

# Goree

ABORIGINAL &  
TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER

news

FROM THE NATIONAL  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Exhibitions



Histories



Research

- 2 Message from the Director of the National Museum of Australia
- 3 Message from the Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director, and Senior Curator
- 3 Message from the Head, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program
- 4 *tayenebe* — exchange, by Andy Greenslade
- 5 *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life*, by Matthew Higgins and Sharon Goddard
- 6 Making a splash at the Museum, by Luke Cummins
- 8 Touching lives, by Margo Neale
- 10 A history of hard work, by Michael Pickering
- 11 Whose objects? Whose history? by Michael Pickering
- 12 Surviving assimilation, by Karolina Kilian
- 13 Taking care of ‘Albert’, by Jay Arthur
- 14 Family history is land rights history, by Peter Stanley
- 15 Hidden story behind a portrait, by Fiona Paisley
- 16 A force for good, by John Harms
- 17 NAIDOC Week on the peninsula
- 18 ATSIP News
- 20 Recent projects in the Repatriation Unit, by David Kaus
- 21 Collection stories
  - Patsy Cameron’s kelp water carriers, by Stephanie Pfennigwerth
  - Indigenous encounters with the Irish kind, by Cinnamon Van Reyk, Karolina Kilian and Rebecca Nason
  - Shell necklaces: An unbroken tradition, by Stephanie Pfennigwerth

## Goree: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander News

**Edition editor:** Barbara Paulson  
**Copyeditors:** Judy Baker and Julie Simpkin  
**Project manager:** Barbara Paulson  
**Design:** Giraffe Visual Communication Management Pty Ltd  
**Print:** Goanna Print  
**Photos:** George Serras and Lannon Harley, National Museum of Australia, unless otherwise noted

## Cover photos

**Main:** Phil Yubbagurri Brown, co-ordinator and facilitator for the annual Didj Comp held during NAIDOC Week at the Museum

**Bottom left:** Mick Dodson viewing live tree frogs in the *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life* exhibition

**Bottom middle:** Lola Edwards and her ‘sister’ at the handover of ‘Albert’

**Bottom right:** Ben Cruse, an intern at the Museum’s Centre for Historical Research

**Email:** mates@nma.gov.au

Produced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program with assistance from the Photography, Publishing and Copyright and Production sections of the National Museum of Australia

## Gallery photos

**Left:** Inside the *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life* exhibition, the Mekong River diorama relates the story of one of Cambodia’s largest rivers and the Giant Mekong Catfish which has become endangered.

**Middle:** The Dethridge Wheel was invented in 1910 to measure the flow of water. It is now an icon of Australian irrigation.

**Right:** The Murray Cod, one of Australia’s iconic fish, can be seen live within *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life* courtesy of the National Zoo and Aquarium.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Welcome. On behalf of the National Museum of Australia, I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples of the Australian Capital Territory, as well as all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose stories we are privileged to share.

This is my last message as Director of the National Museum of Australia as I move into what is popularly called ‘retirement’ although I doubt that my activities will slow down. It is not, however, a sad time, as I take much with me, in particular my continuing enthusiasm and support for the telling of Indigenous histories and a greater appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

It has been particularly pleasing to see the achievements of the Museum in representing the histories and cultures of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Museum is acknowledged as a world leader in the way it communicates Indigenous histories to its audiences.

However, this success would be impossible without the trust, support, and generosity of those Indigenous Australians whose lives and cultures we profile.

The future looks good for the National Museum of Australia. While resourcing issues will come and go, and belts will be tightened and loosened accordingly, nothing seems to dent the passion and commitment of the staff. We are developing new major exhibitions that will present Indigenous histories and cultures not only to Australia but also to the world. We are presenting more and more on the web, sending the stories into schools and homes. First and foremost in the telling of those stories is the ‘Indigenous voice’ — words from the mouths of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have experienced the events we describe. It is this voice that is largely responsible for our success.

I thank you for your support over the years and wish you all the very best for the future.

**Craddock Morton**



Mekong River diorama



MESSAGE FROM THE  
PRINCIPAL ADVISOR  
(INDIGENOUS) TO  
THE DIRECTOR, AND  
SENIOR CURATOR

I would like to acknowledge the local Ngunnawal and Ngambri custodians of the area.

Our Director of six years, Craddock Morton, is retiring and leaving in his wake many tangible gains as a tribute to his unwavering commitment to the promotion of Indigenous issues at the Museum. These include the increase in Indigenous employment with schemes that cater to the needs of our people; a Museum-wide cultural awareness program; seminal acquisitions; a series of groundbreaking Indigenous exhibitions; and initiating plans for an Indigenous Advisory Group. Those that will stand as his lasting legacy are the acquisition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs art collection and his strong support for the Canning Stock Route project; the epic international Emily exhibition and the Papunya exhibition.

On a more personal note his door was always open to any blackfella who visited the Museum and he was the first signatory on a petition to the Prime Minister from Gordon Syron to save the Aboriginal Keeping Place after a visit to the old disused warehouse in Redfern where it is temporarily stored, and where Syron lives. Craddock is rightly proud of the first purchase by a public institution of a significant collection of Syron's protest art, which enables the Museum to tell our story of political struggle by someone widely known as a pioneer of urban art. Craddock knew that Indigenous history and culture is core business at a Museum where some 80 per cent of the collection is Indigenous and that visitors have a right to expect Indigenous involvement in content and program delivery. Not as a choice but an imperative. But most of all he knew that in this area the Museum has to be forever proactive.

**Margo Neale**



MESSAGE FROM THE  
HEAD ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER PROGRAM

Welcome again to Goree. I'd first like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the Canberra region, the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people.

The year is shaping up to be a busy one for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, with major exhibitions under development, and maintaining the existing permanent exhibitions.

As well as our popular permanent galleries, our Focus Gallery, located in the Gallery of First Australians, keeps busy. We are preparing to send the civil rights exhibition, *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, on tour to Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. *Tayenebe*, an exhibition of Tasmanian women's fibre work, is on show in the Focus Gallery from late March until July. In December, we open Yalangbara, a collaborative project between the National Museum, the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery and the Marika family of the Rirratjingu people of north-east Arnhem Land.

In July, we open the *Yiwarra Kuju* (One Road) exhibition in our major temporary gallery. This exhibition brings together a magnificent collection of art and stories from the region around the Canning Stock Route in the Western Desert. This exhibition is the result of close collaboration with the Western Australian arts organisation FORM, and several art centres of the region. The complex Indigenous perspective on the history of the Canning Stock Route is told through art and story.

Elsewhere in the Museum, we started the year by celebrating the anniversary of the Apology. We are planning events for NAIDOC Week as well as public programs to accompany the various exhibitions.

All that, plus the usual work of developing and documenting collections and providing advice to audiences and stakeholders, means a busy year. One that we hope you will enjoy hearing about.

**Michael Pickering**

An Australian invention



The mighty Murray Cod



# tayenebe — exchange

*Water carrier by Eva Richardson, 2005*  
Bull kelp (*Durvillaea potatorum*),  
tea-tree (*Melaleuca sp.*),  
river reed (*Schoenoplectus pungens*)



Photo: Simon Cuthbert, TMAG

*Baskets by Vicki maikutena Matson-Green, Patsy Cameron, Dulcie Greeno and Audrey Frost*



Every day at the Museum I see staff hard at work preparing for the next exhibition. Then, once up, it seems all too short a span before the exhibition is about to close and the same staff are deep in preparation for the next. Some exhibitions are more special to me than others. Some we produce in-house and the process is plain to see, while others are prepared at other institutions and come ready-made, with no evidence of the sweat and effort that went into its making.

*Tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women's Fibre Work* was quite a different model. With this exhibition, the Museum was invited to become a partner and adviser, so in a sense, the Museum sat along the sidelines all the way, watching the entire process, watching other people carry out the hard yakka. But the Museum was there at the end too, celebrating and witnessing the joy and pride of the women whose work is on display.

The entire project was a partnership between Arts Tasmania, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the National Museum of Australia. It aimed to create professional development and creative opportunities for women through reviving traditional fibre skills and thereby reclaiming aspects of their culture. From 2006 to 2009, Arts Tasmania's Lola Greeno organised a series of workshops across the state that involved about 35 women and girls. More than weaving was carried out at these workshops: the word *tayenebe*, a Bruny Island word meaning exchange, was put into practice.

