

# AHO YARNUPINGS

## Yarn Up

The second Yarn Up of the year has already been and gone. For this session we were lucky enough to have Joanne Selfe present to us. The AHO has been working with Joanne through her role with the NSW Judicial Commission. As the Project Officer for the Ngara Yura project, Joanne is tasked with enhancing understandings of Aboriginal culture amongst those working in the judiciary. Joanne has spent most of her life working on initiatives that address issues affecting Aboriginal people. Her experience and enthraling enthusiasm brought a hush to the room pretty quickly. Jo frequently talked about how important it is for Aboriginal people to be connected and engaged with their community. The various reports and studies that she's worked on demonstrate that this engagement decreases the likelihood of an individual becoming yet another tragic statistic. An engaged and strong individual equals an engaged and strong community. Throughout the yarn, it became clear that this perpetuating cycle plays out both ways. Young Aboriginal men who have found themselves in prison are far more likely to become even further disconnected from their community and culture. This is a cost payed by not only the individual but also their community. We had a fantastic variety of people attending the Yarn Up; from AHO volunteers, reconciliation advocates, community members and health care professionals. Jo was generous enough to go beyond sharing details about her professional life. Sharing stories about her personal experiences gave everyone an invaluable insight into the impact that previous government policies have had on Aboriginal communities, culture and families. These personal insights really emphasised how important it is to consider the full ramifications that government policy can have on Australia's Aboriginal population. It also drove home the message that for things to change, they have to change from the ground up. Some of the most successful initiatives that Jo spoke about were the ones that were born out of communities and contexts from which they looked to address. It's this same community engagement that Yarn Ups are all about. So if this sounds like you're cup of tea, then come along. Details about the next Yarnn Up will be announced soon. RSVP to [aho@norhtsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:aho@norhtsydney.nsw.gov.au).



## Contents

**2 An Exotic Take On Native Title**

**4 The Tranby Family**

**5 In Fear of the Field**

**6 Passing Time**

**6 Volunteers**





Our interns Jill, from Germany, and Dara from the States, were asked to give an ‘outsider’s’ perspective of Australia’s Native Title story...

## An Exotic Take On Native Title

### Jill

The struggle for Aboriginal rights and land began the moment Europeans landed in Australia in 1788. For the past 150 years, the indigenous people of Australia faced discrimination and unequal treatment. The legal concept of “Terra Nullius” was used to justify European settlement on indigenous land. As indigenous people did not build permanent settlements or acknowledge land ownership to the same extent as Europeans did, Europeans did not recognize a legitimate indigenous claim to the land. The Native Title Act of 1993 gave the indigenous people of Australia the legal right to their land and

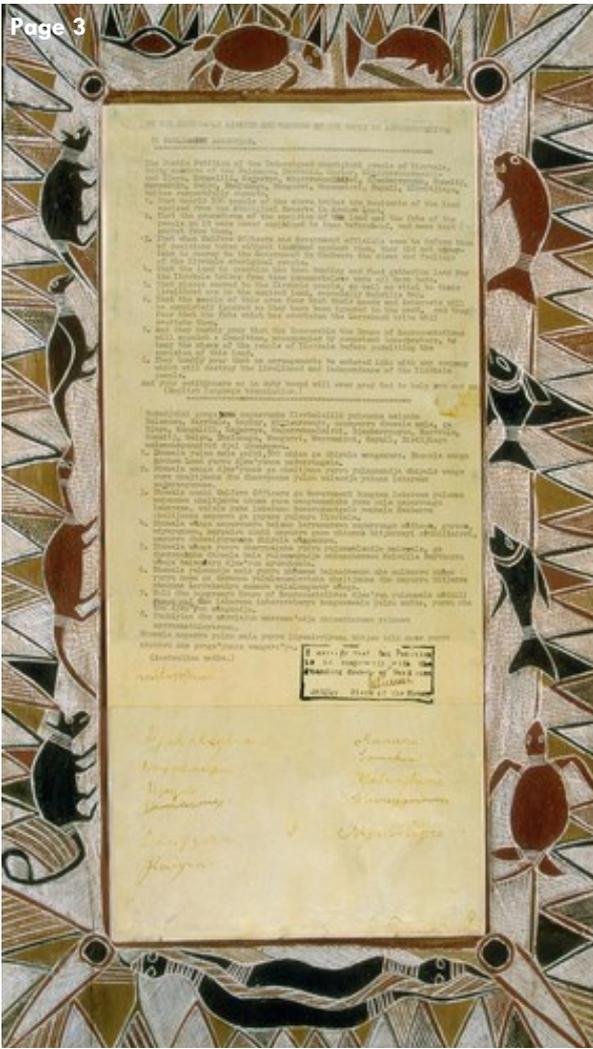
acknowledged the symbiotic relationship they had with the land. Throughout colonization, Europeans have disregarded the relationship that indigenous people have with the land and natural environment. Prior to the Act, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people were not recognized as rightful claimants to the land. The Act recognized the traditional law and customs of the indigenous peoples who inhabited Australia prior to European colonization.

