

Hume LIN book club goes a Wandarr-ing



Wandarra Book Club members (from left) Allan Harrison, Leanne Brooke, Aunty Maureen Simpson and Karen Lovett get together to select their next title. Photo: Tammy Hunter.

As a way of building rapport between Hume LIN members in the Broadmeadows area of Melbourne's north-west, the Wandarra Book Club has been a great success.

Established by the LIN in partnership with Hume City Council, the Book Club now meets every six weeks to discuss their chosen book and to receive a new title for their next session.

After the idea was floated at a LIN meeting, DPCD Indigenous Community Engagement Broker Tammy Hunter took the proposal to the Hume City Council Librarian to get things moving.

Hume Council Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Leanne Brook, a keen reader herself, is the Book Club's coordinator. All group members are Hume LIN participants and take it in turns to play host by providing a cup of tea and a bite to eat for each gathering.

Leanne said Book Club members get 10 new books a year with accompanying notes about the author, published

reviews, discussion questions and further reading.

Participants also receive invitations to Hume library events such as new book launches and talks by authors.

Book Club member Karen Lovett said, "It's a great community event. The Book Club gets people together (and) we love going to other people's houses and sharing the space."

Another club member, Allen Harrison added, "You don't just read books - you have a yarn and a laugh too."

The purpose of the project is to stimulate the mind as well as to improve literacy skills and promote reading in the family.

The Book Club also contributes to improving communication skills by helping participants learn to listen to different points of view and different ways of expression, as well as how to 'discuss and disagree'.

Some of the books the Club has worked through already include *The Tall Man* by Chloe Hooper, *Swallow the Air* by Tara June Winch, Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart* and *Journey to the Stone Country* by Alex Miller.

Mildura workshop group



Lakes Entrance workshop group

Halls Gap workshop group



Geelong workshop group



Gearing up for community planning

Community planning can and should be an inspiring and empowering experience for the whole community.

Across Victoria, LIN participants are sharing community ideas and developing their planning skills.

AAV, in partnership with Swinburne University, has held a number of community planning workshops at Geelong, Bendigo, Lakes Entrance, Mildura, Kilsyth, Halls Gap and Melbourne.

These two day workshops are open to interested LIN participants from across the region and are facilitated by AAV and Swinburne staff. The aim is to introduce workshop participants to the key issues, ideas and methods used in community planning and help them to develop a successful plan in their own community.

The workshops use creative and innovative ways to build each participant's knowledge, confidence and motivation.

Artwork is used to express ideas and visions for the future and specially designed 'strength cards' help inspire discussion about what is important to each community.

Participants are invited to present a profile of their own community. Each group is invited to identify skills and qualities in their LIN which can contribute to making their community plan a success.

So far, more than 120 LIN participants from all over Victoria have taken part and found the experience to be valuable and rewarding.

More workshops are planned in 2011.

Bendigo workshop group



Kilsyth workshop group



The Melbourne workshop



"We were able to share our stories, journeys and aspirations and it helped to map out our future directions."

Participant, Lakes Entrance workshop June 2010



Brayukaloong scrapbookers in full swing (from top left) Gracie Hayes; Maryanne Meyer and Gracie; Aunty Dot Mullett; Pauline and Sandra Mullett (bottom). Photos: Leonie Solomon-Green.

The art beat of the community



When some Baw Baw Indigenous community members asked Indigenous Community Engagement Broker Leonie Solomon-Green and Maryanne Meyer from Education Centre Gippsland (ECG) to help set up a local women’s art group – nobody was expecting the powerhouse they created.

By setting up the group, a partnership was born between the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Warragul-Drouin LIN and ECG.

Working on the idea of building relationships with the community through art, the partners realised they could use the group as a base to carry out their work to strengthen the local community.

The Brayukaloong Scrapbooking group began meeting every Monday for a five hour session during the day.

With the session in full swing, it didn’t take much encouragement to get the participants talking about needs and aspirations - for themselves, their families and their community.

As the weeks went by, the insights that were gleaned from these relaxed and friendly conversations began to take shape as a community plan.

Soon other agencies and service providers saw the Brayukaloong Scrapbook Club as an ideal group to ask about programs and services in the Baw Baw region.

Although the desire to keep the group just focussed on art activity was strong, it didn’t take long for the participants to decide they could do both – have their scrapbook session early, and run a community/LIN meeting after lunch.