'The project exemplifies a series of vital exchanges between women, across generations, across cultures and between institutions,' says exhibition curator Julie Gough. 'More than skills have been shared; stories and memories, many highlights and also sadness have been part of the *tayenebe* journey.'

The results of the project are a collection of baskets and kelp containers of great beauty. Artists also produced personal journals as they recovered the knowledge of their ancestors. The journals were made to document the entire *tayenebe* project: plants and fibres that were — or were not — suitable for weaving; their distribution and differences in the plant varieties across the state; samples of the fibre; photographs and information gleaned from each other and from historical sources; as well as creative notes and thoughts on the process.

The works were first exhibited in Hobart last year in a stunningly elegant show. The exhibition was cleverly designed, using sustainable materials and methods and a modular format that makes it very adaptable for the variety of venues to which it will travel. The design also ensures the women's works, old and new, will be kept safe. One historical basket will be touring with the recently produced baskets and kelp containers.

The Museum has an added reason to celebrate *tayenebe*. We are fortunate that approximately half of the fibre work on display has been acquired by the Museum, as well as some other pieces that were made during the workshops, including string and rope samples and one of the journals kept by the artists. All of these will become part of the National Historical Collection.

**Andy Greenslade** Curator, AT SIP

The exhibition opened on 30 March at the Museum and is on show until 25 July. Go to <http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/> to see more about the exhibition, and also find a link to the TMAG and Craft Australia's Right Way discussion about the *tayenebe* project.



*Weaving at Larapuna*



Lucia Bossi, Courtesy, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

# WATER

H<sub>2</sub>O=LIFE

*Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life* is an international exhibition exploring the way humans have used water for thousands of years. Through displays and interactive demonstrations it illustrates the natural and cultural aspects of the water that underpins life on earth. It offers a global perspective, including Australia's own water story. It aims to make people more aware of water's key role on the planet and of the need for it to be valued highly rather than taken for granted.

Australia's water story is one of adapting to the environment, and adapting the environment to us. The development of water resources in Australia is one of the biggest issues now confronting Australians.

Looking at water in nature, there are animals, birds and plants that reflect remarkable adaptation to a dry continent. Small mammals such as the fat-tailed dunnart and kowari obtain all their water from their food. They don't need to drink, which is just as well as they inhabit some of the most arid parts of Australia. Pelicans, straw-necked ibis, yellow-billed spoonbills and other waterbirds fly huge distances to find water after rainfall. How they find the water is still a mystery. Floods boost food sources and breeding opportunities for birds. Plants have adapted with root systems, leaf forms and hard seed cases, which combine to give advantages in a dry environment.

Indigenous people have been in Australia for at least 60,000 years, learning how to live in a continent where the fundamental fluid of life can so often be in short supply. From coolamons and canoes to fishtraps, Aboriginal material culture illustrates the triumphs of adaption by one of the world's oldest civilisations. The exhibition includes a bark canoe and a wooden container used for carrying water, both from the Museum's National Historical Collection. Significantly, water isn't just a resource. It is part of culture too. One of the most pervasive figures in the spiritual life of some Aboriginal cultures is the Rainbow Serpent, strongly associated with rain and a giver of life. Paintings from the Museum's collection showing the Rainbow Serpent and traditional waterholes are on show alongside a painted boomerang and a pubic cover made from pearl shell. These examples of Indigenous cultural interpretations of water help to demonstrate its significance as more than just a physical resource.

Under the influence of climate change, Australians are now experiencing one of the worst droughts in recorded history. Consequently, agricultural use of water is scrutinised like never before. Regulation of rivers through the construction of dams, and the diversion of water for irrigation, have had profound impacts. Changed

*Matthew demonstrating one of the interactive displays to guest Mick Dodson*



Photo: Matthew Higgins

*The Dethridge water meter wheel has been produced in thousands and is a symbol of Australian irrigation*

flow patterns have contributed to declines in native fish and waterbird populations. Wetlands have shrunk and salinity has worsened. The biggest blue-green algae outbreak seen anywhere on earth occurred on the Darling River in 1991, and another one bloomed in 2009 over hundreds of kilometres of the Murray River.

Despite the gloom, there are positives, and hope for a healthy water future is a theme of the *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O =Life* exhibition. An instrument used near Wagga Wagga to research salinity is displayed, underlining work to combat rising groundwater levels and salt. A live Murray Cod serves to remind visitors what is at stake in our rivers and is accompanied by images of newly constructed fish ladders on dams, and fisheries' research initiatives.

Exhibition visitors will also be challenged to ponder a range of water issues at the personal level, from the use of dual-flush toilets to water as a vote-swing at elections. Above all, the exhibition aims to show people that Australia's water future is not simply something imposed on them, but is created by people and the decisions they make now.

**Matthew Higgins Senior Curator** and **Sharon Goddard Assistant Curator**  
*Old New Land and Eternity*

*Aboriginal men obtain water from mallee root at Yalata in South Australia, 1981*



Photo: National Library of Australia

# Making a splash at the Museum

Hands-on with Taronga Zoomobile



Photo: Jason McCarthy

Graham Walker entertains the crowd



Photo: Jason McCarthy

Summer 2010 saw another fun and successful holiday program for families and children at the National Museum of Australia. In three weeks, over 5000 families and children participated in a range of hands-on activities, workshops and a family festival themed around the *Water: H<sub>2</sub>O=Life* exhibition.

Highlights of the school holiday program included:

- Live water bug identification with Waterwatch ACT
- 'H<sub>2</sub> Whoa! Science Show,' with scientist Graham Walker performing fun water science experiments
- Taronga Zoomobile performance and animal handling
- Children becoming water bug detectives in a science and drawing workshop
- Music for Everyone, music workshops for people with disabilities

The centrepiece of each holiday program is the Discovery Space, a free drop-in program dedicated to open-ended, play-based learning for families and children. The Discovery Space is located

in the Hall of the Museum and runs every school holidays. The programs are designed for children aged 5 to 12 but younger and older children are always welcome to participate.

The summer 2010 Discovery Space: Thirst for Knowledge, provided the opportunity for visitors to learn about why healthy waterways are important for all living things. After getting up-close to live water bugs, children faced the challenge of making their own water bugs from a choice of recycled and craft materials. There was a great range of creative responses, including dragonflies, water mites and freshwater yabbies.

For the summer 2010 program we were fortunate to have Indigenous cadet Lorna Woodcock join the team to learn and assist with delivering some of the programs.

After the program we asked Lorna what it was like to work in the Discovery Space?

She replied, 'As a cadet, working in the Discovery Space gave me a glimpse at the younger audiences of the Museum — the future visitors. I got to learn about water bugs, enjoyed sharing memories

Col Hardy performing 'Animals of the Dreaming'



Photo: Jason McCarthy

Lorna Woodcock assisting the making of 'Bugs'



Photo: Benita Tanks

A Discovery Space creation



Photo: Jason McCarthy



Photo: Benita Tunks

of being bitten by a leech with a very disgusted little girl, and learnt ways to relate an exhibition concept to younger audiences. I enjoyed the challenge of it all and even got to be coordinator on Australia Day, but most of all the team and delivery of the program made the experience all the more fun. Oh and also getting to make water bugs! Definitely a highlight.'

The autumn Discovery Space (12–23 April 2010) featured a 'Making Do' theme celebrating things in the Museum's collection that are made by hand, including making bush toys from craft materials and recycled objects.

Planning for the winter Discovery Space (5–16 July) is underway and will include the family festival for NAIDOC Week on Saturday 10 July. The program will include the Annual Didgeridu Competition and opportunities to:

- learn Indigenous dance
- hear interactive storytelling
- play traditional Indigenous games
- get busy 'making' with craft materials in the Discovery Space.

**Luke Cummins** Public Programs Coordinator

To learn more about upcoming programs for families and children at the Museum go to the Museum's website [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)

Artist Naomi Zouwer completing the 'Bugs' window mural

Another Discovery Space creation



Photo: Benita Tunks



Photo: Benita Tunks

# Touching lives



*Anthony Murphy, Wilfred Nawirridj, Jimmy Namarnyilk (seated) from Gunbalanya community, Martin Thomas and expedition survivor Ray Specht pose in front of a display of objects from the expedition*



*Kitty Eggerking, Suzy Russell, Hugh Cairns, Leon White, Martin McCarthy, Bill Harney Yuidumduma, from the Menngen community, view artefacts from the expedition*

*Barks, Birds & Billabongs: Exploring the legacy of the 1948 Australian-American Expedition to Arnhem Land* was a five-day international symposium held in November 2009 which revisited this landmark international venture — led by Australian anthropologist and photographer Charles P Mountford (1890–1976) — and explored the vast collections gathered during the trip with an emphasis on Indigenous perspectives.

