

December 2016

Issue 3



# Aboriginal Heritage Office Yarnupings

[www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org)



Northern Beaches

"I've been moved watching nature slowly turning  
Through the seasons and the patterns that she brings  
And as the morning star proceeds  
The breaking of a new day  
You'll find the black crow is already on the wing"

*Kev Carmody, Eulogy for a Black Person*

Summer Edition

It's not just Santa  
who has to be gen-  
erous at Christmas  
time, no, no no!



## BREAKING NEWS!

Strathfield Council has joined the partnership of Councils! Strathfield signed the Memorandum of Understanding that allows the Aboriginal Heritage Office to roll out its services to this new partner.



### In this Edition:

- P2: What is the AHO?
- P4: A Continental Myth
- P6: Voices Heard
- P8: Crossword & Quiz
- P10-: Book Review
- P13: Listening Page

"Was it yesterday

Or a thousand years,

My eager feet

Caressed your paths;

My opened fingers

Counted grains of sand

Hidden in the warmth of time."

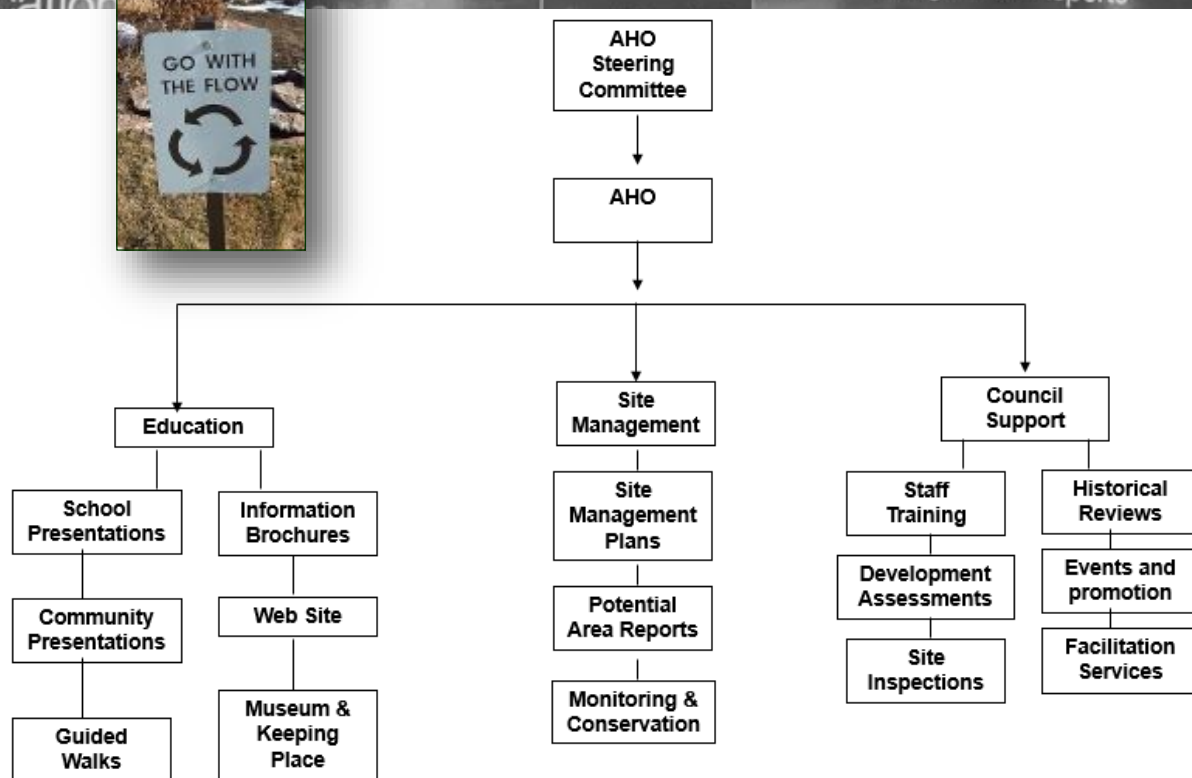
*Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Return to Nature*

# What is the AHO?

The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) is a unique partnership of local Councils in northern Sydney working to protect Aboriginal sites and promote Aboriginal history and heritage in each of the Council areas. The AHO's activities are based on three main areas: site management, council support and education. In carrying out these roles, the AHO provides training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, it showcases Aboriginal ingenuity, and it provides community groups, schools, universities and individuals with opportunities to meet Aboriginal education officers and learn about the Aboriginal perspective in the region's history and landscape.