Leonie Solomon-Green said, “It has been really encouraging to see a small group of Indigenous people starting to believe in who they are and that they can have a voice.

“This has had a ripple effect which is now touching the rest of the community,” Leonie said.

The Brayukaloong Scrapbook Club is a great example of finding interesting and creative ways for agencies and governments to engage with the Indigenous community which can help bring about positive change.

The project shows that people in the community are passionate about where they live, and about keeping their identity, culture and traditions alive.

The Brayukaloong LIN group recently met with Baw Baw Shire CEO Helen Anstis and is now working with Council to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and a Reconciliation Plan.

Leonie said, “This story is about a group of women and their passion to see their local Indigenous community grow and succeed. It’s about a community coming together and learning to trust. It’s about listening to the community’s needs and aspirations and developing projects and ideas.”



(l to r) Koorie student Jay Togo Singh, KESO Tess Sampson, School Principal Ana Rees, teacher and Curriculum Committee leader Debra Ford and KESO Jeanette Bowden.
Photo: Thelma Chilly.

Aboriginal culture on the curriculum in Robinvale

Many of the Local Indigenous Networks in Victoria recognise the importance of providing strong support for their young people to achieve their goals and aspirations through education, training and employment.

In Robinvale, this focus on youth has led to a ground-breaking partnership between the LIN and Robinvale Secondary College that will have Aboriginal Studies being introduced into the school curriculum in 2011.

Robinvale Secondary College is the only secondary school in the town and has an enrolment of about 280 students. The school prides itself on its multiculturalism and the wide range of opportunities it can provide in a small country town.

The relationship between the LIN and Robinvale Secondary College did not happen overnight but has been built over time.

The first step, in 2008, was the creation of the Robinvale Indigenous Leadership Group

which provides a voice and a range of support for Indigenous students in the school environment.

As a result of this relationship, the LIN became involved in a number of activities at the College to celebrate NAIDOC Week in 2010. This was the first time in many years that NAIDOC celebrations had been held at the school.

It was at these celebrations that the head of the school's Curriculum Committee, Debra Ford, formally invited Robinvale LIN representatives to attend their next meeting to discuss the incorporation of Aboriginal Studies into the school curriculum.

The LIN is now working with the School, the Robinvale Indigenous community and the AAV Cultural Heritage Team, based in Bendigo, to find innovative ways to teach Aboriginal culture in subject areas such as mathematics, science, geography and the social sciences.

LINs gather to celebrate success

After a busy year, LIN participants and their families from Melbourne's north-west decided it was time to get together to share success stories, swap ideas about future projects and activities - and just have some fun.

In December 2010, more than 40 LIN participants and their families came together at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, which generously provided its premises for the event.

Melbourne's North-West Metro region has five LINs - at Whittlesea, Hume, Northern Metro (Thornbury-Fitzroy), Maribyrnong and Wyndham/Hobson Bay (Werribee) - and is home to nearly 25 per cent of Victoria's Indigenous population.

In the past year, the LINs have been involved in a range of activities. These include taking part in community planning workshops, the Bubup Wilam Early Years project in Whittlesea, launching a logo for the Northern Metro LIN, planning the Broadmeadows community garden project, supporting Local Aboriginal education consultative groups and initiating local health and fitness activities.

Two articles about Hume LIN activities in Broadmeadows are featured in this issue of VOICE, being the Wandarra Book Club (see page 13) and the Hume School Holiday Program (see page 20).

The day's activities included an Acknowledgement of Country, information tables on community planning, art activities and face painting. There were also traditional games, a comedy performance, show bags with community information and a LIN community lunch.

Participants were invited to give their ideas about future skills development, making better use of community assets and how to increase community participation in their LIN.

North-West Metro Indigenous Community Engagement Brokers Deborah Murray and Tammy Hunter thought the day was a great way to cap-off a successful year for the LINs in their region.

Deborah said, "It was a really successful day. People said they enjoyed the opportunity to get together and share stories and hoped this could happen more often.

"The LINs are now looking forward to building on their success and getting their community plans ready for implementation."

LIN participants and their families get together in Footscray.



Francine Riches and Aunty Vivian Euston at the North-West Metro LINs gathering.





(from left) Mildura Rural City Council's Peter Douglas and Sarah Nickas with Sandra Stewart and Gloria Clarke from Mildura LIN.