The native land rights movement began in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century when indigenous people began to use the British parliamentary system as a means of regaining possession of their land. Because the Aboriginals and the British had such polarized values and customs, Aboriginal methods of diplomacy and compromise were ultimately ineffective. In 1963 the Yolngu people from Yirrkala drafted a series of petitions on bark and sent them to the Australian House of Representatives in hopes of gaining recognition for Aboriginal lands. The Yolngu people asserted their rights to the land they had inhabited for generations and of which they relied on as hunting grounds and resources. The Australian government offered compensation for the Yolngu’s loss but failed to deliver any form of remuneration. The failure of the Yirrkala Bark Petitions did however increase awareness of the plight of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory as well as signposting for a change in approach taken with the British government.

Indigenous people of Australia began to realize they needed to appeal to the British in solidarity. Eddie Mabo was an influential leader in the fight to recognise the possession of native land and helped raise awareness and gain unified support for the cause. Mabo was a Torres Strait Islander born on Murray Island in the Northern Territory. After realizing that his land was in fact owned by the Crown, he dedicated his life to the Native Land Movement to return rightful ownership to the indigenous people of the Northern Territory. In *Mabo vs. Queensland (2)* 1992, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the indigenous land rights. This was a monumental decision that gave way to the Native Title Act, which was passed the following year in 1993. The triumph of the Native Title Act is mirrored in multiple cultures and it also lends perspective on the long-term effect of global European colonialism.

As a German citizen, I recognize similarities between the indigenous land struggle in Australia and the struggle in Germany during the Berlin Blockade. Following World War II, Germany was war torn and divided. By 1948, East Germany was separated from West Germany by the Berlin Wall and absorbed into the Soviet controlled Eastern Bloc. The indigenous people of Australia faced a

Above: Finding a new angel. Jill on the left and Dara on the right.



similar situation when they were forced to assimilate into a foreign European society. The majority of Germans living in East Germany were not there by choice and were forced to surrender their rights to the Soviet influence. Similar to the indigenous people of Australia, East Germans were forced to relinquish their identity and assimilate into a foreign, communist society. I often hear stories of individuals who risked their lives to help others escape East Germany and I think a similar type of camaraderie existed among the indigenous people of Australia. Leaders like Eddie Mabo helped encourage action and support in the struggle for legal recognition in the Australian government. When people unite against a common oppressor, change becomes a reality.

### Dara

The United States shares a similar colonial past with Australia. Despite the fact America was already inhabited by Native American tribes, Europeans colonized the land with the same ignorance as Australian colonialists. The relationship between the Native Americans and the European settlers was riddled with miscommunication, cultural conflict, and land disputes. Similar to the indigenous people of Australia, Native Americans did not adhere to a sense of land ownership: the concept of property was not a part of their culture. The European colonists saw open, boundless land and assumed it was theirs to claim and build upon. Native Americans and indigenous people of Australia practiced a much different lifestyle on their respective lands. Europeans used fences and barriers to delineate property lines and territory, whereas indigenous people used more ephemeral tribal boundaries. The European farming lifestyle required the cultivation of land plots and distinguishing borders.