With over 800 recorded Aboriginal sites within the partner Council lands of northern Sydney, including rock art and engravings, axe sharpening grooves, shell middens and more, and being located within and around the urban area of Australia's oldest city, there are many pressures on this surviving Aboriginal heritage and also many opportunities to help protect it into the future. The AHO assists local governments to take more responsibility and be more effective in planning for protecting, managing and promoting Aboriginal heritage. It has established Council Aboriginal heritage planning procedures to prevent accidental damage to sites on Council land and, where possible, private property, including a referral system that helps to identify Aboriginal heritage issues.

The AHO education and training program has gradually expanded to include a full-time Aboriginal Education Officer position, a schools program, guided walks and talks, brochures, a website, the only Aboriginal Museum, Education Centre and Keeping Place in northern Sydney (currently closed due to space restrictions), and specialised training for Council staff. The education and training program connects local residents and people from diverse backgrounds. Volunteer programs allow locals and international visitors, including Indigenous students, to learn about the Aboriginal heritage of the area and participate in caring for heritage and educating others about it.



"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth". Muhammad Ali



# Why we do this

November 2016

Dear Ms Smith,

*Our class was fortunate enough to listen to your talk discussing the history of Indigenous Australians. The information you provided us was profoundly instructive and something I will never forget. We learned a variety of things ranging from remedies to rituals and symbols to self-determination. I never really understood the trauma that Aboriginal people encountered during the time known as the Stolen Generations. If I am being honest I never really took too much interest in the history of Australia in comparison to Europe, for example. I didn't fully understand Aboriginal people's position in society in previous times and never took the time to try to grasp what occurred during that time.*

*During class for the past term we have looked at thinking critically, undergoing many processes to ensure we got the most information out of the study of our novel, 'Nanberry'. Although I learned a myriad of things throughout that time, your talk assisted me in really comprehending the significance of place, not only for Aboriginal and Indigenous people but for all Australians. What really stuck with me was your use of multiple perspectives. I recall your use of the words "we" as well as "they". You spoke to us as if we are one with all Australians, despite our different heritages, beliefs or skin colour. I think the work you are doing to tell us about Aboriginal people's history and culture is very important, because I, too, care about Australia and the way in which we treat both our land and citizens.*

*Your talk reminded me about how critical it is for us to continue to work together as one body of people to conserve our land, especially for the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and the preservation of their culture. The analysis of powerful images stood out for me and I appreciate the research and time that goes into compiling this crucial information on behalf of Aboriginal people. You gave us important details about lesser-known sections of Aboriginal culture and notable Indigenous Australians in history. I greatly appreciate your efforts working to create a more harmonious and sustainable future for ALL Australians through the powerful means of awareness.*

Thank you so much,

Yours sincerely,  
Year 8 student



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Nelson Mandela

EDUCATION





# A Continental Myth

By Phil Hunt

Australia is big. Living here it is easy to forget because it is just a country. The name on the passport, a sporting team you barrack for, the place you leave to travel overseas and the place you come back to. We come from a 'small country' of twenty-odd million. No big deal.

*"I've said this often, but when they were handing out continents, not many people got one. We did. We got a continent of our own, unbelievably". Paul Keating*

The trap of forgetting that Australia is a continent is that we can easily under exaggerate things. How easy is it to think of Aboriginal and Islander culture as one. One Aboriginal group, one voice, one opinion. Most Australians probably have this idea that the 'peaceful colonisation of Australia' was the movement of non-Indigenous peoples into the land of one culture. It is difficult to contemplate that it was actually the invasion of hundreds of different cultures. Not one dispossession but many. Not the loss or erosion of one language and culture. Not one impact in one generation. Not one story.

