



Voice of Indigenous Community Engagement

VOICE

Issue 2 February 2011



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Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of VOICE – the newsletter where participants from Victoria's Local Indigenous Networks (LINs) share their success stories.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Jeanette Powell MP.

The Minister is keen to engage with the Aboriginal community and work for constructive and positive outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge the great work the LINs are doing in providing leadership and achieving positive, tangible results for their respective communities.

Some of the stories in VOICE show that little things can make a big difference, and some show that big things can be achieved with hard work, community support and the help of committed partners – be they individuals, groups and organisations.

Again I encourage you to support this newsletter by contributing ideas so we can share our stories and inspire each other to continue to strengthen our communities.

I look forward to a successful and positive 2011.

Ian Hamm
Executive Director
Aboriginal Affairs Victoria

Cover Photo:

(L-R) Tyleah Barr, Amelia Bell, Maddelin Barr and Greta Bell enjoy an all cousin catch up while their parents participate in the LIN Community Planning Workshop in Halls Gap. Photo: Gary Kenny.

Introducing the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



I am honoured to be appointed Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Victorian Government and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community of Victoria.

For those who don't know me, I live in Kialla, near Shepparton, and have been actively representing my community for many years. Prior to entering Parliament as the Member for Shepparton in 2002 I was involved in local government, where I became aware of the issues affecting the local Aboriginal community. Since then, as Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, my understanding of Victorian Aboriginal communities has deepened and with your support my understanding will continue to grow.

In the first few weeks as Minister I was invited to attend the Aboriginal Elders Christmas Luncheon at the Aborigines Advancement League. This celebration allowed me to meet many Elders and talk to people about their local issues and opportunities (as well as do a little bit of boot-scooting!).

The official Welcome to Country performed at the opening of the new Parliament on 21 December 2010 by Aunty Joy Murphy and Aunty Carolyn Briggs was also a very important and significant event. I really appreciated the warm reception I received from our Aboriginal community leaders on that occasion and you can read more about that event in the story on page 4.

Over the last few months I have been learning about the activities of LINs throughout Victoria, and the great things you are doing in local communities.

I am especially interested in the way LINs are going about engaging their local Aboriginal community as this has not been done before anywhere in Australia.

This year, I know the LIN community planning work that's underway will identify local priorities for the future, and it presents a real opportunity for me to hear about what matters to the Aboriginal community. I think it's very important that local people play a real part in shaping how their communities develop.

Highlighting the contribution local people have made already will be a feature of the Victorian Government's priority commitments for this year: we will be launching an Indigenous Honour Roll to recognise the contribution of Indigenous Victorians; and we will also be developing projects with Reconciliation Victoria. I look forward to working with you all on these initiatives - and many more - in the years ahead.

I will be interested to meet LIN participants as I visit the different communities around Victoria and hear about LIN achievements and priorities. I also encourage you to put forward your stories for future editions of VOICE so that your news and achievements can inspire others. I really look forward to reading those stories in future editions of VOICE.

Jeanette Powell
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Aunty Carolyn and Aunty Joy with Victorian Governor Professor David de Kretser.



Welcome to Country opens Victoria's new Parliament

The 57th Victorian Parliament was officially opened with a Welcome to Country performed by Boonwuring Elder Aunty Carolyn Briggs and Wurrundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy.

The opening was held on the morning of Tuesday 21 December 2010, and was the first time these traditional Aboriginal ceremonies were performed under the new Standing Orders - setting the scene for a respectful and inclusive relationship between the Victorian Parliament and the Indigenous community.

In the afternoon, Victorian Governor Professor David de Kretser AC joined Aunty Carolyn and Aunty Joy in a smoking ceremony on the steps of Parliament House, where he was presented with gum leaves and had a possum skin cloak placed on his shoulders (pictured above).

Victoria's Parliament House is thought to stand on, or near, an Aboriginal corroboree site of the Kulin nation, where gatherings and celebrations were held. The Victorian Government continues to use the site for these activities and is committed to continuing to build strong relationships with Indigenous communities.



Aunty Carolyn and Aunty Joy perform the smoking ceremony on the steps of Parliament House.





Indigenous Hip Hop Project performs for Healesville Secondary College in October 2010, as part of the VicHealth Active Participation Expo, coordinated by YMCA.

Celebrating culture to link the community in Healesville

Pulling together a contemporary dance group and reviving a once-popular children's choir are two of the major activities of a cultural strengthening project being carried out in Healesville.