Native American tribes were pushed westward from the east coast as the European colonists expanded inland. Indigenous Australian people were displaced and driven off their lands by colonial expansion as well. In the 1830's, the Crown attempted to reorganize colonial land with regard for the Aboriginal peoples of Botany Bay. The Commissioner allocated pastoral reserves for Aboriginal tribes to use for hunting. The proposed land was often barren and there was great opposi-

tion to the reserves from both sides of the debate. The reserves could not sustain an Aboriginal group and impeded traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and cultural practices. By the 1850's, America instituted a reservation policy for displaced Native Americans. In 1851 the US Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act, which established a policy for Native American displacement and provided reservation land for displaced tribes. These reservations did not replace the stolen indigenous land and failed to appease the Native Americans who had been robbed of their land and hunting grounds.

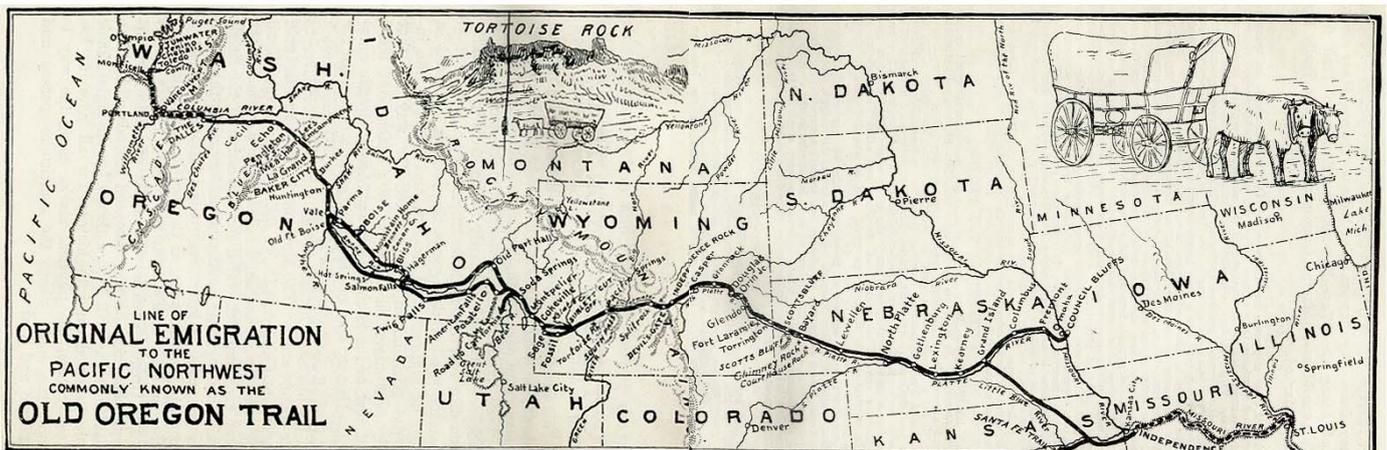
It wasn't until 1924 that the US government began to recognize Native Americans as natural citizens with rights to land. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 allocated land to displaced Native Americans in an attempt to apologize for the mistreatment of Native Americans. The Act stipulated Native Americans born after 1924 would be recognized as naturalized citizens. Unfortunately, Native Americans remained disenfranchised until 1948. The indigenous Australian struggle to reposes their native lands is quite similar to the struggle of Native Americans who were removed from their lands as the American colonies expanded westward across the nation.



<sup>1</sup> Heather Goodall *Invasion to Embassy* (St. Leonards: Allen Unwin, 1996) 45.

<sup>2</sup> Goodall *Invasion to Embassy*, 51.

Above: The Bark Petition.  
Below: The Trail of Tears—a shared grievance.





