

## Indigenous Health – the Growing Crisis

Champion swimmer and former Young Australian of the Year, Ian Thorpe, has joined the growing ranks of prominent people and health experts pleading for attention to the crisis in Indigenous health.

Thorpe recently returned from a visit to remote communities in the Northern Territory, where his Fountain for Youth Trust is working with the Fred Hollows Foundation and the Aboriginal-controlled Sunrise Health Service.

Ian said he was shocked by the living conditions and poor health of his fellow Australians.

The statistics on Indigenous health are certainly shocking. Despite the Commonwealth Government's policy of 'practical reconciliation', the health and life expectancy of Indigenous people is growing worse in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians and Australia has by far the worst record of any comparable developed country.

The gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is now **20 years**. This compares with just **3 to 7 years** in Canada, New Zealand and the US, where the gap has steadily narrowed over the past 30 years.

Information about this health crisis is widely available. A 'Report Card' produced by the Australian Medical Association in 2002 found that

- the Indigenous infant mortality rate was nearly three times that of the total population
- low birth weight – an important indicator of later illness – was about twice the rate of the non-

Indigenous population, with little change since 1991

- the median age of death of Indigenous people was 53 years – **25 years less** than for the population as a whole.

Indigenous people are hospitalized at approximately twice the rate of non-Indigenous people. Rates of heart disease are about 3 times higher; respiratory disease is 9-11 times more common; diabetes occurs 2-4 times more often; and rates of kidney disease are 9 times higher (up to 30 times in some regions).

The AMA has also commissioned research on funding for Indigenous health. It found a great inequity in access to primary health care, and a huge shortfall in funding to meet Indigenous health needs.

For Indigenous people these statistics translate into poor quality of life, chronic illness, early death and too many funerals.

Much of this could be prevented if we had governments willing to empower Indigenous communities and health organisations, and to commit the necessary resources.

Most preventable deaths in the Indigenous population are the result of chronic disease. Dr Ian Ring, Director of the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, says research has shown that mortality rates from chronic disease in Indigenous populations can be halved in under four years.

"For a relatively modest increase in expenditure the standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia can be on a par with non-Indigenous health," Dr Ring said, "if only we can stop the endless policy formulation and start implementing what we already know."

Part of what we already know is this: the best results in health occur when government recognises and supports community ownership and control. ANTaR regards health as the classic case where the

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## Update from the National Office

ANTaR's 2003 National Congress, held in Adelaide from 4-6 April, was attended by over 40 delegates from around Australia and by several members of ANTaR's Indigenous Reference Group (IRG). The Congress was a chance for all States and Territories to share ideas, report on their work, and set directions for the future.

Victorian delegates reported on "Fanning the Flames", a grant-funded \$460,000 project over the next three years, to develop local community projects on racism and reconciliation in regional Victoria.

**Dr Ros Kidd** briefed Congress on the Stolen Wages issue – the pattern of unpaid or underpaid wages owed by Governments to Indigenous employees. Queensland delegates reported on their very successful Stolen Wages campaign, which is likely to become a focus in other States and Territories as well.

**Lester Irabinna Rigney** (National Treaty Think Tank, and IRG), and **Sean Brennan** (Director, Treaty Project, Gilbert & Tobin Centre of Public Law, UNSW) outlined developments with the Treaty issue. **Dr Bill Jonas** (HREOC Social Justice Commissioner, and IRG) briefed Congress on his 2002 Reports on Social Justice and Native Title. **Parry Agius** (SA Aboriginal Land Rights Movement, and IRG), and **Roger Cook** (South West Land & Sea Council, WA) spoke of native title developments in their States. **Olga Havnen** (Fred Hollows Foundation, and IRG) spoke on the health crisis in Indigenous communities. IRG member **Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue** led a visit to the site of the

former Colebrook Children's Home, where she herself was placed, to pay respects at the memorial that the stolen generations community has built there. **Fred Chaney**, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia (RA), and RA's CEO **Jenni Chandler**, came to discuss RA's plans and areas of common work with ANTaR.