People of all shapes, sizes, ages and backgrounds trailed into the Museum's Peninsula Room at noon on Sunday 15 November 2009 to the bird sounds of Red Lily lagoon, recorded 60 years ago in Arnhem Land. Moving silently across a large screen in the room were images projected from another time. There was footage of cargo being handled by whitefellas and their 'native' helpers from a boat stranded precariously on a sandbar; Aboriginal men in nagas filing past Charles P Mountford's tent receiving their payments for work while mammologist Dave Johnson from the Smithsonian Institution stuffs a spotted quoll. Mawalan and others sit in bough shelters painting on bark and telling stories to Mountford while children play with model canoes in the buoyant surf at Yirrkala. On Groote Eylandt the strapping young Gerald Blitner guides a party of scientists across sea and land to burial sites and rock art galleries; the tanned and bare-chested bushman Bill Harney makes a hearty damper on a sheet of bark while young botanist Ray Specht beavers away collecting and pressing specimens in the various bush camps of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. The year was 1948.

In this room, six decades on, sat the now 84-year-old Ray Specht and his family, the adult children of Gerald Blitner and other descendants from Groote, Bill Harney Jnr, the Waramanga son of old Bill Harney, the grandchildren of CP Mountford as well as the relatives of many others of the local communities shown in the film, such as Joe Gumbula from Galiwinku, Thomas Amagula from Groote, Jimmy Namarnyilk and Donna Nadjamerrek from Gunbalanya, and

Naminapu Maymuru from Yirrkala. Ninety-six-year-old Frank Fenner, a former colleague of Mountford, sat reminiscing with Specht. Margaret Calwell, the daughter of Arthur Calwell (a minister in Chifley's government who supported the expedition), unearthed significant memorabilia while academics from the Smithsonian, the National Geographic Society and a number of Australian universities stimulated reminiscences. The American side of the expedition was well-represented by the son and son-in-law of ichthyologist Gifford Miller, known as the fish man. One notable absentee was the 99-year-old Peter Bassett-Smith who at the last minute was taken ill, but was represented by his son and daughter.

As the silent National Geographic film rolled, a microphone was passed around the room capturing a running commentary by those able to flesh out the story, put names to previously unnamed Aboriginal people and explain the 'old ways' depicted. Specht, the sole survivor of the exhibition to be present, was bursting at the seams with anecdotes, providing unique insights. What transpired over the afternoon was a remarkable, impromptu and dynamic piece of history-telling from both sides of the 'frontier'.

This family reunion of descendants and others closely connected with the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition was one of those electrifying rare moments where history and memory intersect in the most human of occasions. Decades were telescoped into a few hours for the eclectic assemblage of people who found union through an extraordinary historic moment, which continues to touch the lives of all connected. Stories heard through their fathers and grandfathers, not recorded in the history books, were exchanged, and connections made and remade. As the daughter of 99-year-old survivor Peter Bassett-Smith (Cine-Photographer) explained '... now I know why my father took his wife to Arnhem Land for their honeymoon in 1951 ...', and Daemoni Bishop discovered the origin of her unusual name and what it was that caught her father's imagination back in 1948. Her father named her after a Yirrkala girl that he had met on the expedition.



# Arnhem Land Reunion at Barks, Birds & Billabongs



*Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC and performers of the Manikay song cycle from Galiwinku, at the launch of the symposium*



Photo: National Library of Australia

*The Phantom beached on a sand bank at low tide, East Alligator River, Northern Territory*

This event fittingly kicked off the five-day symposium, characterised by the transfer of knowledge from western keeping places to rightful Aboriginal owners. Future dialogues were set in motion, including plans for a research portal to digitally unify the expedition's collections, which are dispersed across different locations around the world; an international touring exhibition; assistance with the development and on-going support for community museums; sharing collections with Arnhem Land centres and digital repatriation of film, photos and audio recordings as part of a program of connecting communities with collections and recovering voices.

However, the most dramatic and unexpected result of the symposium was news that the Smithsonian are prepared to repatriate human remains, after decades of unsuccessful lobbying by numerous delegations.

**Margo Neale** *Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director, and Senior Curator*

## What delegates said :

*... engaging, provocative and stimulating ... with moments of real emotion and wonder — rare encounters in most academic conferences.*

**Tony McGregor** Arts Editor, ABC Radio National

*A fabulous achievement ... it felt joyous! It worked for so many different audiences and helped build connections that should develop fruitfully over the years. Everyone I have talked to felt it was a great event, intellectually exciting, collaborative and could hardly have been better organised.*

**Professor Howard Morphy** Director Research School of Humanities and the College of Arts and Social Sciences, ANU

*A special thanks for the sensitive manner in which material was gathered and presented ...*

**Peter Lange** from the Blitner family, Groote Eylandt

*The entire event greatly exceeded my expectations, and also those of my brother-in-law, Bob Cashner. It was tremendous to meet some of the Arnhemlanders, especially the Blitner mob, as the connection back through Gerry Blitner to my father was so strong. That was very special for me.*

**Gifford H Miller** Professor, INSTAAR and Geological Sciences, University of Colorado, USA

For more information on Barks, Birds & Billabongs: Exploring the legacy of the 1948 Australian-American Expedition to Arnhem Land, please see our website [www.nma.gov.au/barks\\_birds\\_billabongs](http://www.nma.gov.au/barks_birds_billabongs)

# A history of hard work



*Hop farmers at Coranderrk, 1882*

In November, the Museum and the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University co-hosted a conference entitled 'Indigenous participation in Australian Economies'. The aim of the conference was to look at the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have played in Australia's economic history over the past 200 years.

Most people are aware of the pre-contact economies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with much written or displayed about the gathering and sharing of food, the trade in resources and objects, and the exchange of ideas. Many are also aware of the popularity of the modern Indigenous art market. Few people, however, are aware that Indigenous participation was often essential to the survival of many introduced western activities.

The two-day conference looked at eight key themes, with a number of papers in each. Themes presented were:

- Histories of economic relations
- Exotic relations: camels and the articulation of Indigenous and settler social and economic forms
- Economy and material culture
- The transformation of relations and transactions within and around missions and stations, fringe camps and towns
- Transitions from no wage to low wage and Community Development and Employment Projects (CDEP)
- Stolen wages and the contemporary efforts to secure recompense
- Local enterprise and Indigenous communities
- Conflicts over development.

Papers were diverse and ranged from trade and sale of Aboriginal art, to Aboriginal peoples' use of camels, mission work, stolen wages, dingo trapping, bush food industries, land management and modern entrepreneurship, to name a few.

The conference was a great success, attracting over 38 Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers, many co-presenting. It highlighted the often-neglected role that Aboriginal people have played in major industries over the past 200 years.

**Michael Pickering** Head, ATSIP

More information on the papers presented is available at [http://www.nma.gov.au/research/indigenous\\_participation\\_in\\_australian\\_economies/](http://www.nma.gov.au/research/indigenous_participation_in_australian_economies/)

*Axe from the colonial period*



*Stockman's spur from Wave Hill*



*Joe McGinnes's wharfie's hook and tuckerbox representing his history as a wharfie and rights activist*



*Seating from the Bowraville Theatre representing the history of segregation practices across Australia*



# Whose objects? Whose history?



*Rodney Dillion's wetsuit used when diving for abalone*



*Torres Strait Islander diving helmet used in the pearling industry*



*Mayor Ted Simpson's radio he used to stay in touch with current affairs and news*

When you mention working with collections

relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, people usually assume you are talking about classic objects, such as spears, boomerangs, shields, baskets, art and the like. It comes as a surprise when it is pointed out that western objects, from a stirrup to a computer, can also be important objects in Indigenous histories.

In November 2009, I gave a paper at the 'Indigenous participation in Australian Economies' conference drawing attention to the variety of objects that should also be considered 'Indigenous'. In their long engagements with western economic activities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used and owned western tools, technologies, and knowledge. These objects are as much a part of Indigenous heritage and histories as are spears, boomerangs, shields, and baskets.