The implications are that one policy won't work for all of these different scenarios. Yet government after government has tried exactly that. With perhaps predictable results.

Australia is old. It is easy to forget that too. How familiar are we now about the idea that Aboriginal peoples have been here for tens of thousands of years? We can talk of the arrival of the British in 1788 and the arrival of the First Australians over 60,000 years ago as somehow similar. 'So, when did your people arrive? And how are you finding it so far?'



C. Mackinilty. NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Modern Australia is young. My grandfather who lived to 99 and was around most of my life told stories of his uncle driving bullock drays down George Street, Sydney.

Did Aboriginal people lose their land in 1788? Most people say yes. Yet most Aboriginal clans wouldn't see a white person for decades or for well over a century. The colonisation of Australia didn't finish in 1788. Neither did the dispossessions. Mentally every immigrant who came to Australia or person born here knew it was up for grabs. Yet Aboriginal groups beyond the frontier didn't get the note that they'd already lost their territory. Someone flew a flag in another language area in some other part of the continent long ago and it meant that every other language and clan group lost their rights? That's the logic

*"Tomorrow morning before we depart, I intend to land and see what can be found in the neighbourhood". Christopher Columbus*





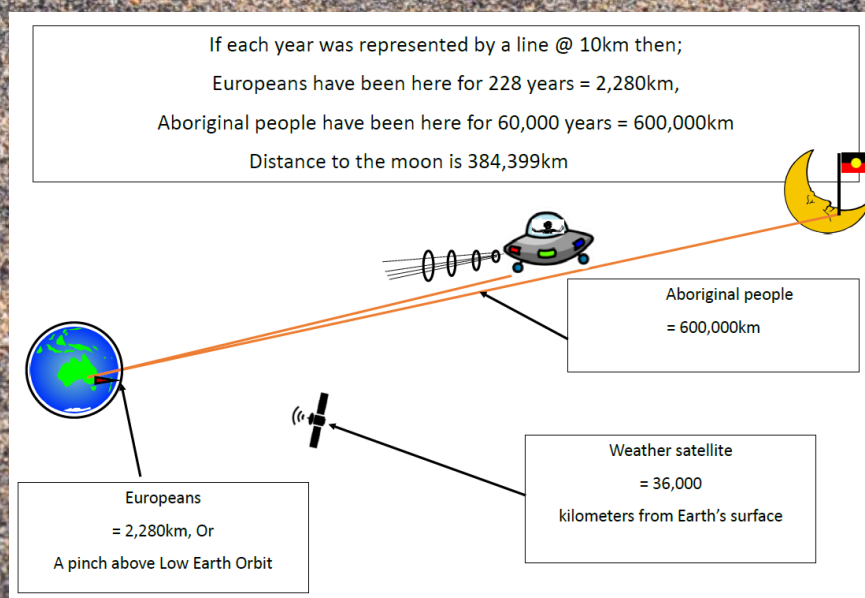
we've been accepting.

Indigenous people survived every climatic and sea level calamity that this continent faced over an incredibly long period of time. They are also in the early part of surviving the colonisation process. Those arriving on the First Fleet made their main water source, the Tank Stream, so polluted that it was undrinkable. Their descendants, all of us, are still grappling with how to adapt European land-use models to the varied landscapes of a very un-European continent.

Despite the great movement of people around the world, it is perhaps more important than ever that we learn from cultures who have adapted to a local area and who take responsibility for it. If the measure of success is not then one's personal or community material wealth but the land's ability to continue to provide healthy sustenance and wellbeing to all species well into the future, how will we rate? Could we do what Djok traditional owner Jeffery Lee did when he refused millions of mining dollars to ensure the protection of lands near Kakadu?