Healesville LIN participants, local and state government, the YMCA and Shire of Yarra Ranges have teamed up to organise the project.

The project embraces the principles of 'respect, caring and sharing' and rejects the concept of family violence as a part of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The project has secured funding for three years and is focussed on Indigenous children and young people aged 5 to 25 years who have experienced, or are at risk of, family violence; but the project is also open to their non-Indigenous friends.

The idea of including non-Indigenous young people came from the young Aboriginal people who said they did not want to do activities that remove them from their established friendship groups.

The project vision is to see the groups become self-sufficient through performances and other fundraising activity within the three year funding timeframe.

The project's Cultural Patron, Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy AO said, "This reconciliation model provides many benefits, creating a stronger connection between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids, providing an environment to grow together, valuing each other and respecting each others culture."



Community members join Minister Powell at Parliament House for the official opening.

Ministers, MPs and community members stand while Aunty Carolyn and Aunty Joy perform the Welcome to Country at the opening.



Warrnambool memorial honours Indigenous people



Indigenous communities and LIN participants from across south-west Victoria proudly took part in an historic ceremony in Warrnambool in November 2010, to open Victoria's first war memorial dedicated to Indigenous men and women.

The ceremony brought many people together – those who had served and their families, Indigenous Elders, community leaders, historians, government officials and local community members from across the region.

The opening of the memorial followed more than three years of research by local historian, Peter Bakker, who commenced the project after coming across a photograph in the Warrnambool RSL of Indigenous soldier Reginald Rawlings who won a bravery medal in the First World War.

Further research by Mr Bakker found 88 Indigenous men and women from south-west Victoria have served in the Australian military in times of war from World War One to Afghanistan. He was surprised and

disappointed to find there was nothing in the area to recognise their service.

Marcus Clarke, from Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative in Warrnambool, said Indigenous men and women who had served in Australia's military have not been adequately recognised in official ceremonies and commemorative sites.

He told the *Warrnambool Standard*, "The Aboriginal contribution has been a missing voice from the Australian military legend and psyche for many decades. We hope this new memorial can give that voice back to them."

Executive Director of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Ian Hamm, who laid a wreath to honour those who had served said, "It was a moving and satisfying experience to see the contribution of Indigenous Victorians being recognised through this memorial."

AAV Executive Director Ian Hamm prepares to lay a wreath with Aunty Dot Peters at the newly dedicated memorial.
Photos: Shane Bell.

Warrnambool LIN participants (from left) Nathan Douglas, Adeline McDonald, Anita McKenzie and Lowell Hunter get behind their community plan. Photo: Shane Bell.



Warrnambool Plan keeps it simple

When the Warrnambool LIN set out to develop their community plan they decided that the easier it was to understand, the more people would take part and get behind it.

The LIN participants wanted to keep things straight-forward and use a simple poster format which can be read and understood at a glance.

DPCD Brokers Shane and Sandra Bell, who facilitated the planning process, believe the LIN has made their plan more accessible to everyone and increased their chances of achieving their goals.

A key role of the 38 LINs across Victoria is to develop a community plan which expresses the voice of the community and reflects local aspirations and priorities.

Shane said, “Developing a community plan using this simple poster concept has been enjoyable for everyone involved.

“Everyone can quickly see and understand the results of our planning work. Sometimes keeping the process simple is the best way to go.”

The first planning sessions started about 18 months ago and since then the LIN has developed a community profile, vision statement and action plan.

The plan focuses on the following broad priorities:

- promoting and celebrating local Aboriginal culture;
- encouraging local youth participation in the LIN and community; and
- supporting community inclusiveness.

In their draft plan the LIN has identified a number of actions and timelines for each priority. These include developing projects and activities to promote Aboriginal culture, engaging with community organisations and government at all levels, working with Elders and youth and promoting community awareness of the role of the LIN.

The first draft of the plan is now being circulated to the community for comment.

In working on the Warrnambool LIN Plan, Shane and Sandra made good use of what they learned studying for the Diploma of Community Development Course, developed by AAV and Swinburne University (see VOICE article on page 22).

Robinvale Hurricanes (from left) Tara Uluibau, Toakase Amato and Iva Burewe proudly display their medals. Photo: Thelma Chilly.



Robinvale Hurricanes whip through women's rugby

The idea of starting a local women's rugby team in Robinvale was met with great enthusiasm earlier this year – but there was a small problem.