The tools reflect the many industries that relied on Indigenous labour. Moreover, there is hardly an industry that has not seen Indigenous involvement. From the colonial era there are the horseshoes and tack that reflect engagement in the pastoral industry, harvesting tools, ploughs, spades, saws and axes that reflect work in the farming and logging industries, bricks and stone from work in the building industry, cloths and pipes from daily life. From the early twentieth century there are again the tools of the pastoral industry, there are diving suits worn by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pearl divers from Broome to the Torres Strait, there are ships captained and crewed by Indigenous sailors.

Moving on in time, the Museum is proud to recognise Mayor Ted Simpson's work as a shearer, as well as the wharfie's hook and tuckerbox of Joe McGuinness. We have the Bowraville cinema seats — one style for whites, one style for Aboriginal patrons. More recently we have acquired the electric frypan used by Ernabella batik makers and Rodney Dillion's wetsuit, used to catch abalone. It won't be long before we have the computers and mobile phones used by Indigenous people in both maintaining cultural information and communicating their lives and aspirations.

In the past, museums have often failed to explicitly reflect the significance of such objects in the development of their Indigenous exhibitions and collections. With rare exceptions, those tools used by Indigenous workers, but made by western industry, usually ended up in the western history collections. However, this is changing, with the recognition that appreciating their importance to Indigenous histories is essential to telling the ongoing story of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Michael Pickering** Head, ATSIP

# Surviving assimilation:

We discover Mary Terszak's inspiring story



Mary holding a photograph of herself with her schoolmates



Mary, who wears a T-shirt she made for the 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations, being interviewed by Karolina



Mary holding her Certificate of Exemption

To find out more about Mary's story and the current National Museum of Australia travelling exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow: Fighting for Indigenous Rights 1920–1970*, please see the Museum's website [www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/from\\_little\\_things\\_big\\_things\\_grow/](http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/from_little_things_big_things_grow/).

I was two years as an Aboriginal child and then all taken away. I now, as I said, stand here not as the person that I was born to be — I am changed, programmed into ... white society. Mary Terszak, 2009

In February 2009, Museum photographer Lannon Harley and I had the great opportunity to visit Mary Terszak, a Nyoongah woman from south-west Western Australia. Mary kindly allowed us to record her memories and memorabilia of institutionalisation, as well as her reflections on life as a member of the Stolen Generations, for inclusion in the exciting travelling exhibition and accompanying website — *From Little Things Big Things Grow: Fighting for Indigenous Rights 1920–1970*.

Mary Terszak's life was forever changed when, at the age of 2, she was taken away from her mother, placed in a children's home, told she was an orphan, and instructed not to associate with Aboriginal Australians. By the time she left Sister Kate's Children's Home 18 years later, Mary had endured a tough, parentless, lonely childhood spread across four institutions. Having moved from Western Australia to the New South Wales Central Coast over 40 years ago, Mary still keenly feels the effects of these experiences. She also still struggles with her anger at what happened to her and the countless other Indigenous Australians who have endured the effects of Australia's assimilation policy.

In some ways, the government's ruthless tactics were effective — Mary has lived her life largely disassociated from her family, her people, her culture and her Country. This life has not been what Mary would have wanted for herself, however, and the sorrow and difficulty that the isolation has caused her have led Mary to become a passionate spokesperson against these alienating government practices.

In order to raise awareness of these past practices and their lasting impact on those affected, Mary used the discipline that was so heavily-handedly instilled in her in the children's home to gain a postgraduate tertiary education and write a book about her life — *Orphaned by the Colour of My Skin: A Stolen Generation Story*. Mary also speaks publicly about her experiences and mentors Indigenous children at a local school — providing them with the

support and encouragement that was denied her during her childhood. In the last few years, Mary has also taken the brave step of reconnecting with her family and Country, though like many others in her position, she has found this a very challenging and confronting process.

The many tragedies of Mary's life are the consequence of government interventions into her upbringing — interventions that, by their very nature, were discriminatory against Indigenous Australians. Ironically, they would probably not have resulted in Mary's removal and institutionalisation in a children's home had it not been for her pale complexion and 'white' appearance, which in the government's eyes made her the perfect candidate for assimilation.

In recent times, the claims of outspoken survivors like Mary have begun to be heard — not only by ordinary Australians, but also state and federal governments. In February 2008, for example, Mary was proud to attend Parliament House to hear the Government's Apology to the Stolen Generations. This formal acknowledgement of the grievances inflicted by the forced removal of Indigenous children from their parents marked an important step in the healing process for many of those affected.

The November 2009 Apology to the 'Forgotten Australians' — the roughly 500,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian children, as well as former child migrants, who were placed in orphanages and homes during the early and mid-twentieth century — focused on the government's failure in their 'duty of care' to these children. This apology again brought attention to the abuse and neglect suffered by countless children, such as Mary, as a result of their placement through government policy into institutional care.

The National Museum of Australia, in association with other key organisations and in consultation with affected individuals, plays a vital role in documenting and sharing in the public arena the histories of these ill-treated Australians.

**Karolina Kilian** Assistant Curator, ATSIP

# Taking care of 'Albert'

A very precious item came into the Museum's care last November when Museum Director Craddock Morton accepted the gift of the Albert Namatjira painting *Arreyonga Paddock, James Range* from the 'Girls' of the former Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home.

In the Home, these Girls (as they call themselves) had nothing of their own. Everything belonged to the Home. Everything except for one thing — a painting by Albert Namatjira. But how did a painting from a famous Central Australian artist end up on a wall in a children's home in southern New South Wales?

In 1956, Albert Namatjira while on a visit to Sydney took a side-trip to Cootamundra and visited the Home. Aboriginal people were certainly not encouraged to visit children's homes like Cootamundra but Namatjira was a national celebrity so authorities must have altered their usual policy. Namatjira himself, unlike almost any other visitor to the Home, would have understood what the girls had lost, taken from family, community and Country. Nada Shareef was a child at the Home when Namatjira came and she remembers that 'he had tears in his eyes to see all the girls there, because we're all taken from our families.'

Cut off from the outside world, the girls did not really know who he was. But he was a visitor to break the routine of their dull lives and he was memorable because he was so black! Many of them had been taken away from family too young to remember seeing a grown Aboriginal man.

One year later, Namatjira sent this painting of his Country. It was hung over the door in the main dormitory so all the girls passed under that painting every day of their lives. They knew it was theirs, they knew that the famous Aboriginal painter Albert Namatjira had painted a picture of his Country for them, the girls who had lost so much.

When the Home closed, the painting disappeared. But the Girls never forgot about it and were always looking out for where it might be. Then about 10 years ago, Lola Edwards, one of the Girls, found it hanging in the headquarters of the Department of Community Services in Ashfield, Sydney. 'I'm not leaving without it' was her direct comment. And she didn't. She left with the painting under her arm.

It took some time for the Girls to decide where 'Albert', as they called the painting, should be kept. The Museum is very privileged in that it was here that the Girls decided 'Albert' should be cared for, to be kept forever, as part of the story of the Girls and the Cootamundra Home.

It was an emotional day when 'Albert' was given into the care of the Museum. Many of the Girls who came to Canberra for the day had not seen the painting since they left the Home. Director Craddock Morton made a personal apology as he accepted the painting. 'I'm sorry for what we've done to you. Personally, I feel deep sadness and shame,' he said. 'But there is joy as well, at your strength in confronting your situation and your resilience in coming through it.'

'Albert' will be on display in the Lower Gallery of First Australians for some time to come. Being a watercolour it will need to be 'rested' in the dark for periods of time, so the colours will remain as bright into the future as they are now. But during the times it is not on display, the Girls and their families can still see it. All they have to do is let the Museum know they are coming to Canberra and that they would like to see the painting. It can then be taken out of its resting place for them to view.

**Jay Arthur** Curator, ATSIP



*Director Craddock Morton accepting 'Albert' on behalf of the Museum*



*Coota Girls surround 'Albert'*



*Coota Girls remembering Albert Namatjira visiting the home*

# Family history is land rights history

*Nick Brown, Kirsty McLaren, Ben Cruse and Peter Stanley*



Photo: Barbara Paulson

Ben Cruse, an Indigenous cadet at the National Museum, has spent the past summer working as part of the Museum's Centre for Historical Research on a research project that combines the world of scholarship and his family history. He has investigated the history of land rights activism on the far south coast of New South Wales by interviewing his father, Bj, and grandfather, Ossie, both active in the land rights cause around Eden.

Ben's research is extending our understanding of this aspect of Indigenous history. 'I grew up in a political household,' Bj tells Ben. In fact, his family's involvement in activism spans several generations. His great-grandfather Ben took part in the Day of Mourning protests in 1938, and his father has been involved in land rights activism around Eden for 30 years.