**"When you dig a hole in that country you are killing me. I don't worry about money at all." Jeffery Lee**

Could it be argued that the older we get, the more we have benefited from the land around us and therefore the more we should give back for those who come after us? If by investigating, utilising and experimenting with Indigenous knowledge systems we find benefits to our new society and the environment, how do we guarantee that the original owners share in the abundance? While so many Indigenous people lack educational, employment, financial and networking opportunities, how can we ensure we won't simply begin a new era of dispossession? Without a better understanding of the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been left out of the prosperity of this continent over recent generations, our new society's foundations must sit unsurely on this ancient landscape.



**"Australia is properly speaking an island, but it is so much larger than every other island on the face of the globe, that it is classed as a continent in order to convey to the mind a just idea of its magnitude". Charles Sturt**





# Voices Heard

By Karen Smith

Some days it seems that Aboriginal voices cannot rise above the noise of ignorance and those who wish to exclude an accurate view of Aboriginal Australia. However, there are many Aboriginal people who tear down the stereotypes. In this article I wish to share with you and pay my respects to some of the Aboriginal people who have made their voice heard and who inspire and challenge me and the world.

**Uncle Harold Thomas** – Artist and designer of our Aboriginal Flag. Uncle Harold was taken from his mother and father, as were his 15 siblings, and he tells us both his mother and father were also taken from their parents. Uncle Harold won the 2016 Telstra Art Award for his painting 'Tribal Abduction'. He says of this painting *"This reflects the historical story of the destruction of Aboriginal people, the most hurtful part of a child's life is to be torn from your mother's breast, no matter where you are in the world, [it] is the most tragic thing for a child."*



Harold Thomas (Bundoo). Photo: Fiona Morrison/NATSAAL.

Thank you Uncle Harold who shared with the world his story of pain and showed us the pain of the mothers, fathers and the mob.

**Nayuka Gorrie** - is a young powerful voice, an activist and writer who challenges our beliefs and does not step backwards from black politics. She describes herself as *"I am a Kurnai/Gunai, Gunditjmarra, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman. I am passionate about self-determination and culture. I am lucky enough to work on an initiative that backs young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people across the country."* Below are some of her insights:

## THOUGHT

On Black Rage, New Funerals, And The Exhausting Resilience Of Our Mob  
by NAYUKA GORRIE 1 SEPTEMBER 2016

"Marginalised peoples have different ways of coping with pain, disempowerment and injustice. Some may be in a state of denial, some may cry, some protest, some riot. My way of coping is to write about it. But what many of us have in common through all this is our grief and our rage."

\*\*\*\*\*

"A treaty forces you to see me as an equal, with a separate identity, history and culture that has existed for tens of thousands of years.

Recognition forces me to ask to be seen by you in a colonial system that I don't want to legitimise. F\*\*\* that."

\*\*\*\*\*

Nayuka Gorrie @NayukaGorrie 1.12.16

it is the utmost position of privilege to say that the oppressed need to reveal their trauma in order for YOU to learn #firstcontact

"If you're Indigenous, you're in politics whether you like it or not." Kev Carmody

**Blackfella Films** has introduced Australia and the world to stories about Aboriginal people, Country and culture. The influence of these stories has crossed the world which has been challenged and educated by this innovative film company. It produces factual and drama in both series and feature formats for theatrical, television and online platforms. The company was founded in 1992 by writer/director/producer **Rachel Perkins** who was joined by producer **Darren Dale** in 2002. Below flows a list of some of the many achievements of Blackfella Films.

**First Australians** - The highest selling educational title in Australia. Many awards.

**The Tall Man** - Received the inaugural Walkley Award for Documentary.

**Mabo** - The Documentary story of Mabo for TV.

**Black Panther Woman** - Documentary.

**Redfern Now** - 6 x 1 hour ABC drama series developed in collaboration with renowned UK scriptwriter Jimmy McGovern. The series was the first Australian drama series written, directed and produced by Indigenous Australians and ran for 2 seasons.

**Blood Brothers** - Documentary. The stories of Darby Jampinjimpa Ross, Rupert Max Stuart, Charles Perkins and Mandawuy Yunuipingu.