## The Tranby Family

Usually she's doing the teaching, but we've asked our education officer Karen to tell us a bit about the learning. Where did she get some of her teachings?

*Left: Tranby graduating mob.*

*Below: Karen passing it on.*

Tranby Aboriginal College is Australia's oldest, independent Indigenous education provider. The College is an important cultural institution and a community based education cooperative. Tranby is the name of a village in Norway and not an Aboriginal word. Established in 1957, Tranby offers specialised courses in an environment that supports Aboriginal ways of learning and that is run by and for Aboriginal people. Tranby is of at least 50 percent indigenous ownership and control.

Reverend Alf Clint was a Methodist minister and a trade unionist working for the Australian Board of Missions (ABM) and was employed by the ABM as Director of Cooperatives establishing cooperatives in New Guinea and Australia. In 1957 he was given the 'Tranby building' by Christ Church St Laurence for use as a cooperative. Reverend Clint wrote in a 1956 Cooperative News Sheet, "Which do you think is better – for the Missions or Governments to own plantations, cattle stations and luggers or for the native people to own them themselves?"

Kevin Cook, who is described as a "pioneer freedom fighter" for Aboriginal People, became the first Aboriginal General Secretary of Tranby Aboriginal College. Kevin Cook was heavily involved with land rights and was impressed with Reverend Alf Cook receiving funding for the Tranby educational cooperative from the Builders and Labourers' Federation (BLF) and Kevin Cook joined Tranby as a board member.

The College has pioneered in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult education, training and social action. It has become a prominent voice in the national dialogue concerning social justice issues affecting the Indigenous community.

Tranby was extended in 1998 with the new architecture reflecting an Aboriginal circle of learning. Circular rooms surround a central circular courtyard and meeting place. Classes and presentations are always held here.

Tranby is more than a College. It is a family, a community atmosphere where respect for each other and Indigenous culture is reflected in the ways of learning. During my time at the college I met many people from different communities around the country. I loved the way the class moved and how we all helped each other. We supported each other and cared for each other.

My time spent in the subjects that I studied was inspiring. All the students became very close over the long periods spent together during block classes and we were a family. The students in our class were the library we drew on. In our class, we experienced mission and reserve living - some of our students were still happily living in communities and studying to help their community. Some students or families were from the 'Stolen Generation' and told us their stories of loss. Learning about land rights, culture and identity, the personal stories and anecdotes provided a far deeper learning than any I could have received elsewhere.



Sometimes extended families would be a part of the same class. Despite tragic and sorrowful facts and stories, jokes and laughter were always bubbling up.