The Cruse family has many connections to notable figures in Indigenous history (as Ben's research brings out). His grandfather worked with William Cooper, Pearl Gibbs and Faith Bandler. Bj's inspiration was his father, Ossie, while Charles Perkins was a family friend.

Ben has drawn upon family memories and local records, and has researched the wider context of the land rights struggle, highlighting both his family's central role but also the way in which they have worked with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to create new ways of managing the local environment.

The project has been a collaboration between the Museum and the Australian National University, where Ben is undertaking a degree in anthropology. His goal is to work in Indigenous heritage, preferably on the far south coast of New South Wales. He is already involved in working for the local Indigenous heritage centre at Eden.

Ben's research has been aided at the Museum by Dr Nick Brown (a senior research fellow in the Centre for Historical Research) who has written about the environmental history of the south coast, and at the ANU by Professor Nic Peterson of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies. He has been advised by Kirsty McLaren, a tutor at the ANU's Jabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre.

The National Museum has a strong commitment to supporting the professional education of aspiring Indigenous museum professionals, and currently supports three Indigenous cadets.

Ben is the second Indigenous cadet the Centre for Historical Research has hosted. Last year Rebecca Richards worked as a research assistant in the Centre. She recently won a prestigious Neville Bonner Memorial Scholarship to enable her to complete her honours thesis in anthropology at the University of Adelaide.

All at the Museum, and especially those involved with Ben's research, wish him well in achieving his ambitions.

**Peter Stanley** *Head, Centre for Historical Research*

# Hidden story behind a portrait

Mike Pickering, Leanne Dempsey and Fiona Paisley

At a recent lunchtime event held in the *From Little Things Big Things Grow* exhibition space, I shared a 'Public Conversation' with Michael Pickering (Head of ATSIP) about my work on the life of Anthony Martin Fernando. Reflecting on the power of Raj Nagi's painting of Fernando hanging in the exhibition, I began by describing the event it depicts: Fernando's remarkable street protest outside Australia House in London during the late 1920s. 'This is all that is left of my people' so Aboriginal protestor Anthony Martin Fernando is said to have advised passers-by, pointing to small toy skeletons — then popular children's novelties — he had dotted on his person. While we know Fernando often lived as a street trader and that toys were among his wares, the use of skeletons in this protest seems likely to refer to reports reaching London at this time of the massacre of Aboriginal people near Forrest River in Central Australia. Even the conservative British newspaper *The Times* could not ignore the damning testimony given at the enquiry into the role of police in the killings, at which some tins containing charred bones of the deceased were tabled as evidence. The toy skeletons stood not only for murder and efforts at cover-up, but for the capacity of the dead to haunt the present.



Given the dramatic nature of his protests, why is Fernando one of the least known of the remarkable Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are featured in the exhibition? One reason is that Fernando, of South Asian and Aboriginal descent and born in Sydney in the 1860s, had already left Australia at the turn of last century — when he was middle-aged. Another is that virtually all his protests took place overseas and hence are recorded mostly in archives in other countries: by the 1910s he was living and working in Europe and, following confinement as a civilian detainee in an Austrian internment camp during the war, had taken his protests for Aboriginal Australia to the streets of Rome and London. Thirdly, at the centre of Fernando's politics was his black identity — his Aboriginality was guided by his mother's memory (she was his 'guiding star'). At the same time, while he was never in contact with his peers in Australia, Fernando shared many of their concerns and aims. He brought a modern Aboriginal perspective not unlike their own to the world of international politics in Europe, taking his call 'in the name of humanity' directly to the streets of London and Rome following the war, as well as through the pages of a Swiss newspaper, and at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park.



One of the diaries kept by Anthony Martin Fernando

Thanks to funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, I have been able to complete a comprehensive study of Fernando's life (to be published next year). I draw inspiration from histories that place Australia in transnational and global perspectives, such as those by Devleena Gosh and Heather Goodall in their Indian Oceans project, Regina Ganter in her book *Mixed Relations*, and John Maynard's work on the influence of African-American politics on Aboriginal activism in the early 1920s. This research work has been encouraged by the generosity of Heather Goodall, who first drew my attention to Fernando, and more recently by the response to the award-winning program by Daniel Browning on Radio National's *Away!* Among new findings I uncovered have been three notebooks kept by Fernando in which he described racism in London and his views of world affairs — visitors can see one of these remarkable documents on display in the exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*. Other new material only just surfacing relates to Fernando's picket in St Peter's Square in Rome in 1925; although a devout Catholic, he handed out flyers condemning the Catholic Church as well as the British regime for exploiting the Aboriginal people and for failing to uphold the very standards of 'civilisation' they so often proclaimed.

Another revelation concerns Fernando's name. Born to parents whose surname was Silva, at some stage during the first half of his life, he adopted the name by which we now know him in honour of Italian people with whom he found work several times in his life. This suggests he had already travelled overseas and returned again before his final departure in the early 1900s. Nonetheless, the connection between Aboriginal and South Asian Australian history that inspired Raj Nagi's wonderful painting still applies to Fernando's story: it was the same dynamic flow of populations across the region that brought his parents together nearly 150 years ago.

Fiona Paisley Historian, Griffith University

# A force for good



Kids contesting the ruck

Photo: David Callow

Those of us who follow footy know full well what an tremendous impact Indigenous footballers have had on all of the codes, in particular Australian Football (AFL) and Rugby League (NRL). In recent times this has been celebrated by the NRL through the wonderful Indigenous All Stars match at the Gold Coast, and through the AFL's annual Dreamtime at the G fixture.

At elite level, Indigenous footballers make up a significant proportion of the players in both codes. And at grass roots level football is much-loved by many Indigenous people. In metropolitan and country Australia Indigenous players provide much of the talent for local sides. There are examples of all-Indigenous sides across the nation. And if you have travelled to remote communities in central and northern Australia you will see what footy means to the people.

On 15 September last year Manning Clark House in conjunction with the National Museum of Australia conducted a well-attended seminar at the Museum. 'Force For Good: How Indigenous Australians have Enriched Football and how Football has Enriched the Lives of Indigenous Australians' brought together three fine speakers.

Dr Sean Gorman, from Curtin University in Western Australia, is the author of *Brotherboys*, the story of Jim and Phil Krakouer. Apart from talking about the Krakouer brothers, he gave a historical overview of Indigenous Australians in football, giving examples of celebrated footballers such as Doug Nicholls. He looked at the place of blackfellas in footy and some of the difficulties they

faced. He talked about his role with the AFL clubs in creating greater awareness of Indigenous cultures and understandings. He highlighted a couple of key moments — especially the image of St Kilda player Nicky Winmar lifting his jumper to the Collingwood crowd and pointing at his skin, and the stance of Michael Long when vilified in an ANZAC Day match.

Che Cockatoo-Collins played 160 games for Essendon and Port Adelaide and helped Michael Long change the AFL's racial and religious vilification code. He has also been involved in Indigenous education programs. He now works as an advisor to government and to oil and exploration company Santos. Che gave a brilliant account of his life in footy and talked about both the positive and negative elements of Indigenous Australians' involvement in football, which he believes can send a powerful message to the broader community. It can be an arena where overt racism can be challenged and where stereotypical assumptions can be attacked.

Historian Dr David Headon spoke of the many Indigenous players he has admired in the other codes, particularly Rugby League, over the years. Like Sean and Che he recalled numerous significant moments at the top level and also in lower-grade football.

It was an extremely engaging seminar and one which clearly demonstrated that footy has become a force for good, having a significant social impact.

**John Harms** Director, Manning Clark House



# NAIDOC Week on the Peninsula

Come along on Sunday 4 July, 2010



*Duncan Smith leading the dance line*

This year the National Museum of Australia (NMA) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) are celebrating unsung heroes. Together we are developing an exciting program of activities and events for all ages.

The Museum is joining with AIATSIS to celebrate NAIDOC Week on the Peninsula. We will have a variety of programs and events taking place on the Acton Peninsula in July 2010. There will be the annual Didj Comp, market stalls, performances, workshops, craft and art activities and storytelling.

In the Hall at the Museum there will be a central stage where you can participate in interactive storytelling with Wiradjuri man Larry Brandy, who was awarded Indigenous Person of the Year in 2008. Larry will demonstrate the use of different aboriginal tools and weapons as part of his stories. Members of the Eastern Arrente communities will share their stories in sand drawings.