**Deep Water** – Documentary. Gay Hate Crimes.

**DNA Nation** – Documentary. Three well known Australians trace their genetic roots.

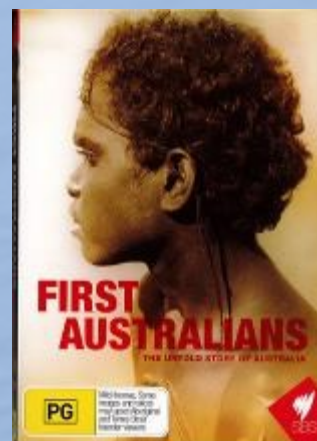
**First Contact** - Series 1 & 2. Showing the chasm and disconnect between the First Australians and the rest of the nation.

**Flat** - 15 year old Marnie growing up.

**From Spirit to Spirit** – Documentary. Looks at the colonisation of NSW. This series is the first international Indigenous co-venture.

**Jacob** – The story of a young Aboriginal mother.

**Lani's Story** - The rates of domestic violence against Aboriginal women in Australia are at endemic proportions. How does one woman break the cycle?



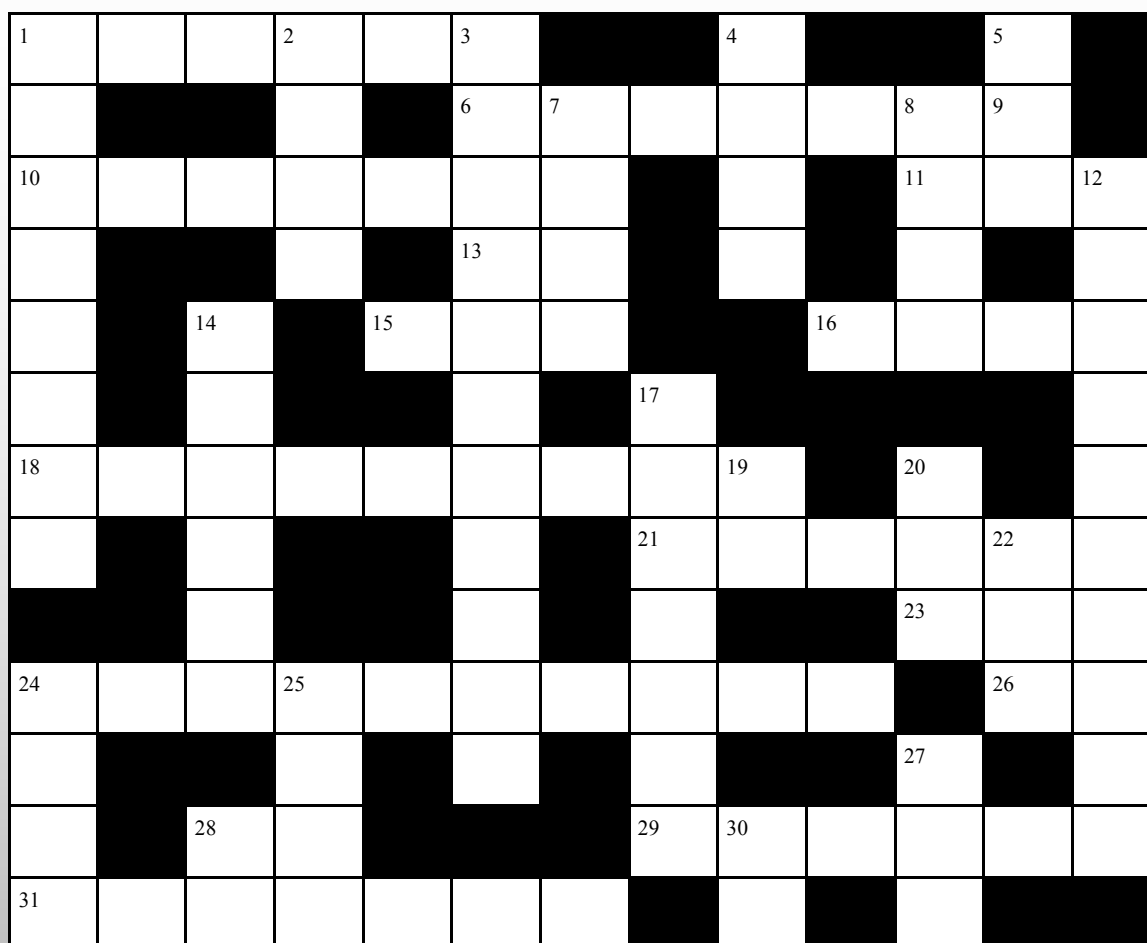
This is not an inclusive list, even for Blackfella Films. As a Christmas holiday exercise, perhaps you and your children could name your own list of inspirational Aboriginal people. Let's change the stereotype together.