LIN builds stronger links with Mildura Council

An important role for each LIN is to develop a good working relationship between their Indigenous community and local government.

By working closely with their local council, Indigenous communities can become more involved in local planning processes and increase their level of community participation.

This can help the LIN to generate improved access to local services and increase community participation in the economic, social and cultural life of their area.

In November 2010, the Mildura LIN took an important step toward building a stronger relationship with their local council.

Along with members of the Yuranga Aboriginal Committee, Mildura LIN representatives met with the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) to discuss a range of issues.

At the meeting, LIN participants Gloria Clark and Sandra Stewart, with Indigenous Community Engagement Broker Thelma Chilly, made presentations to members of Council, including Acting Mayor Susan Nichols and Chief Executive Officer Mark Henderson.

Among the range of subjects discussed, the LIN asked Council to consider implementing an Aboriginal Affairs portfolio and to look

at establishing an Aboriginal Culture Centre in Mildura.

In the wake of the meeting, MRCC has taken steps to invite LIN representatives to join an Interim Committee to develop an Indigenous Affairs Framework at Council and to establish Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Mildura Rural City is one of Victoria's largest municipalities. The 2006 Census recorded an Indigenous population of 1,431 which is the second highest for a local government area in Victoria.

It is generally recognised that the Indigenous population is higher than officially recorded as many Indigenous people come to Mildura from interstate for seasonal employment and access to services.

The Council Plan 2009-13 includes a commitment to develop and implement an Indigenous Action Plan as part of the Council's Social Inclusion Strategy. The Action Plan also says the Council "recognises the significance of Indigenous culture in the region and encourages diverse cultural expression".

Thelma said, "The Mildura LIN is really pleased with the progress being made in our dealings with the Mildura Council. We look forward to working closely with Council on their Indigenous Affairs Framework and other initiatives and making sure our community is actively involved in Council planning."

Hume LIN school holiday program



(from left) Erin Kelly, Callan Wold, Selina Sutherland and Charlea Miller enjoy the culturally sensitive and supportive school holiday program developed through the Hume LIN.

In the Broadmeadows area of Melbourne, the Hume LIN has established a culturally sensitive and supportive school holiday program for children with a disability.

The program has been so successful it has already outgrown its original premises.

The program started at the Gunung Willam Balluk Learning Centre, the Indigenous Education program at the Broadmeadows TAFE, but is now being held at the Brotherhood of St Lawrence building in Craigieburn.

The school holiday program was identified as a priority issue by the LIN which then established a partnership with the Hume City Council to obtain funding from the federal government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The program provides culturally sensitive support for Koori families, many of whom are LIN participants.

Also, the children get to take part in a program which offers positive experiences.

Hume LIN member Karen Lovett said, "The kids get to meet other community members their own age and get to participate in activities they don't usually do or get a chance to do."

"My kids got to meet members of their family they had never met before," she said.

The program is developed through a partnership between the Hume LIN, FaHCSIA and the Hume City Council.

The assistance of the staff and students of Broadmeadows TAFE in getting the program established in the initial stages was instrumental. They delivered the program on their campus and allowed the students to help organise and run the program as part of their work experience in VCAL and Certificate III in Community Services.

Leanne Brooke, a key driver of the program and Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Hume City Council said, "(the program) is a great opportunity for the parents to have a rest and know that their kids are being looked after."

The program commenced in April 2010 in the Easter holiday break and has continued to operate for each school holiday period since then.



Mornington Peninsula LIN participants Kath Flanagan, Brenda Wilson, Glenys Watts, Rita Watkins and Dawn Campbell at the site of the planned new Aboriginal gathering place in Hastings *Photo: Newspix/Jill Mitchell.*

Willum Warrain

– a gathering place
by the sea

Mornington Peninsula's Indigenous community has long expressed its aspiration to have a community gathering place.

As a result of hard work by the LIN and support from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and Victorian Government Department of Health, the community should have its own meeting place in early 2011.

To be named Willum Warrain, which means 'a place by the sea', the gathering place will be located at Warringine Park.

Nearly eight years ago, the community researched gathering places around Victoria and investigated the costs of establishing and operating its own community facility.

More recently, the Mornington Peninsula (Hastings) LIN joined the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee for Melbourne's Southern-Metro region.

Through this committee, all four LINs in the region (including Dandenong, St Kilda and Frankston) asked that gathering places be established for each local Aboriginal community to meet and run activities.