Kick up a storm with Duncan Smith and his group of dancers and musicians from Wiradjuri Echo. Learn about the stories behind the dances, as well as some of the moves.

On the AIATSIS forecourt at the Peninsula there will be over 30 market stalls selling Indigenous arts and crafts, children's activities and products.

There will also be a stage where local performers — professional and amateur, young and old — will perform throughout the day.

## The Didj Comp

The National Museum of Australia and Corroboree College announce the annual Didj Comp to be held during NAIDOC Week 2010 — on Sunday 4 July from 2 to 3 pm at the Museum.

This year's competition will include prizes for:

- Best solo didjeridu player
- Best solo artwork on a didjeridu
- Best junior didjeridu player
- Most unique didjeridu

The competition is open to everyone. Registration is free although you are encouraged to register before the day. For enquiries and registration please contact Phillip Yubbagurri Brown on 0421 983 309, corroboreeman@gmail.com. or Warren Saunders at warren\_saunders@optusnet.com.au

More events will be announced closer to the date. Visit the websites for further details on the NAIDOC Week on the Peninsula celebrations for 2010.

<http://www.nma.gov.au>  
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au>

Sunday 4 July 2010 on the Acton Peninsula from 11 am to 3 pm **All welcome and entry is free.**



*Larry Brandy's interactive storytelling*



*Competitors at the annual Didj Comp*



*Children's art and craft in the Main Hall*

# ATSIP NEWS

All articles by **Barbara Paulson** unless otherwise stated



Photo: courtesy AIATSIS

*Sylvia Kleinert, Barbara Paulson, Janine Leane and Sam Faulkner*

## Representing urban narratives

In September 2009, I presented a paper 'Representing urban narratives' about the curatorial processes of cultural representation in museums during a session at the AIATSIS National Indigenous Studies Conference 2009: Perspectives on Urban Life. The session also included Janine Leane and Sam Faulkner, each presenting a paper on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented in literature.

The session opened with discussions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' representation in museums, film and literature. The main point being conveyed was the difference in content, portrayal and underlying text when

Indigenous people present their own stories and cultural information as opposed to information being mediated or represented by non-Indigenous people. There are pro and cons to representations of Indigenous people in both cases. Janine made the insightful point that 'when reading literature by non-Indigenous people writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the descriptions tell you more about the author than the subject.' Two other main issues arose within the discussions — one was the lack of 'self' representation of cultural information for public consumption and the other was the effect stereotyping has on how Indigenous people, knowledge and cultural materials are presented especially for wider audiences.

The three-day conference was packed with discussions on issues regarding all aspects of contemporary living for/ by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For more information see the AIATSIS website — [www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au).

## Research for a new joint exhibition between the British Museum and the National Museum of Australia

At the end of 2009 I was privileged to have the opportunity to spend an extended period in London researching the collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander objects held in the British Museum. This work forms part of research for a new exhibition being developed by the National Museum of Australia and the British Museum, planned to open in Canberra in 2012.

The British Museum's Australian collections have been assembled over the last 240 years. It begins with material Captain Cook collected at Botany Bay in 1770 and includes rare early material little represented in Australian museums. This exhibition will be the first opportunity to see much of this material in Australia since it was taken to the UK.

Museum staff have now begun working with Indigenous elders and cultural knowledge holders from communities who will be represented in the exhibition, to record their perspectives on the key objects in the exhibition. This work will provide a contemporary Indigenous perspective which complements the historical narrative derived from the collections' archival records.

**Ian Coates** Senior Curator, ATSIP

*Women's basket  
from Port Essington,  
Northern Territory  
transferred to the  
British Museum  
from the Haslar  
Hospital Museum,  
Portsmouth in 1855*



Photo: Ian Coates



*Bronwyn Razem in the  
Gallery of First Australians*

## Gunditjmara basket weaver visits the Museum collection

Bronwyn Razem visited the Museum in February this year to see firsthand the woven baskets we have in our collection. Bronwyn is a Gunditjmara basket weaver from Victoria and currently studying her Masters at the Institute of Koori Education, Deakin University. She is researching the weaving techniques used by differing Aboriginal nations across Australia and comparing them with the Gunditjmara techniques she learned from her family. Bronwyn comes from a long traditions of weavers and is one of a few women still practising the traditional Gunditjmara techniques.

Bronwyn spent a day in our collection stores looking at baskets as well as the spiritual aspects in designs applied within weaving and how they develop within the social dynamic of groups, noting that in most cases basket weaving is a communal activity. She is also looking at the way cultural groups have developed and adapted differing techniques in the contemporary field.

## Drawing links with online research



Barbara Paulson and Sarah Rhodes

Sarah Rhodes, outreach officer for Collections Australia Network (CAN) visited the Museum recently to start researching the history of the possum skin cloak. She is working on a project for the CAN Outreach Blog on how the Museum and other cultural organisations have worked with contemporary artists to revitalise the cloak making tradition. When she visited the Museum she saw the Tooloyn Koortakay display in the Gallery of First Australians and learnt about the possum skin cloak workshops. The multimedia project will map items relating to possum skin cloaks and look at the significant impact the revitalised practice has had on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

CAN is a social and technical platform for collections online. It is a national collection database representing galleries, libraries, archives and museums. It also operates as a community of practice, facilitating relationships across the sector via the CAN Outreach Blog. The blog uses thematic stories to interpret collection material, draw links between institutions and builds CAN's online collection database.

## From Little Things Big Things Grow education program

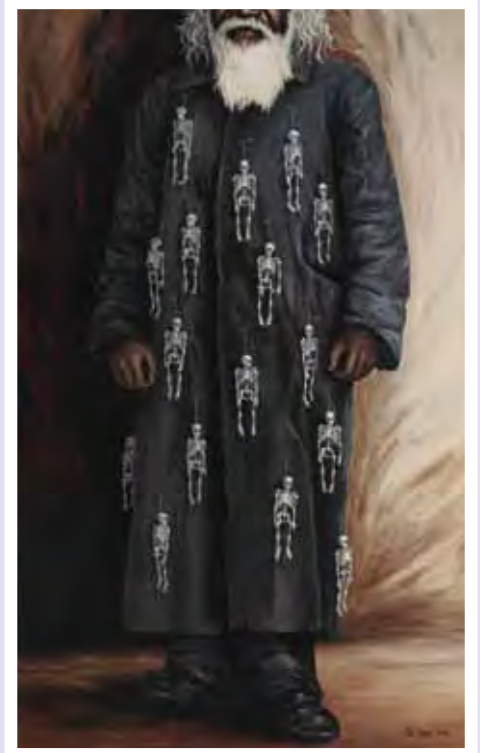
The Education section of the National Museum developed a program to help students identify with the people and events encompassed in the exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow* and to celebrate the fact that ordinary people did extraordinary things to improve Indigenous lives.

The students began with a discussion about what are 'civil rights' and what it might be like to live with fewer rights than others in their society. They then explored civil rights movements throughout the world. In the exhibition itself, the students walked among the life-size figures of Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who worked to improve Indigenous rights. Then they chose the stories of two people to relate to the other students. Choosing only two was the hard part! Finally the students discovered more by examining some objects in the education collection and working out what events in the history of Indigenous rights they related to.

Did the students learn? We think so. Even the groups who were mouse-quiet in the introduction ended up with plenty of information and ideas to contribute in the final discussion — after we managed to get them out of the exhibition!

**Susannah Churchill** Education Officer

*Anthony Martin Fernando portrait by Raj Nagi*



## 'Inside' — life in children's homes

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, childhood memories are those of being separated from family and brought up in a children's home. The Home was sometimes for Indigenous kids and sometimes it was one that took all children.

Indigenous children faced particular problems in these Homes. Their identity was sometimes hidden from them and they all suffered the loss of being brought up without culture and community.

The stories of these children, and of all children who found themselves in a Home, are being told in a new exhibition we are working on here at the Museum. We're including stories from people who identify as 'Stolen Generations', 'Forgotten Australians' or 'Former Child Migrants', and those who experienced living in 'Homes' and don't identify with any particular group. For a long time stories by people who grew up in children's homes were not listened to or believed. Now it's time for that history to be recognised.

If you have a story of life in a children's home, you can contact us on (02) 6208 5088 or 0428 699 905, or take a look at our website [www.nma.gov.au/blogs/inside](http://www.nma.gov.au/blogs/inside) and tell us your story.