"Today I think, trying to look at where we could all work together, for the good of everybody. For mankind and also, you know, for the plants, animals, the whole lot, to co-exist. Everything, everybody to co-exist together, to look after country because

the country don't really need us, but we need the country".

Gudju Gudju Fourmile, SBS *Going Places*

# Crossword:



Answers in our next edition!  
Answers in our next edition!

## Across

1. The season of heat.
6. Eats ants and keeps low to the ground.
10. A big weed, useful to hide rock shelters.
11. Insect that might come indoors before rain.
13. After a summer blackout, switch back to this.
16. A type of whelk common in middens.
14. A method to record art (needs a permit).
15. The night before, Christmas and New Year's.
16. Bowlo', RSL and Night are types of this.
18. A day for giving gifts and sharing food.
20. Aboriginal word for belonging to, people of.
21. Patchwork burning.
23. Laughing out loud.
24. Snakelike. Windy road.
26. Negative.
28. Neither she, we or they did it. Who did?
29. Local Aboriginal name for a bark shelter.
31. What you want to avoid but will come sometime

## Down

1. Longest day of the year is the summer....
2. Bogong made this insect famous.
3. Get the tools out for this holiday activity.
4. An unwanted bloodsucker of the bush.
5. A bit of sun gives you this.
7. Naughty kids in the old days got this.
8. Thin metal item used in 3 Down.
12. Spread this out before putting cutlery down.
14. Summer or winter, with board and wetsuit.
17. To pitch a tent and stay for a bit.
19. It ain't necessarily....
20. Aboriginal word for people of, clan.
22. Electrically charged atom.
24. Put on sunscreen; slip ... slap!
25. A commoner.
27. Middle of a cyclone.
28. Only one of three when Santa comes.
30. When cycling, what goes down must come...



"Whenever I was upset by something in the papers, Jack always told me to be more tolerant, like a horse flicking away flies in the summer."

Jackie Kennedy



# Quizerama #1:

Issue 3, 2016

Page 9



Q1. What is an Aboriginal name for a dish?

Q2. What is the most common stenciled rock art figure in Sydney?

A: boomerang      B: fish      C: hand      D: axe

Q3 The current shoreline of Sydney is roughly the same as it was 15,000 years ago. True or False?

Q4. Who said "we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors; therefore we must also be the bearer of their burdens as well"?

Q5. In what year was the treaty signed between defeated Sydney Aboriginal clans and the British?

Q6. Which Indigenous Australian singer performed at Eurovision?

Q7. Uluru park is managed by traditional owners. True or False?

Q8. How would you get the best stone axe in northern Sydney?

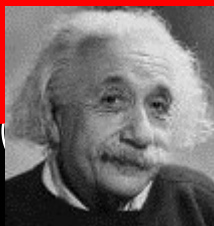
A: from local rock      B: from the beach      C: by trade

Q9. Where was the person in Q4 standing?

Q10. Which species of Hominin is 'wise or knowing man'?



"The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits."



Answers in our next edition!