As well as assisting ANTaR to focus its national and State/Territory campaigns, the Congress triggered a strategic planning process which was recently carried forward by the National Committee at a retreat held in late June. Details will be posted on the website at the completion of the process. Visiting the website is, incidentally, a good way to keep up with ANTaR activities as it is regularly updated ([www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)).

Our office in Rozelle continues to be headquarters for both ANTaR National and the NSW branch of the organisation.

Leigh Bowden recently joined ANTaR as Office Administration and Community Relations Manager. She is assisting both the State and National organisations to strengthen their links with like-minded groups and individuals, as well as co-ordinating the volunteer effort.

Leigh can be contacted by email on [leigh@antar.org.au](mailto:leigh@antar.org.au) or by phone at ANTaR on 9555 6138 or 0405 381 038.

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## **R4WS** (Reconciliation for Western Sydney)



*Maria Maguire and Anne Bicer, members of Reconciliation for Western Sydney at the Aboriginal History Project Exhibition by local school students at Parramatta Library. This project was co-ordinated by Reconciliation for Western Sydney with funding received from Parramatta Council's Community Grants Program.*

Contrary to popular belief, Reconciliation doesn't begin and end with the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Reconciliation for Western Sydney Inc. (R4WS) has been organising events and projects for the past six years.

R4WS aims to increase levels of understanding of Aboriginal culture and issues, create justice and better relationships in the future and contribute to a more harmonious community for all.

Some samples of the projects and events in which we are involved are:

**The Aboriginal History Project**, conducted with funding from local Councils and in conjunction with local primary and high schools.

**The *Walking Together-Building Bridges* course**, conducted twice a year, where everyone has a chance to meet and learn from Aboriginal people and to become informed about past and current events. This year we have a bi-monthly course and a five week course starting in August.

**Special events during Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks.** This year R4WS presented a film night at

Parramatta Town Hall with a screening of ***The Tracker*** on Wednesday 28 May during Reconciliation Week.

Other events include: attending the ANTaR Treaty Training Workshop; attending the Treaty Conference in Canberra; holding community information stalls at local festivals and community events; attending meetings with local Councils and Aboriginal communities; and representation on various local committees to ensure Reconciliation issues are discussed and addressed.

R4WS meets the third Wednesday of every month at the Karibi Centre, Darcy Road, Wentworthville at 7.30 pm.

For more information, please contact Anne Bicer, PO Box 806, Granville, 2142 or phone on 9873 4395 or email [Anne.Bicer@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Anne.Bicer@det.nsw.edu.au).

# Threats and Opportunities Confront ATSIC

On Easter Thursday afternoon, as most people were checking out of their workplaces for four days, Indigenous Affairs Minister Philip Ruddock announced far-reaching changes to the operations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The elected ATSIC Board and Regional Councils will no longer have power over funding decisions. That power has been moved to a new agency, ATSIS (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Agency).

The new agency is not elected by the Indigenous community, and is part of the Commonwealth's Department of Indigenous Affairs under Minister Ruddock. Most of the public servants in the administrative arm of ATSIC are also being shifted across to ATSIS.

The Minister's announcement received a mixed reception from Indigenous organisations and marked a low point in an uneasy war being fought between the national ATSIC leadership, the Minister and certain sections of the media.

The creation of ATSIS comes only a few months into a review of ATSIC and its future role, conducted by a three-member team appointed by Mr Ruddock.

The review has emerged as an opportunity for some considered discussion of ATSIC and its role in political representation, policy-making and service delivery. It is also a chance to examine the relationship between ATSIC's work in the regions of Australia and its national role.

However, in creating ATSIS, the Minister has moved unilaterally and pre-empted the findings

of his own review. While there are still a number of questions hanging over the detail of Mr Ruddock's announcement, the ATSIC Board and Regional Councils have accepted the introduction of ATSIS as an interim measure while awaiting the outcome of the review.