**Jay Arthur** Curator, ATSIP

*Sculpture of a grieving woman, Colebrook Home Memorial, Eden Hills, South Australia. Between 1943 and 1972, Colebrook was home to some 350 Aboriginal children*

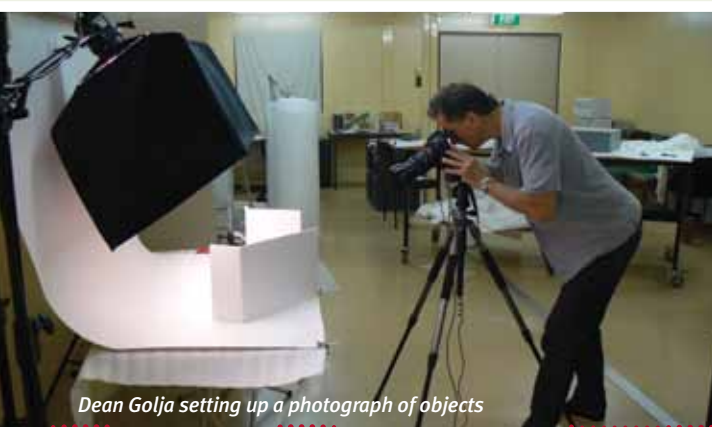
# Recent projects in the Repatriation Unit



*David Kaus showing Teresita Puruntatameri collection documentation while Eustace Tipiloura, Walter Kerinauia, Francis Orsto and Genevieve Campbell talk about other objects*



*Walter Kerinauia being interviewed by the ABC's Nicole Steinke. Walter is talking about an object collected by Charles Hart in 1928-29. Walter and Eustace Tipiloura, standing behind, provided advice on Tiwi objects in the Repatriation store*



*Dean Golja setting up a photograph of objects*

*Photo: David Kaus*

The National Museum of Australia's Repatriation Unit undertook two major projects in the second half of 2009. The first was to examine unprovenanced remains to try to work out where they may have been collected, and the other was to complete photography of all of the objects in the secret/sacred store. This allows us to provide more information to relevant communities. In addition, Repatriation staff continued to host visits and to discuss with communities the future of remains held at the Museum.

Not all remains come into the Museum with sufficient information to enable us to identify who we need to consult with about what should happen to them. When this information does accompany remains, we can talk to appropriate traditional owners and discuss what they would like to happen with them. When the information is inadequate, we need to turn to specialists to assist us. It takes particular skills and knowledge to be able to assess unknown remains to see if some kind of place information can be attributed to them. While this analysis does not always provide the information we need to identify who we should undertake discussions with, when it does we let people know how the information was arrived at so that they can decide if it is sufficient for them to make a decision on whether they can take responsibility for those remains.

With the completion of the photography project, the Museum now has high-quality photographs of all of the secret/sacred objects it holds. As informing traditional owners about these objects can mean travelling to central or northern Australia and showing them photographs of objects, it is important to have good images to show them. We brought in a professional photographer Dean Golja, to do this work with me assisting. Dean had previously worked for the Museum, and was well versed in handling these sometimes quite fragile objects with the sensitivities required.

Over recent months, Arnhem Land and Tiwi objects in the secret/sacred store have been inspected by senior traditional owners from these regions. They advised us that almost 80 of the objects they examined are in fact public. These were also photographed before they were removed to the Museum's general storage. Many of these objects have high exhibition potential and we are very pleased that they are now available to be shown to the general public.

Repatriation at the Museum is ongoing. The Museum actively lets traditional owners know about the remains and secret/sacred objects it holds and discusses with them the future of the items. It is Museum policy to consult widely so that all persons who have a right to make decisions and who want to be involved in the process are consulted. If items are to be repatriated, two options are offered: to return them to the traditional owners or to transfer them to another organisation of their choosing. Traditional owners or their representatives are welcome to pick them up, or Museum staff will deliver them. A third option, for the items to remain in the Museum's secure store, is also available.

**David Kaus** *Curator, ATSIP*

To find out more on repatriation visit the Museum's website at [www.nma.gov.au/collections/repatriation/](http://www.nma.gov.au/collections/repatriation/)

# Patsy Cameron's kelp water carriers



This water carrier was made by Aunty Patsy Cameron, a Tasmanian Aboriginal historian, cultural geographer, writer and elder who lives at Leengtenner (Tomahawk) in far north-eastern Tasmania. It is constructed from a circular piece of bull kelp skewered on parallel tea-tree rods, with two handles of twined string, made from white flag iris, knotted to the ends. The water carrier measures 30.5 cm long, 12 cm high and 11.5 cm wide, and is one of two in the Museum's collections made by Aunty Patsy.

The crafting of kelp (seaweed) to collect and store fresh water is a custom of Tasmanian Aboriginal women. French explorers wrote about the kelp's cultural importance:

Labillardière, naturalist on the d'Entrecasteaux expedition of 1791–94, named the species *Fucus potatorum* in recognition of its use in these elegant, practical buckets. (In Latin, *potare* means 'to drink'.)

Expedition artists also made detailed observations, including this illustration (above) by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, who visited the island in 1802 with the Baudin expedition. The devastation of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture during the 1800s and 1900s resulted in the loss of life, languages and many cultural practices, including kelp-working skills. Until recently, the drawings by the French artists were among the few known historic images of the water carriers.

Aunty Patsy began making water carriers in the early 1990s, when she was working at Riawunna, the Centre for Aboriginal Education at the University of Tasmania. She and her students took a field trip to the west coast, where the women and girls gathered kelp from the beach and worked out techniques around the camp fire. 'The French drawings were instrumental in guiding us,' she says. 'But they showed us the finished product — we had to experiment with the making.' As Aunty Patsy revived this craft she also discovered that the carriers were not only a practical necessity, but also 'may have had a health application. Kelp contains a lot of iodine, which is perhaps why the old people had few thyroid problems,' she explains. 'Their shellfish diet would have helped, too.'

Aunty Patsy's water carriers demonstrate the value of historical records to empower contemporary and future Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural practises. They represent renewed and continuing relationships with ancestors and Country, and tell personal and community stories of identity, heritage and survival.

**Stephanie Pfennigwerth**

*Assistant Curator, Collections Development Unit*

# Indigenous encounters with the Irish kind



*A decorated shield given to Francis Tully as a wedding gift by the Indigenous people who lived with the Duracks and Tullys at Quilpie*

From a south-western Queensland shield to a fishing rod to a golden guitar, the National Museum of Australia's temporary exhibition *Irish in Australia*, which opens on St Patrick's Day (17 March) 2011, will reveal the varied stories of the encounters between Indigenous Australians and Irish migrants from 1788 to the present day.

Not just a history lesson, the exhibition will celebrate some modern Australians who have become famous in their own lifetime, such as musician Ted Egan and artist John Moriarty, as well as earlier stories from the frontier, including the Duracks, Daisy Bates and Francis Gillen.

Over the past 40 years, Ted Egan has been writing and singing about the Australian way of life and its people, which has been heavily influenced by his close association with many Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory. Personal objects from the Aboriginal mother and Irish father of John Moriarty — well known for his work in Australia's Indigenous civil rights movement and for his Aboriginal Dreaming designs that adorn Qantas planes — will tell the story of this famed Australian's search for his roots.

Among the earlier stories from the frontier are those of the Irish-Australian pastoralist families of Tully and Durack, whose respect of the Indigenous groups on their land was acknowledged with a wedding gift of a carved and painted shield in 1915. The curators are hoping to shed more light on this gift by researching which among the Wangkumara, Wadjalang, Ngandangur, Punthamara and Maranganji would have been living around the Bulloo River and working with the Tullys at this time. The exhibition will also look at controversial migrants like Daisy Bates through the Aboriginal weapons she collected from the Ooldea region in the beginning of the twentieth century, and frontier conflict in Victoria through weapons that were collected by the von Steiglitz brothers after a skirmish with the local Aboriginal people in western Victoria. Through objects like necklaces, axes, head ornaments and bark paintings, the stories of famous collectors like Francis Gillen and Paddy Cahill will show the richness of culture from the Central Australian and Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) regions in the early 1900s.

There'll be a great mix of traditional objects, modern collectables and contemporary art, which will give visitors a taste of the entwined histories of Irish migrants and Indigenous people since 1788.