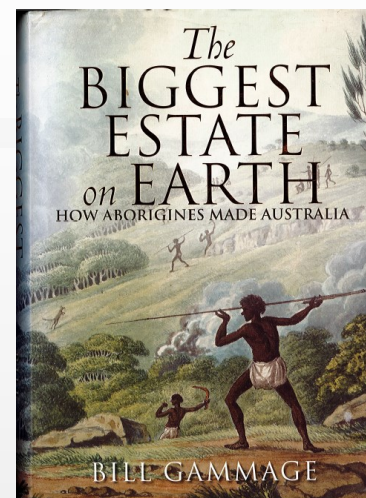
"Science is a perception of the world around us. Science is a place where what you find in nature pleases you". Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar



# Book Review:

By Phil Hunt

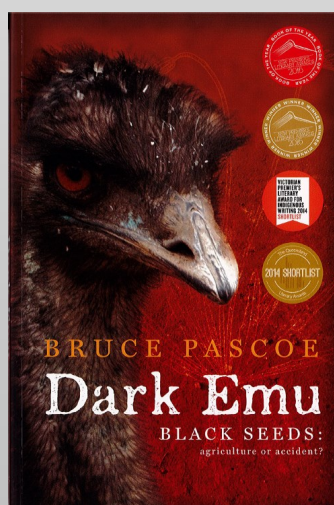
It is perhaps ironic that in order to learn more about traditional Aboriginal landuse practices in many parts of Australia we have to look at the European explorers' accounts to recover lost knowledge. This is what Bill Gammage (*Biggest Estate on Earth*) and Bruce Pascoe (*Dark Emu Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*) have done. They have both provided many examples and direct quotes from some of Australia's most well-known 'discoverers' in order to hammer away at our deeply held mythology that Indigenous peoples had little involvement in the land other than looking for food and shelter. They both came across deep suspicion and disbelief from people who would not be convinced about the strategic planning and economic credentials of people who were supposed to have such simple lives.



During research for my honours thesis (something Bill Gammage actually referenced, such was his exhaustive work!) I became aware of the difference between our current perceptions of the bush and how it used to actually be. One is a slightly romanticised 'wilderness', the other is a landscape more open and amenable in places – the 'gentleman's park' that Gammage finds quotes to again and again. When you are carrying tall spears or nursing a baby and carrying dillybags and coolamons you don't want to be bush-bashing. You take the easiest route. That might be a well-established pathway or a more open area. Fire was one way the landscape was made easier to get around. The benefits of a well-managed landscape go far beyond a good commute. Bill Gammage provides example after example across the continent of how local people managed the land with sophisticated and well-practised techniques:

**"They sanctioned key principles: think long term; leave the world as it is; think globally, act locally; ally with fire; control population. They were active, not passive, striving for balance and continuity to make all life abundant, convenient and predictable." Bill Gammage**

Bruce Pascoe has done a wonderful job of bringing the Indigenous agricultural, aquacultural and architectural traditions to light using Indigenous informants and similar sources – the explorers who showed the new invaders where the best lands lay. Descriptions of villages in semi-arid areas capable of housing 500 people, with individual buildings large enough for 30-40 and pathways radiating out in different directions, or stone walled buildings associated with elaborate eel-traps, or drainage works running over hundreds of metres are in many explorers journals. Also references to vast areas used for growing grasses for seed, or cultivated with yams.



**"Destruction of these systems was witnessed by the very earliest Europeans. Aboriginal Protector, William Thomas, saw many aquaculture systems but reported that most were destroyed by Europeans in the first days after arrival." Bruce Pascoe**

Both these books are thoroughly recommended for bringing to light evidence that helps explain the complexities of our past and the contradictions of our present. Only with thoughtful re-appraisal of both can we really begin to make better choices for the future. I personally only have two misgivings. Gammage's use of the term '1788' as a way to differentiate pre and post invasion periods is convenient but unfortunately reinforces the idea that all Aboriginal groups were dispossessed at that time, when it would take more than a century for many groups to even meet the frontier. In *Dark Emu*, Bruce Pascoe promotes the use of indigenous plants and animals to





# Spot the Difference:



Dave's office, Northbridge



Dave's office, Manly



Museum space, Northbridge



Museum space, Manly



Visitor space, Northbridge



Visitor space, Manly

replace domesticated species, while acknowledging some risks with harvesting native animals. I would suggest that the market-based increasingly urban culture we live in would be unable to appreciate and respect wildlife if it became a familiar item on the supermarket shelves. The world's resources are not under increasing pressure due to Indigenous people's ideas of stewardship, which includes deep respect for each species' role in the wider ecology. It is we the majority that are the drivers. Modern farming techniques for a globalised market need to adjust if we are to be confident that our fellow earthlings will receive a fair go. There are many examples of farmers who are 'giving back' some of the land to nature and reaping the rewards.