While it was good to have 30 women 'pack down' at the Murray Valley Aboriginal Hall to sign-up for the team, the trouble was many of the women didn't know the rules of the game.

The push behind the team came from the Robinvale Local Indigenous Network, in partnership with the Pacific Islander and Indigenous Harmony Committee.

They wanted to open up cross-community communication, as well as provide a different health and fitness option for local women.

The team is made up of Aboriginal, Tongan, Fijian and European women and they trained every night for two weeks. Many players picked up the finer points of the game as they went along.

They named themselves the Robinvale Hurricanes and designed their own logo. Their jerseys were funded by the Victorian Government Department of Justice in Mildura.

Coached by Peree Pez Kirirua, with the help of assistant coaches Moses Uluibau and Sidney Chilly, the Hurricanes joined the Sunraysia Rugby League competition in Mildura.

Their 'historic' first match was on 7 August 2010 when they took on the Mildura Allstars at Nicholls Point in Mildura.

Much to the delight of the crowd, the Hurricanes played with passion and zeal and managed to win 14 to nil.

A week later, in the curtain-raiser to the Rugby League Grand Finals held in Wentworth (NSW), the Mildura Allstars turned the tables. Even so, the Hurricanes have gone from strength to strength and were featured on the local evening television news.

A community presentation night for the team was sponsored by the Swan Hill Rural City Council and Victoria Police. Members of the team were awarded medals in recognition of their great efforts.

All the women who competed have now called for a permanent women's competition to be established in the Sunraysia League.

Robinvale Indigenous Community Engagement Broker, Thelma Chilly said, "Our team is keeping Robinvale women healthy, happy and focussed. They are breaking new ground here – making history, creating harmony – and ultimately making this a better place to live."

For the Hurricanes, the 2011 season can't come around soon enough. They are already keen for their training to resume so they can keep fit and firing.

Sport makes healthier communities

LINs go in to bat for Indigenous cricket

A project to promote Indigenous cricket has taken some major steps forward in south-west Victoria.

The project has been developed with the support of LINs across the Grampians and Barwon regions, following discussions between Indigenous Community Engagement Broker Larry Kanoa, the South West Indigenous Cricket Association (SWICA), Cricket Victoria and Sport and Recreation Victoria. The Victorian Government Department of Justice and Aboriginal Community Justice Panel are providing funding.

With LIN support, the project will provide development pathways for Indigenous cricketers, identify young and emerging talent, build stronger community connections and promote health and fitness in south-west Victorian Indigenous communities.

The project builds on the success of an annual cricket match – the Johnny Mullagh Cup – named after the pioneer Indigenous cricketer who led an Indigenous Australian team on an historic tour of England in 1868.

This contest features an Indigenous team of players from across Victoria's south-west and a non-Indigenous team from the Horsham District.



Cricket runs in the family for Project Coordinator Brett Harrison (centre) and younger brothers Ben (left) and Jacob (right).

In 2009, Indigenous cricket received a boost when SWICA was formed and organised some ad hoc games between Indigenous communities including Heywood, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Halls Gap, Horsham and Geelong.

After that, an Indigenous team took part in Mildura's Willow Fest Cricket Competition; for the first time in the competition's 25 year history.

Project Facilitator Brett Harrison is based in Horsham at the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative and the SWICA representative on the project is Wayne Bell.

Wayne said, "With Brett's appointment for this project it's a very exciting time for Indigenous cricket. Brett's job is to coordinate the project and gain maximum benefits for individuals and communities."

Brett added, "It's the start of something special in building a good foundation for the future development of Indigenous cricket in the south-west."

A number of Indigenous organisations in the region are supporting this project including Winda Mara (Heywood), Goolum Goolum (Horsham), Wathaurong (Geelong), Gunditjmarra (Warrnambool) and Ballarat and District Cooperative. Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative (Halls Gap) provides in-kind support such as match day transport.

Legendary cricket all rounder Johnny Mullagh Unaarrimin famously led an Indigenous Australian team on a tour of England in 1868. Picture courtesy of Harrow Discovery Centre, Victoria.





Plan shows the way ahead for Lake Tyers

(top left) Trisha Sellings
and Janaya Johnson.

(top right) Curtis
and Amelia Hood.

The new five year plan for South Eastern Victoria's Lake Tyers Aboriginal community presents a positive vision for a strong, safe and successful community.