The review team is pressing on and has since released a discussion paper which reflects current criticisms of ATSIC while also canvassing the most effective ways forward for the organisation. A number of different options for combining the organisation's regional and national functions are put forward for comment.

Even though the circumstances of these recent changes have been less than ideal, many people involved in the organisation see this period as one of opportunity to not only create a more effective ATSIC but to also give the elected arm of ATSIC greater influence on the funding and program decisions of State, Territory and Federal Governments which impact on Indigenous people.

The ATSIC Review is taking submissions on its discussion paper until mid-August. For a copy of the paper call 1800 700 140 or go to [www.atsicreview.gov.au](http://www.atsicreview.gov.au)

For background information on ATSIC and its predecessors see this brief from the Parliamentary Library: [www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/CIB/2002-03/03cib29.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/CIB/2002-03/03cib29.pdf).



## Bargain Basement Ideas At Half The Price

This year's Indigenous Affairs budget was remarkable in its ordinariness, with its bottom line muddled by old monies yet to be spent, programs that are forward committed and some which will expire this financial year.

The main initiatives were increases in CDEP (work for the dole) funding; a commitment to yearly reporting on disadvantage; and some minor higher education and health initiatives.

The CDEP program gains 1000 extra places nationally in the next four years to support prevention and rehabilitation programs for family violence and substance abuse in remote areas.

CDEP money is actually the welfare entitlements of Indigenous people – money the Government would normally spend on any Australian who is unemployed or in receipt of other benefits through Centrelink.

However, with CDEP the government gets extra value. It gets service delivery done on the cheap and generally for services which in the wider community would be fully funded or simply provided by Governments as a basic community standard.

Even though these are extra places, ATSIC (which administers the scheme) was given no extra resources to deal with their administration.

ATSIC has described the initiative as “not financially significant.”

The yearly reporting on disadvantage is generally welcomed as a belated introduction of standards into Indigenous policy; the higher education extras are attached to the controversial *Backing Australia's Future* package which is bound for lengthy debate in the Senate; and NACCHO, an Indigenous health umbrella body, described the budget health initiatives as doing “almost nothing to address the Aboriginal health crisis.”

The official Budget documents are at [www.minister.immi.gov.au/atsia/](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/atsia/).



### **Sea of Hands, Olympic Park, 7 June 2003.**

*Each year the AFL stages the Indigenous Game between Essendon and the Sydney Swans for the Marn Grook Trophy. The event includes Indigenous dance and musical performances, and celebrates the achievements of famous Indigenous leaders and sporting stars.*

# Young People Take *Reconcili*ACTION



*Groups talking through the issues at the recent Reconciliation and Rights Youth Gathering held by ReconciliACTION in Glebe in April.*

The ReconciliACTION Network recently held the Reconciliation and Rights Youth Conference in Glebe, Sydney. It brought together over 70 Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people from across the state including Wagga Wagga, Kempsey, Moruya, Tamworth and the Sydney metropolitan area.

Co-ordinator, Sylvie Ellsmore, said the event was a great success and proved that Indigenous rights remain a very important issue for young Australians.

The conference included presentations from Gregory Phillips, Aden Ridgeway and Mick Dodson. A lot of time was spent over the two days of the conference building networks and skilling up on campaigning, lobbying and

community leadership. ANTaR's Rozelle headquarters proved a great venue for the conference barbecue and rooftop concert.

The ReconciliACTION Network is a youth initiated and youth run group. It includes people from metropolitan, regional and rural NSW and was formed in early 2002 from various high schools, universities, TAFEs, student unions, Indigenous organisations, community groups and Reconciliation bodies. Its focus, as the name suggests, is on projects and campaigns.

The ReconciliACTION Network is supported by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) and the NSW Reconciliation Council.

Website: [www.reconciliaction.org.au](http://www.reconciliaction.org.au).