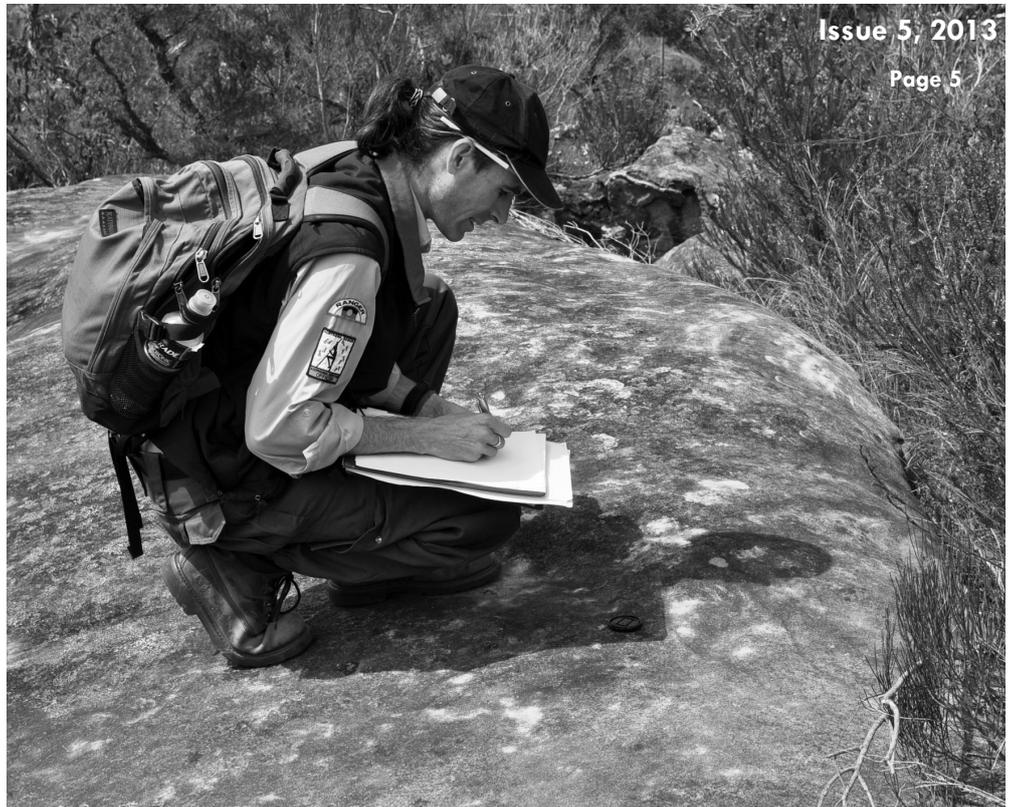
NRL was a favourite topic and I was roasted over the coals by everyone it seemed for my support of the Sea Eagles.

One of the great social times was meal time where yarns and stories were exchanged and again the dining room and veranda would be filled with laughter. Morning and afternoon tea was provided and a hot meal was given every lunch. This made sure we were never wanting for food. I was introduced to mission food such as fried scones which I had never had before.

Aboriginal people continue to travel from all over Australia to study and train at Tranby, joining the family, taking the knowledge back to their communities and studying courses in legal studies, community development and business.



The physical duress of fieldwork is merely a welcome distraction from what lies thereafter...



Above: Even when it's fieldwork...it's paperwork.

## In Fear of the Field

Many people think that working in a job involving fieldwork must be fabulous. "Out there in the bush or on the harbour, among those wonderful Aboriginal sites...", they say, while a faraway, lost in time expression drifts across their face like fluffy clouds across a blue sky. Well, let us say that the field is no playground and there would be no shortage of people who live in fear of the field. Not for the extremes of temperature, the cobwebs or threat of snakes. Not for sunburn or spiky plants, for thick scrub or the blackened poking sticks of a post-fire survey. Threats of oyster cuts, rogue waves, slippery tracks or smirking magpies are no match for the most feared phenomenon in all fieldwork horrors. What could be worse than stereophonic joggers, bewildered bikers, lazy dog walkers or group tours? Or icy downpours, push-n-shove wind gusts, dust storms or eye-blanching rock glare? What could be worse than face level branch flicks, shin high hidden-by-grass dead branches, obscured hollows, boot grabbing vines, ear tweaking twigs or underpants-seeking bush-bashing debris? What?! What could be worse than the most unromantic parts of fieldwork already mentioned?!

Paper work.

Nothing wounds more than post-field written requirements. When people sigh longingly at the notion of the romantic field they forget, of course, that every minute in the field requires a proportional and lengthy period of time in the office. Did you visit a site? Then don't forget to fill in the monitoring form, download the photos, update the sites database, update the activities database, update the site card and insert the photos. If the update is significant, then the state government's Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System needs to be updated (another form or two, an email, a record on our tracking system). If it is time to update Council's records, then all the sites and all the tables need to be finalised and sent to Council.

Even before we set foot in the shrubbery we fill in a work health and safety induction sheet. If you take a vehicle, you fill in a log book. If it is a big project, all the observations made in the field have to be compiled and some analysis carried out. If it is a site inspection, a site conservation management report may be required. If it is a DA inspection, a letter or email may suffice. There is little one can do in the field without it being a catalyst for bureaucracy. Blessed be the bureaucrats, for they shall know, in triplicate, who inherited the earth.