# A Bush Christmas: By Karen Smith

## Christmas Bush and Christmas Bells



Photo: Brian Walters

Forget commercial Christmas decorations and buy yourself a Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*). For many of us in NSW, it is not Christmas without our Christmas Bush. The Christmas Bush is not really a bush but a tree which can grow to 10 metres tall although rarely reaching above 4 to 5 metres when cultivated. The ideal habitat is a rainforest gully or among a sloping Sydney flora section of bushland. There are now dwarf varieties including some that have been developed to have bright red sepals.

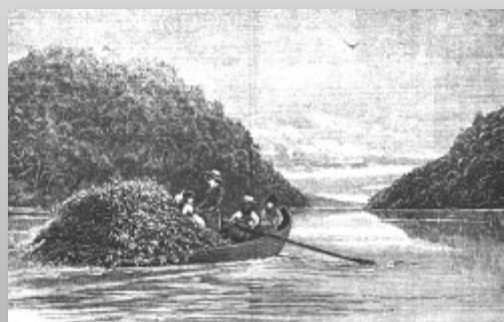
The Australian Government Rural Industries Research and Development Cooperation estimates that the Christmas Bush is "the fastest growing wildflower export crop in eastern Australia".



'Christmas Belles' was the caption of an illustration of young ladies collecting Christmas Bells in the *Illustrated Sydney News* - Christmas Issue 1886.

Historically Christmas Bush and Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia* spp.) were used to replace the red and green of Holly and Ivy by the colonists<sup>1</sup>.

One of our own Northern Beaches wildflower areas (Belrose, Davidson and Frenchs Forest) was a native wildflowers gathering ground for the Sydney markets in the 1800's. Many settler's letters and private recollections recall the use of Australian native plants like Christmas Bush and Christmas Bells. Christmas Bells are a protected species and can only be purchased from a florist.



A boatload of Christmas Bushes being rowed towards Sydney for sale in the markets [Sydney Mail 23 December 1882]

Images: Australian National Botanic Gardens

1. <http://blogs.hht.net.au/cook/before-tinsel-there-was-christmas-bush/>



Christmas Bells



**Shhhh.** The next page is for listening. We invite you to set aside at least 28 seconds and give the land a chance to speak





**No speaking, no commenting, only listening**



# Yearly Round Up:

Are you sure 'Collaroy' means  
*'place of lost assets'?*

Ask the ocean.

It's not just the  
budget that's  
getting blurry...

Need a bigger  
calendar ... or  
more days in  
the year !

Humidity +  
Heat +  
Movement = ??  
Something to do  
with gaskets?

A woman rang a Sydney radio station this month to declare that she had been to university and learned that Aboriginal people didn't own the land, the land owned them. She then demanded to know why there was still a call for land rights and a treaty. The DJ agreed. What would they think of people who say, "My door is always open for you?"



## Answers:

From our last edition (April 2016)!

### Crossword

Across: 1 Flower. 4 Fruit. 7 Cling. 10 Numbat. 11 Loo. 13 Ebb. 14 Tracing. 15 Low. 17 Tin. 19 Lotto. 20 Geebung. 22 Warrigal. 24 Iron. 25 UN. 27 Drumstick. 28 Yea.

Down: 1 Flannel. 2 Wombat. 3 Rent. 5 Recognise. 6 Ten. 8 Lo. 9 Gibbergunya. 12 Icing. 16 Water. 17 Toxins. 18 Quarry. 21 Eel. 22 Wed. 23 Rum. 23 OK.

### Quizerama 1—Unscramble

1 Aboriginality. 2 Colonisation. 3 Country. 4 Dispossession. 5 Diversity. 6 Dreaming. 7 Elder. 8 Indigenous. 9 Mob. 10 Treaty.