# Coming Events

*The NSW ANTaR Newsletter appears three times a year. ANTaR members are also updated by email and special bulletins from time to time.*

*Please advise us of coming events in your locality and help us to spread the word.*

Contact us at: NSW ANTaR Inc.,  
PO Box 1176, ROZELLE NSW 2039  
phone 02 9555 6138, email [leigh@antar.org.au](mailto:leigh@antar.org.au),  
or contact the NSW Secretary at 02 9144 2406 (ah)  
or by email at [bob.makinson@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bob.makinson@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)

## SYDNEY AREA

### July

• **27 July (Sun): ANTaR NSW Local Groups and members' meeting.** 10 am – 4.30 pm, at NCOSS (upstairs), 66 Albion St Surry Hills. Updates on local group activity, State and national ANTaR campaigns, and recent developments in Indigenous affairs. Guest speakers: Bill Jonas (HREOC Commissioner), speaking on 'Progress of the national Reconciliation process – and what local groups can do'; and Lyn Riley-Mundine (Chairperson, NSW Reconciliation Council) speaking on Reconciliation and Local Government. If arriving late please phone 0408 116 488 for admission to building.

### August

• **6 Aug to 3 Sept: Reconciliation for Western Sydney – Building Bridges – Walking Together:**  
a five-week course every Wednesday night at 7.30pm – Building Bridges at Karabi

Centre, Wentworthville. Further information: Maria Maguire on 9896 3839.

• **25 Aug (Mon): ANTaR Lowe Action Group – Appropriate Protocols for Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners.** ANTaR Lowe and a representative of the Darug community will be hosting a public meeting to discuss appropriate protocol for acknowledgment of the traditional owners of land. All welcome. Supported by a community grant from Strathfield Council. 7.00pm at Community Centre, 1b Bates Street, Homebush. Contact Anna Logan 9764 1976.

### September

• **17 Sept (Wed): Reconciliation for Western Sydney – Building Bridges – Current Challenges of Equity & Justice** at Karabi Centre, Wentworthville, 7.30 pm. Further information: Maria Maguire on 9896 3839.

### October

• **3-4 Oct (Fri-Sat):**

**ReconciliACTION Network Youth Conference** – network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people from rural and urban NSW. Open to all 16-29 year-olds, this Gathering is an opportunity to discuss racism, reconciliation and how to move the world forward; skills workshops will be on offer. Some accommodation and travel subsidies available. Venue: Sydney, to be finalized but near public transport. More details: Network Coordinator, Sylvie Ellsmore, [recon@reconciliaction.org.au](mailto:recon@reconciliaction.org.au) or 0403 977 213; for general info, visit [www.reconciliaction.org.au](http://www.reconciliaction.org.au)

• **15 Oct (Wed): Reconciliation for Western Sydney, Annual General Meeting.** 7.30 pm, at Karabi Centre, Wentworthville. Further information: Maria Maguire on 9896 3839.

• **18 Oct (Sat): Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR)** – 3pm – 5pm, special tour of the Cadi Jam Ora garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, with an Aboriginal guide. Find out about the Cadigal people and their heritage. \$16.50/person. Maximum 25 people, bookings essential – call Botanic Gardens Community Education on 02 9231 8134. Join HARR afterwards at the Lillipilli in the Rocks restaurant, cnr Globe and Nurses Walk – book for 6.30 pm on 9251 6988 under your own name and ask to be seated with HARR.

# Door Ajar for AJAC Reforms in Juvenile Justice & Sentencing Policy

While Aboriginal people make up only 1.5% of the NSW population, Aboriginal juveniles make up 38% of all young people in detention in NSW – a rate 15 times that of non-Aboriginal people.

This high rate of imprisonment points to the urgent need to implement recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which recommended strategies to reduce juvenile involvement in the welfare and criminal justice systems. In particular the Royal Commission stressed the need to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities.