The physical duress of fieldwork is merely a welcome distraction from what lies thereafter in the labyrinth of procedure and reportage. Once the data is inputted there will be no sign of the suffering involved – no sweat stained monitoring pages, crumpled site cards, hail smudged maps, sand grain blocked pen nibs, rusted tape measures. No quantification of keyboard strokes, mouse-tracking miles, computer monitor gamma ray kilowatts absorbed. The result will be clinical, digital, and fiscally measurable.

If you speak to someone and ask them to 'pop out and have a look at' something, and a tremble comes to their lip, a displaced look crosses their eyes, a slight nervous twitch appears in the hand, be sympathetic, it could be PTFIPSS (post-traumatic fieldwork-induced paperwork stress syndrome). Keep the patient calm by using soothing tones: "it probably isn't anything", "actually, maybe it's just a rock", "the graffiti may not be on the site at all", "it is quite disturbed so perhaps the visit would be a waste of time". Then distract them with other challenges: "the bush is a bit thick there", "I guess it is a bit wet to visit now?", "it is a bit of a scramble to get in". Finish off with a timesaver: "I'll email you the details", "would a map marking the location help?", "I have quite a few good photos I could send". See the colour return to their face? That's the way. Shhh, just don't mention the p-word.





# 'Passing Time'

Issue 5, 2013

Page 6

## Movie Review by Dara

### Gravity

After seeing the trailer for this film, I had no idea what to expect. The general reaction to the theatrical trailer is usually one of confusion and scepticism. How entertaining can a movie about 2 astronauts floating around in space be? There are no aliens, battle scenes, or warp speed travel in the film but it offers a different sort of entertainment. The film only spans a short period of time, only about 24 hours, so it is fast-paced by nature. While the film may not appeal to the average action-junkie movie go-er, it is certainly suspenseful and captivating. This film was made to be experienced in 3D; it is well worth the IMAX experience! The panorama shots of earth are breathtaking and serve as the backdrop for a good portion of the film.



# Volunteers

We'd like to congratulate all involved in the volunteer monitoring. The program received the Sydney North Highly Commendable Team of the Year Award. The award was given by the NSW Centre for Volunteering. It seem a shame that for all the obvious merits of volunteer programs across the state, there still remains such a struggle with issues regarding insurance. C'est la vie.

We've just run our last training session of the year. There was a fantastic combination amongst those attending; we had both new volunteers eager to learn and experienced volunteers looking for a bit of a refresher. There was plenty of knowledge shared.

Many of our volunteers have been coming along to our Yarn Ups and it's been a real pleasure to have them.

For all our volunteer who have been trained this year, you should have by now received a package with the new forms that to be filled in and returned. A massive thank you to all those who have already done so. If you need any help to complete these forms please don't hesitate to give Gareth a call on 9936 8263. For our volunteers who have been involved in the program since before 2013, we are putting the final touches on a quick PowerPoint that will run you through a safety induction. This will be emailed out over the coming weeks.



## Cook Up

This month's recipe featured at latest buffet. There was none left. It goes perfectly with pork but can be enjoyed on it's own as a lunch time snack.

Best to make the dressing first. Add the oil, lemon juice, mustard and seasoning in a small, clean jar and give it a good shaking.

Set that aside and turn your attention to the fennel. Pick off all the soft shoots sprouting out the top and keep for later. Then chop the green stalks off, half the fennel bulbs and remove the V shaped tough stem inside. Slice the fennel as finely as possible and then do the same for the apple.

Chuck the fennel and apple in your serving bowl or plate and mix through the dressing as soon as possible. Get the sliced apple and fennel coated in the dressing as soon as possible as this will stop them from browning. Toss the green fennel sprigs over the top and wolf it down.



### Ingredients

- 2 tsp seeded mustard;
- 4 tsp olive oil;
- 2 tsp lemon juice;
- 3 large fennel bulbs;
- 4 apples.