**Cinnamon van Reyk, Karolina Killian and Rebecca Nason**

*Curators, Irish in Australia project*

# Shell necklaces: An unbroken tradition

*Aunty Dulcie with a photo of her children, draped with one of her necklaces (a symbol of love and protection)*



*Cape Barren Goose shell necklace 2005, featuring white cockles, gull shells and black crow shells, made and worn by artist Lola Greeno*

Necklace-making is one of the most significant cultural traditions of Tasmanian Aboriginal women. Dating back at least 2000 years, it is also one of the few traditions that has continued without interruption since before European colonisation of what is now known as Tasmania began in 1803. The knowledge and skills have been passed down through generations of women, particularly the women of the Furneaux Islands, off Tasmania's north-east coast.

The National Museum of Australia is proud to have in its collections eight Tasmanian Aboriginal shell necklaces. Six of the eight necklaces were made by women from the same family: Dulcie Greeno, her sister Corrie Fullard, Dulcie's daughter Betty Grace, and Dulcie's daughter-in-law Lola Greeno.

Dulcie Greeno is a senior custodian of necklace-making. She was born in 1923 on Cape Barren Island, one of the Furneaux Islands group, and lived for many years on nearby Flinders Island, where she and her family continued their traditions of muttonbirding and crayfishing. Aunty Dulcie first began stringing shells as a child. 'My grandmother used to do shell necklaces and a couple of my Aunties,' she says in an interview she and her family recorded with Australian Museums and Galleries Online. 'We'd go around with them on the beach and collect shells with them.'

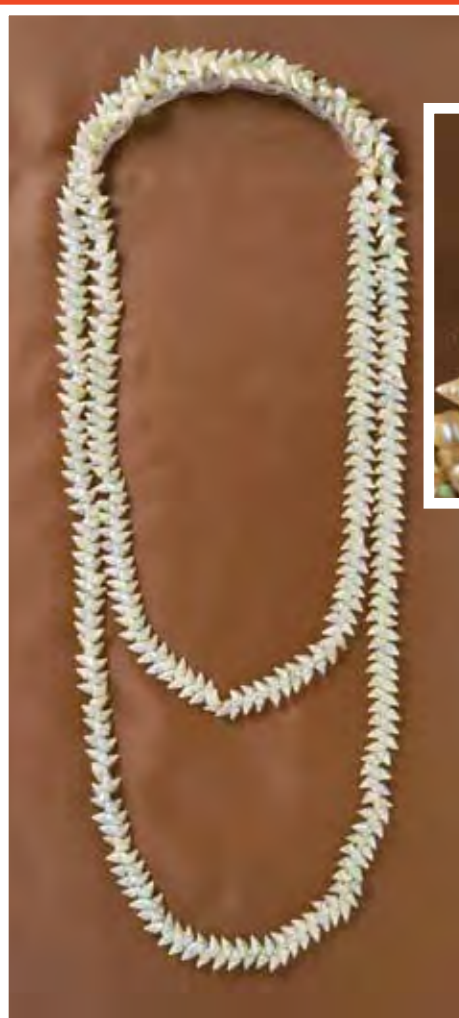
Shell necklaces were originally made for personal decoration and as gifts and tokens of honour. 'And they [the old people] would have used them to barter with the inland tribes for whatever they had, like ochre, because that wasn't found near the sea,' Aunty Corrie explains. After European settlement, necklaces were sold or exchanged for supplies. Lola, one of a family of 10, recalls her mother 'made them in the earlier times for pocket money helping to feed

and clothe us kids.' The beautiful necklaces are now sought after by national and state museums, galleries and private collectors.

Some of Aunty Dulcie's necklaces use hundreds of shells, including some so small they can fit under a fingernail. 'I like stringing these small rice shells,' she says. 'The smaller the shells the daintier I think the strings are.' Black and white shells are important to Lola because they were one of her mother's favourite designs. 'Every time I think about these shells I have to make a black and white necklace in respect and honour to her,' she says.

Shell-stringing is an opportunity for women to share stories, pass knowledge to younger generations and maintain culture. For women like Aunty Dulcie and Aunty Corrie, who now live in urban Tasmania, making necklaces is also an opportunity to renew their ties to Country, and the past. 'The shells for my first necklace came from a place where my Mum and Dad used to collect their shells,' says Aunty Corrie. 'It was there I played as a child.'

Different shells are collected depending on the season. Men often help the women collect the shells, especially the maireeners (rainbow kelp shells), which live on seaweed. 'We don't use maireeners we pick up on the beach because they are too brittle and they lose their colour,' explains Aunty Dulcie. Instead, people wade out into the ocean to get them. Her father helped her grandmother and mother collect maireeners, but 'Dad always used to say [the rice shells] were too fiddly for him. He had such big hands.' To collect these smaller shells, says Aunty Dulcie, 'we take our lunch and crawl along on our hands and knees.'



*Corrie Fullard's 'Jewel of the Sea' is 178 cm long and features hundreds of green maireeners*

*Lola Greeno and her daughter Vanessa collecting shells*



*Photo courtesy: Vanessa Greeno*

Historians Ling Roth and Lyndall Ryan have described how the women used to pierce each shell with the eyetooth of a kangaroo or wallaby. The shells were then threaded on kangaroo tail sinews or on string made from natural fibres, smoked over a fire, and rubbed in grass to remove their outer coating and reveal the pearly surface. The shells were later polished with penguin or muttonbird oil. Now the women use acids such as vinegar to clean the shells, and metal punches — including old darts — to hole the larger ones. ‘There’s a bit of a knack to how much pressure you put on them or otherwise you shatter them,’ explains Aunty Corrie.

Smaller shells are holed with a needle and threaded into intricate designs. Although it can take a day to thread just 10 cm of a necklace, the use of these smaller shells is increasing as the larger maireeners become more scarce. ‘Where in the past you only walked in a foot of water, today the same shells are in waist-deep water,’ says Aunty Corrie. She blames pollution for the gradual loss of the kelp on which the maireeners grow. Arts Tasmania and their Aboriginal Advisory Group are working with the museum sector and the University of Tasmania to consider how best to protect the environment and the women’s cultural practices.

The elders are determined their tradition will continue, and have mentored several younger women in necklace-making. ‘Too many of the stories are lost and gone with our people,’ says Lola. ‘I want to make sure my daughter continues her interest and that my granddaughter will eventually make these.’ She is proud to tell her grandchildren about the museums and galleries where they can see her work, and that of their great-grandmother. ‘It’s pretty special,’ she says. ‘Their history is stored in those places.’

**Stephanie Pfennigwerth**  
Assistant Curator, Collections Development Unit



*Necklace of green maireeners, brown rice shells and black cats' teeth shells, made by Dulcie Greeno*

# Next issue highlights

- The exhibition *tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women's Fibre Work*
- The Canning Stock Route Project and associated events
- The travelling civil rights exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*
- More stories from the *Barks, Birds & Billabongs* symposium
- More objects from our National Historical Collection
- Updates on new and continuing projects.

**Next issue due out in November 2010.**

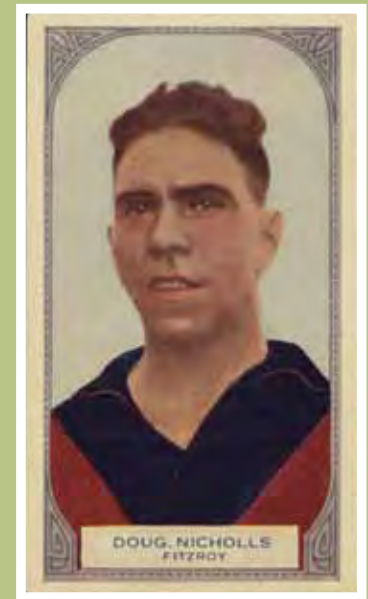


*Dance mask (about 1986) belonging to civil rights activist Shirley Andrews OAM. As seen in the From Little Things Big Things Grow exhibition*

*Three phases of water — ice, liquid and vapour, as seen in Water: H<sub>2</sub>O =Life exhibition*



*Victorian Footballers No.61 players card — Doug Nichols*



## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA CANBERRA

**National Museum of Australia**

GPO Box 1901, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

**Telephone:** (02) 6208 5000 or 1800 026 132

**Fax:** (02) 6208 5398

**Email:** [mates@nma.gov.au](mailto:mates@nma.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)

**Opening hours:** 9 am to 5 pm daily  
(closed Christmas Day)

*Gore: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News from the National Museum of Australia can be downloaded from our website [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)*

If you do not wish to receive future newsletters please let us know.

The National Museum is an Australian Government Agency.