As well as taking young people away from their families, imprisonment has direct effects on employment and income levels and increases the chance of further contact with the criminal justice system.

The NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC) advises the NSW Government about the criminal justice system in regard to Aboriginal people. It operates under a justice agreement with the NSW Attorney-General and is in the final stages of consultation on an Aboriginal Justice Plan for NSW.

AJAC has focussed on diverting young Aboriginal offenders from the formal criminal justice system through the use of community-based programs and innovative sentencing mechanisms such as circle sentencing.

However there are still significant barriers to progress. AJAC statistics show that a quarter of all juveniles refused bail between 1997 and 1999 were Aboriginal, and that the rate of bail refusal had increased by 15% during this time. Young Aboriginal people were refused bail for a range of reasons such as: a lack of understanding of bail

conditions by Aboriginal defendants; heavy policing of some Aboriginal communities; and even a lack of transport to court locations which increased the likelihood of ‘failure to appear’ for Aboriginal defendants in some locations.

AJAC recommended changes to the *Bail Act 1978* such as making the imposition of a financial surety or security a provision of last resort, providing for an automatic bail entitlement for offensive language and behaviour charges, providing a definition of prior offences that excludes offensive language and behaviour offences, and increasing the non-gaol accommodation options available (eg bail hostels), particularly in rural areas and for homeless juvenile defendants.

The NSW Government made broader changes to the *Bail Act* last year which moved in the opposite direction, removing the presumption in favour of bail in certain circumstances. However, a new section based on some of these recommendations was included in the Act. It included: providing an Aboriginal definition of “community ties”; courts and police to consider Aboriginality as a key factor in determining eligibility for bail; and requiring police and courts to consider alternative non-gaol accommodation for Aboriginal people that may be refused bail.

The operation of these amendments, specifically with respect to Aboriginal people, will be reviewed after 12 months. This could provide a useful timeframe to push for greater changes.

The NSW Government also announced in June they would consider the abolition of short prison sentences which the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research said could save NSW taxpayers up to \$47 million per year. As these short sentences serve mainly to send first time offenders to the “university of crime”, diversionary options will be considered.

Such changes could reduce the number of people coming into prison by approximately 40%, significantly reducing Aboriginal over



representation in prison. Aboriginal people make up approximately 20% of people in NSW prisons serving sentences of six months or less.

The NSW AJAC has been advocating the need to introduce diversionary options for Aboriginal offenders and will be supporting this move. Significant public support could help make this proposal a reality.

Aboriginal overrepresentation is an urgent challenge for government and the community. Improvement in this area is a key indicator of social justice for Indigenous people. Despite the Carr Government's heavy emphasis on 'law and order' there are signs of progress in NSW. But more needs to be done. The coming twelve months provide scope for support and advocacy in this area through finalisation and implementation of the NSW Aboriginal Justice Plan, review of amendments to the Bail Act 1978 and moves to abolish short term prison sentences in favour of diversionary programs.

### **STOP PRESS**

In late June the WA Parliament passed a law abolishing sentences of less than 6 months duration.

Further information:

- NSW AJAC:  
[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ajac.nsf/pages/index](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ajac.nsf/pages/index)
- HREOC Social Justice Reports:  
[www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/sjreport\\_01/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sjreport_01/index.html)  
[www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/sjreport\\_02/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sjreport_02/index.html)
- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991  
[www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic)

## Information Day for ANTaR members and local groups

**SUNDAY 27th JULY,**

**10 am – 4.30 pm**

**NCOSS premises, 66 Albion St,  
Surry Hills, Sydney**

- **What's happening at local level** – Local group reps please bring short reports, photos, and any literature you like!
- **Bill Jonas (HREOC Commissioner)** speaking on progress of the National Reconciliation process (Senate Inquiry outcomes, and the vacuum in governmental leadership on Reconciliation) and on how ANTaR and local groups can support the process.
- **Lyn Riley-Mundine (Chairperson, NSW Reconciliation Council Inc.)** speaking on Reconciliation and Local Government.
- **Reportback on recent national Native Title Conference** in Alice Springs.
- **What ANTaR is doing** – National and NSW – outcomes of recent ANTaR National Congress and national strategy meeting – your feedback appreciated!