These communities told the Department of Health and their respective local councils that having a place for people to come together is fundamental to the success of priority health initiatives.

These initiatives include such issues as tackling smoking, improving health care pathways and a healthy transition to adulthood.

Mornington Peninsula Shire's Aboriginal Development Officer Glenys Watts said, "Community members are feeling empowered and are enjoying having input into the planning of their meeting place".

She said the community is looking forward to beautifying the area by planting native trees and decorating.

With support from their LIN and management skills gained through the 'Managing in Two Worlds' Governance Training Program, jointly delivered by AAV and Swinburne University, the community feel well prepared to establish and operate their new meeting place by the sea.



Swinburne University's Clare Duggan and AAV Executive Director Ian Hamm (seated) congratulate new graduates Shane Bell, Chris Bonacci, Deborah Murray, Allyson Walker, Leonie Solomon-Green, Alana Marsh and Paul McDonald (seated).

Brokers lead the way on community planning

It was congratulations and smiles all round as the DPCD Indigenous Community Engagement Brokers gathered to receive their Diploma in Community Development from Swinburne University at a ceremony held in Melbourne in November 2010.

The ceremony was an important day for the Brokers and their families who came to share the moment.

It was also an important step for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Swinburne University, who have jointly developed a new course with a special focus on Indigenous community planning.

AAV Executive Director Ian Hamm said the new course was an important investment in building the skill base of DPCD staff and was already producing practical results in Victorian Indigenous communities.

Ian said, "Having completed this course, our Brokers now have the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to facilitate development of community plans in Victorian Indigenous communities.

"The recently completed Lake Tyers Community Plan is an excellent example of how the Brokers are already putting their newly gained knowledge to good use.

"I congratulate all the graduates who took part in the course and also commend Swinburne University for their valuable contribution to the planning, design and delivery of this innovative program."

The new course complements the successful AAV Managing in Two Worlds Governance Training Program which has been delivered in partnership with Swinburne since 2006.

Barwon South-West Broker Shane Bell whose wife Karryn and children Amelia and Greta joined him for his graduation said, "Doing this course with the other Brokers has been a great learning experience for me. It has given me a really good understanding of what it takes to make a successful community plan.

"I've already put some of the ideas we learned about into practice in Warrnambool and the community is really pleased with the progress they are making on their plan." (See VOICE article page 7: Warrnambool Plan keeps it simple).

Tackling FAMILY VIOLENCE

Aunty Cath and Bairnsdale LIN send a strong message

When tireless worker for the community, Aunty Cath Solomon, joined the Bairnsdale Local Indigenous Network, she had a plan and partners to tackle family violence.

On Monday and Friday nights local Elder Cath can be found at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative where she runs a youth group and a young adults group.

Cath runs the groups with the support of the Baptist Church, Uniting Care Gippsland and the East Gippsland Aboriginal Arts Corporation.

Cath had a growing concern about the level of family violence in society and its impact on young people.

So, in partnership with the Paynesville Football Club, she decided to start a campaign to 'Give Family Violence the Boot'.

Cath took her idea to the Bairnsdale LIN to get help to produce banners and bumper stickers. Through the LIN a request went to the Gippsland Integrated Family Violence Services Regional Steering Committee which provided funding to support the program.

To get the community involved, about 25 children from Bairnsdale's Koori Kids Church group contributed to the artwork for the banner.

Children from the Koori Kids Church group join Aunty Cath Solomon and Bianca Baker to create an artistic border for the campaign banner. Photo: courtesy Bairnsdale Advertiser.



Once linked together, the design forms a continuous pattern around the central message of the banner which is displayed at local football matches.

"It's difficult to get people to understand that family violence affects all of us in some way and we should all do whatever we can to get the message out, that family violence and all forms of violence are not acceptable," Cath said.

"We don't accept violence on the football field and I thought that was a good place to send a message that we can't accept family violence either.

"I really hope all the football clubs in our region will get behind the campaign and help give family violence the boot."

Local footballers Nathan Pegler (Lakes Entrance) and Max Solomon (Paynesville) support the campaign and are on the banner to represent the many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who do not tolerate family violence.

The banner was displayed at the entrance of all the East Gippsland Football/Netball League finals and at the White Ribbon Day at Federation Square.

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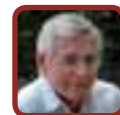
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