition.

The Yagan Memorial Park is planned to open to the public for remembrance and contemplation in 2010.



Desert Knowledge

True to its commitment to improving life opportunities for Indigenous Western Australians, the Department of Indigenous Affairs has formed a partnership with the Remote Economic Participation Cooperative Research Centre.

Formerly known as Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, the Centre is tilting its operations to focus more fully on economic participation in remote Australia.

The partnership includes the commitment of half of a staff position to the Centre for four years. This won't necessarily be a single person, it might involve rotation of several staff from across the Department working with the centre's staff.

The partnership will help build the knowledge, skills and networks of the assigned staff-members.

It will also better align the design and delivery of policy and programs with new and existing research.

Toad busting in the East Kimberley

A program to try to stem the advance of cane toads from the east has been recognised for its Reconciliation efforts.

The Kimberley Toad Busters group runs a program that incorporates Indigenous youth catching toads two or three nights every week.

It also has connections with a number of local Aboriginal corporations and community groups, members of which take teams out toad-busting anywhere there is a need.

At each toad busting session volunteers share a healthy meal and learn about the environment and the impact of the toads.

The Kimberley Toad Busters were delighted to have a film crew from the Living Black television show join them in the field.

Some of the mums, Community Elders and teachers came along for the filming at Newry Station, just across the border in the Northern Territory, with 67 people working in teams to catch toads.

Three quarters of the crew were Indigenous, and most of those were children aged 3 to 18

Kimberley Toad Busters Field Coordinator Ben Scott-Virtue said the most wonderful thing about the program is that the sessions include crew members from all walks of life.

"We'll have kids who have a pretty sad home life catching toads alongside doctors and other professionals, and it gives everyone a focus away from the negative aspects of the community," he said.

"Toad-busting is a great way to promote community building and understanding, and it gives people a way to get out and away from the crime and their sad home lives."



Department of Indigenous Affairs
Expert Judge Mary Cowley presents
Eugene Eades with his prize



Indigenous Service Award

This is the second year the Department of Indigenous Affairs has sponsored the Indigenous Service Award, one of the Regional Achievement and Community Awards.

Up from 11 entries last year, the judges had a tough time choosing the finalists and winner from 18 submissions this year.

This year's winner is Eugene Eades of Albany.

Employed by Greening Australia as the South Coast Caring for Country project officer for Gondwana Link, Mr Eades provides cultural awareness training and mentoring for project officers and other Natural Resource Management staff as well as educational institutions and the broader community.

Mr Eades is the integral link between the Noongar community and Natural Resource Management staff and said he found it empowering to be back on the land.

The other finalists were the Avon Valley Catchment Council and the Eastern Goldfields YMCA.

Business Development Round Table

As a step towards halving the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Western Australians, the Department of Indigenous Affairs convened an Aboriginal Business Development Round Table recently.

The Aboriginal business representatives were charged with identifying how State Government procurement can be improved to better support Aboriginal business development.

This will include identifying the critical issues impacting on Aboriginal businesses including the factors that prevent new and existing business development and focusing on successful business development strategies such as AusAid's method of contracting in countries where aid projects are undertaken.

The group will also look at identifying "quick wins" that create traction and enable Aboriginal businesses to compete and increase employment opportunities from Government projects that provide limited tender notice such as the East Kimberley Development Package.

The group explored these issues and made several recommendations including the development of an Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and establishing an Aboriginal procurement advisory within the Department of Treasury and Finance to help boost opportunities for Aboriginal corporations to supply Government.

These recommendations will be incorporated into a working paper which will be used to pursue the aim of halving the employment gap.

Aboriginal seniors learn more sports and make new friends

Recently, the Aboriginal Senior's Activity and Information Day brought together more than 100 Aboriginal seniors from across the metropolitan area to keep active and have fun.

Held at the Champion Centre, Aboriginal people over the age of 45 were encouraged to try carpet bowls, exercise to music, Nintendo Wii Fit, seated hockey, skittles and were treated to a hearty, healthy lunch.

The Seniors' Recreation Council of Western Australia, supported by the Departments of Indigenous Affairs and Sport and Recreation runs the event quarterly to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

President Hugh Rogers said these free events provided opportunities for Aboriginal people to socialise while keeping fit and healthy.

"The Council has a strong emphasis on observing Aboriginal cultural protocols and has strongly encouraged those involved to participate in other events," Mr Rogers said.

"Getting Aboriginal seniors together is an important step in forging new friendships and keeping active, which can be increasingly difficult as we get older."

Department of Indigenous Affairs Director General, Patrick Walker was enthusiastic in his support of these events.

"This year's NAIDOC theme was about honouring Elders and nurturing youth, and it is programs such as the Aboriginal Seniors' Information and Activity Days that give Aboriginal seniors the opportunity to participate in such worthwhile community events," Mr Walker said.

The Aboriginal History Research Unit also hosted a stall offering information to people wishing to gain access to family records and view photographs.

A simple choice - Executive Director Cliff Weeks

Cliff Weeks joined the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) as the new Executive Director, responsible for regional outcomes and overseeing the activities of DIA's seven regional offices. Cliff is the youngest of the four new Executive Directors and is one of the youngest senior staff in the public sector.

When asked how he fits in the new Executive team he responds that they are all very different people with complementary but individual skill sets.

"We are a very dynamic team.

"We are all very different and yet our intent is the same.

"While it sounds clichéd it's also true, that we all want to use our skills to make a positive improvement for Aboriginal people."