- **Sea of Hands resources** – what's available and how you can use it.

**Lunch provided – gold coin donation.**

The venue is 5 minutes easy walk from Central Station. For security reasons the street entrance is locked, but will be attended from 9.45 am to 10.30 am – if you arrive after that time please phone 0408 116 488 for admission.

Space is limited so please register – contact **Bob Makinson** on 02 9144 2406 after hours, 0408 116 488 mobile, email [bob.makinson@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bob.makinson@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au); or Leigh at [leigh@antar.org.au](mailto:leigh@antar.org.au)

## Alice Springs Conference Reflects on Mabo Legacy

The mixed legacy of native title, just over a decade after the High Court's Mabo decision, was the main theme to emerge from this year's national Native Title Conference held in June in Alice Springs.

Over 460 delegates and another 100 youth forum participants attended the 3-day event, staged by the Central Land Council (CLC) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

The abiding presence of Lhere Artepe, the recognised native title holders for Alice Springs, 'the people the *Land Rights Act* forgot', was a powerful reminder of the positive side to native title. The Mabo decision changed Australia and allowed groups like the Arrernte peoples of Alice Springs to achieve legal recognition denied to them since colonisation.

Marcia Langton reminded the conference that a price couldn't be put on that success; CLC director David Ross said "recognition counts for a hell of a bloody lot"; and Mrs Bonita Mabo said "people from all over Australia are getting up to say where they come from and who they are."

But the conference also strongly registered the downsides to the native title era for Indigenous people: bitterness and disillusionment, as the promise of Mabo has been whittled away by narrow-minded High Court decisions and legislated dispossession; and frustration as people's aspirations for a better deal for their families and communities have become entangled in flawed and legalistic processes.

Noel Pearson condemned the High Court for its failure in recent years to rise to the challenge of the original Mabo decision. Within government,

progress on questions of land justice has been thwarted, he said, by 'ruthlessly determined' opponents. But Pearson's conclusion, that native title is not a dead issue, echoed reports from around Australia.

*"... the promise of  
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dispossession ..."*

The Noongars in Perth and South West WA, the Wotjabaluk in Victoria, the Lhere Artepe, the Tennant Creek mobs, the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in South Australia and the communities of Cape York are just some of the groups striving together to improve the lives of their people in the post-Mabo era.

The clarion call – from Larissa Behrendt, Aden Ridgeway, Daryl Pearce and Murray Jones, along with overseas guest Christine Zuni Cruz, Pearson, Langton and many others – was for strategic leadership from Indigenous peoples themselves. The call to governments was to work out what they are prepared to negotiate and then to sit down and talk for real about the problems and the aspirations of Australia's Indigenous people.

Papers from the conference will be available at [www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/ntru/conf2003/papers.htm](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/ntru/conf2003/papers.htm).

## HREOC

Australia is the only Western country without a Bill of Rights. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) is one of the few institutions with responsibility for upholding universal human rights in our system of government. By building specialist expertise in the area, the Social Justice Commissioner at HREOC has been one of the most powerful and persistent voices in support of Indigenous rights to land and social justice.

The Commonwealth Government is once more trying to nobble the Commission. A Bill currently before federal Parliament would eliminate specialist Commissioners, make three generalist commissioners do the work currently assigned to five and give the Attorney-General a right to veto HREOC's intervention in court cases raising human rights issues, even when the Government would be an opposing party in the litigation (an obvious conflict of interest).

Various ANTaR organisations made submissions to the Senate Inquiry into the Bill. We encourage you to write to your local federal MP and Senators urging them to reject the Bill. To inform yourself about the proposals and the issues they raise, check out HREOC's own submission to the Inquiry:  
**[www.humanrights.gov.au/ahrc/submission.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/ahrc/submission.html)**.