With a population of around 140, the Lake Tyers community is located on 1620 hectares of land which was handed over to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust in 1970 under the Aboriginal Lands Act (1970).

Nearly two years in the making, the Lake Tyers Plan for 2010-15 is the result of many workshops and community meetings, surveys and consultations with groups including the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Interim Committee of Management and the Community Renewal Project.

Using an easy to follow format, the plan sets out clear goals and actions to encourage community health and wellbeing and to enable community members to achieve their educational, social and economic potential.

The Lake Tyers community has identified eight important goals for the future; namely to maintain and strengthen culture, improve health and wellbeing, build community harmony, increase participation

in education and training, increase employment opportunities, promote community achievements, develop sustainable business enterprises, and practice good governance and management.

To achieve each goal, the plan contains both short and long term actions. This is done to make sure there are some 'quick wins', as well as working together on the things that may take longer to achieve.

To improve community health and wellbeing for example, the plan has 10 practical short term actions to get things moving. These include more participation in sport and active recreation, planting vegetable gardens and fruit trees, planning more activities for Elders, holding a community fishing day event, promoting alcohol and tobacco-free areas and investigating the establishment of a Men's Shed and a Women's Centre.

Longer term actions to improve community health include securing funds to improve campsite amenities and install public toilets at the cemetery.

The Lake Tyers plan was facilitated by Paul McDonald who is a DPCD Indigenous Community Engagement Broker in the Gippsland Region.

Paul said, "Working together on the plan has brought the community together and created a really positive outlook for the future."

Paul is one of 13 DPCD Brokers across Victoria who recently completed a new Diploma of Community Development course with a special focus on Community Planning. This course has been developed in partnership between AAV and Swinburne University (see VOICE article page 22.)

For Paul, working with the Lake Tyers community to develop their plan has been an excellent opportunity to put the knowledge and skills he gained from his studies into practice.

It is also important to recognise the outstanding work done for this plan by 18 local students from Lake Tyers studying for their Certificate III in Community Services, which was also delivered jointly by AAV and Swinburne University.

These students, ranging from Elders to late teens, worked closely with their community to identify the key priorities and then extensively surveyed community members to identify how important changes could be achieved.

Support for the implementation of the Plan will be provided by the Trust Administration, the Community Renewal Project and the Gippsland Indigenous Community Engagement Broker.

Implementation of the plan will be monitored by a community steering group and will be reviewed annually.

All photos courtesy Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

Land Management graduates from Lake Tyers Community with Uncle Bill Tregonning and trainer Malcolm Pleydell.



Janelle Jones, Nina Mullett, Joanne Peacock and Alice Hughes.

Aunty May O'Rourke and Wilfred Carter.



Barbara Wilkinson, Libby Carter and Beth Harrison.

Aunty Gina Wilkinson and Chantelle Hood.





Great men of rock teach ancient skills

Aboriginal Elders from Albury-Wodonga and Wangaratta LINs are determined to find ways to pass on some of their traditional knowledge and skills to the next generation.

As a starting point, during 2010 local Elders and community members skilled in the ancient art of making stone tools took part in a series of 'Great Men of Rock' workshops held at the Burraja Cultural Centre.

The workshops were well attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous local community members and provided a great opportunity for many younger people to see and experience stone tool making (knapping) techniques first-hand.

Elders first made stone points and blades which could then be used for hafting onto spears or made into knives.

Young workshop participants then discovered there are many different ways to shape stone, prepare resin for binding and haft stone to wood.

The final workshop involved participants grinding stone axes and hafting them on to locally harvested wattle handles.

Elders participating in the workshops welcomed the opportunity to pass on their skills and knowledge.

Uncle Wally Cooper said, "We don't want these workshops to stop. We have a duty to pass on our knowledge."

The workshops were documented by photographer Chontelle Bourne and film maker Jacqueline Shulz, creating a valuable educational resource for future generations.

Items produced in the workshops were exhibited in the Albury Library Museum during 2010 NAIDOC celebrations. The exhibition ran for 14 weeks with 18,000 people coming to view the display.

The Great Men of Rock project was funded and supported by the Wodonga City Council, North East Catchment Management Authority and the Murray Catchment Management Authority.

The project was also made possible through the assistance and support of the Albury-Wodonga and Wangaratta LINs.

Uncle Wally Cooper (pictured above) and stone tool making in practice (below). Photos: Chontelle Bourne.