It is interesting to listen to Cliff talk so candidly about the reaction of his contemporaries when he told them he was coming to DIA.

"It is no secret that DIA has had some challenges in the past.

"However for the last year, under the leadership of

Director General, Patrick Walker things are beginning to change - change fast and for the better."

Cliff is originally from Geraldton but has been based in Perth for the last 15 years. He has had various jobs in the construction industry and was a constable in the WA Police Service for four years, before leaving to join the WA Public Sector.

He has been at the Department of Housing for seven years in a range of roles in Project Management and Program Development.

Cliff said his move to DIA was a really simple choice: "it is no good standing at the edges and whinging that things aren't working.

"If you care about making a difference for Aboriginal people then you have roll up your sleeves and get into the mix — be part of the solution".

He relates this philosophy to when he was policeman: "as a copper you learn very early on in your career that when you become involved in serious incidents you have to take action and manage the situation because there is no one coming after you. You are it and you deal with it."

Cliff says it is great to be in the mix, as he calls it, and although wants to create some success stories as soon as possible, his outlook for the wellbeing of Aboriginal people is long-term.

"Our focus needs to be out there, making on the ground improvements for Aboriginal Western Australians."

Front: Executive Director Regional Outcomes Cliff Weeks, Director-General Patrick Walker, Executive Director Policy and Reform Noela Taylor
Back: Executive Director Corporate Services Tim Roach, Executive Director Land and Heritage Andrew Burke, Chief Operating Officer Brian Wilkinson and Executive Director Northern Region Duncan Ord.



**DRUG,
ALCOHOL
AND SMOKE
FREE EVENT**

FREMANTLE
ESPLANADE RESERVE
SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER,
2:00PM – 7:30PM

WARDARNJI ABORIGINAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

presented by Respect Yourself
Respect Your Culture

ACTIVITIES

Nyoongar Welcome Department of
Indigenous Affairs PALS Award
Presentations Music and Dance
Stalls and Displays
Cultural Demonstrations
Food and Drinks
Winjan Sand Art Display

FEATURED PERFORMANCES BY

Yabu band Old Flames Band
Warangka Boom! Bap! Pow!
Kwarbah Djookian Wadumbah
Twilight Corroborree

For further information phone: (08) 9432 9822

This event is supported by the Australian Government Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the City of Fremantle.

Original artwork by Eugene Winmar



PALS Awards 2009

Don't miss the PALS School Reconciliation Awards at the Wardarnji Aboriginal Cultural Festival.

Wardarnji is a free public event put on by the City of Fremantle.

You'll need to be at the main stage at 2pm for the PALS Awards presentation.

We want everyone to be there cheering for the students and teachers who are playing their part in the Reconciliation process.

Visit the PALS marquee for lots of fun-filled activities for kids (and kids at heart!)

After the success of last year's archaeological dig heritage officers will again be helping interested kids

and adults get their hands dirty while learning about this fascinating field.

Artists are offering face painting, dance workshops and art workshops, so there will be no excuse not to exercise your creative side.

This year a record 220 PALS projects were put forward for the judges to assess.

This is a 2000 per cent increase on the 11 received for the inaugural PALS awards five years ago!

When: Saturday 14 November, 2009

Where: Esplanade Reserve, Fremantle

What time: Awards from 2pm, Festival 2pm – 7.30pm



The track to Mogumber, soon to cover the nearly 2km from the church to the Mogumber Cemetery,

Track to honour past residents of Mogumber

Earthworks for the second stage of the Mogumber Environmental and Cultural Trail have been finished, with interpretive signage to be installed shortly.

The project, funded by the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Northern Agricultural Catchment council, has been managed by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council.

Covering the nearly 2km from the church at the Mogumber Heritage Precinct to the Mogumber

Cemetery, it will acknowledge the significant history of Mogumber and raise community awareness through an environmental project.

The signage will, when installed, share some of the stories and knowledge of the children of this land, and the plants and animals that call this place home.

A number of the Elders who have worked with the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council on the Mogumber Caring for Country project believe that supporting this project will go a long way to paying respect to their relatives who are buried at the Mogumber Cemetery.

In brief

Centres boost children's health

The Department of Education will establish five new children and family centres across Western Australia by 2014 to vastly improve education and health of Aboriginal children in the next decade.

The first of the centres will be built in Halls Creek, and is scheduled to open by the end of next year. The others will be in Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne and the Swan Region.

Clients will have access to advice on early childhood learning and care; pre-pregnancy; antenatal; teenage health services; and to maternal and child health services.

Indigenous employment facts

In 2007, there were an estimated 158,000 Indigenous people aged 15 and over who had jobs, which is roughly half of the Indigenous population over 15.

Official ABS employment figures show the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is 14% compared to 4.9% for other Australians. But these figures don't present the full story. Many Indigenous people don't show up in the unemployment figures because they live in areas where there are very limited opportunities to get paid work or take part in employment programs.

So, although the official figures say there are around 25,000 Indigenous Australians who don't have jobs and who aren't in an employment or training program like the Community Development Employment Program, the real number is probably much higher.

All material contained in this publication is correct to the best knowledge of the editors at the time of publication.

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Language Teachers' graduation a boost to more than learning

With the recent graduation of nine more Aboriginal Language Teachers, there are now 106 such teachers in 79 schools teaching 25 different languages, across Western Australia.

The teachers completed a two-year traineeship that included resource development, planning, teaching and assessment.

Learning an Aboriginal language enhances the identity, self esteem and engagement of Aboriginal students and promotes Reconciliation with the wider community.