## Stolen Wages

For 50 years the Queensland Government took, in today's terms, millions of dollars in wages owing to Indigenous workers, who received only a fraction of the money they earned – usually working in jobs they had little or no choice in. Savings were skimmed and diverted, child endowment and pensions intercepted and trust funds abused.

The Stolen Wages campaign is about getting governments to accept their responsibility for unpaid, missing and misused wages, savings and trust funds during the decades in which they exercised far-reaching controls over the lives of Indigenous people.

To date the issue has been most prominent in Queensland, where ANTaR Queensland (with

research by its Patron Dr Ros Kidd) has worked with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations on a campaign response to the Beattie Government's inadequate settlement offer.

The issue is set to go national and likely become a major story in NSW, where successive State governments allegedly engaged in similar practices. To keep up to date and find out what you can do, check out the 'Stolen Wages campaign' link on the ANTaR website (**[www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)**).

## New Books

### *Achieving Social Justice*

Anyone interested in social change, reconciliation or Indigenous rights in Australia should read *Achieving Social Justice*, the latest book from the young Indigenous professor of law at UTS, Larissa Behrendt.

Published in paperback by Federation Press in May 2003 this highly readable book is, as George Williams says, 'a powerful and personal narrative of why reconciliation is vital to Australia's future. Larissa Behrendt is one of Australia's leading young thinkers on Indigenous law and policy.'

Copies are now in the shops, and are also available at the special price of \$27.95 (plus \$5 postage) from ANTaR's office (ph: 02 9555 6138).

### *Looking for Blackfella's Point*

Book of the Year in the 2003 NSW Premier's Literary Awards was Mark McKenna's *Looking for Blackfella's Point: An Australian History of Place* (UNSW Press).

After buying a block of land in southeastern NSW in 1993, McKenna set out to discover its history. The book explains that journey and probes the wider questions of dispossession and connection to land.

## **ANTaR NSW** **membership renewals**

Following discussions at the last AGM, the ANTaR NSW committee decided at its June meeting to introduce membership subscriptions. Membership has previously been free.

The fees will help to fund our activities in the State, including more resource materials and an expanded print run of this and future issues of the Newsletter, reaching the wider ANTaR support base as well as actual members. We hope the Newsletter will be a useful resource for local Reconciliation and Indigenous Support groups, for its news and campaign content and for use on stalls and at events.

The new membership fee structure is:

- Individual rate: \$20, or \$10 unwaged and concession
- Organisational rate: \$40 small organisations (e.g. local reconciliation groups), \$100 large organisations (e.g. State-wide bodies).

Current members (before 1 July 2003) retain their free membership up to the close of the Annual General Meeting 2003 (likely to be in November). New members paying before this year's AGM will have their membership carried through to the 2004 AGM.

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'rights agenda' of genuine Indigenous empowerment must be brought to bear on the issues of so-called practical reconciliation. Work is underway on ANTaR's health campaign – the website ([www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)) and future newsletters will keep you informed about the campaign and ways you can help.

More information: AMA, *Public Report Card 2003 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Health: Time for Action*, at [www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5N5UHZ](http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5N5UHZ)

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Have you got some spare time and would like to help out at the ANTaR office or with a Sea of Hands installation? Perhaps you have office experience, expertise in databases or websites, or maybe it's campaigning, desktop publishing or other relevant skills? If you'd like to contribute to rights-based reconciliation in Australia by offering your help to ANTaR, please contact our office on 02 9555 6138 or by email on [leigh@antar.org.au](mailto:leigh@antar.org.au).



### **Reconciliation Week 2003, University of Sydney**

*This was the fifth Sea of Hands installation designed by Deborah Lennis, a young local Aboriginal artist and educator. The design, based around the idea of education, emphasised unity and the exchange of information between people.*