

Mungo...



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The Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation respectfully acknowledges the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boonwurrung Nation who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land.

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April 2021

FROM THE CO-CHAIR

Boonwurrung Word of the Month:

Ngargee – dance, ceremony

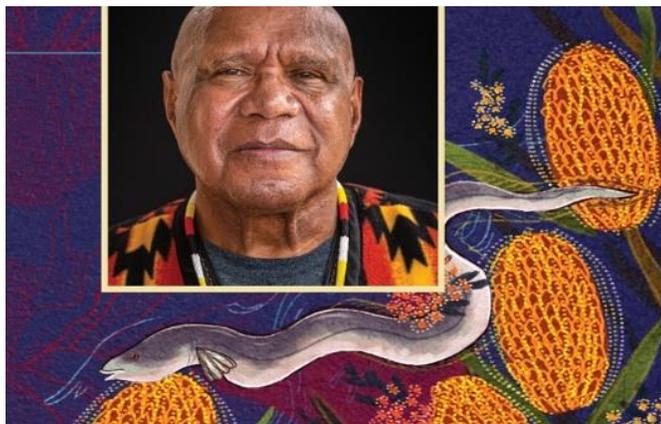
Yoo-rrook Commission

In an historic first enquiry of its kind in Australia, the Yoo-rrook or Truth and Justice Commission, officially announced on 9 March, is a highly significant step in the Victorian Government's path to forge state-based Treaties with its Aboriginal communities. Five commissioners will be tasked with laying down an authoritative account of Victoria's history of colonisation, and examine two centuries of colonisation and oppression in the state. Details inside.

Sorry Day

I'm happy to report that we will be hosting an informal lunch to commemorate National Sorry Day on **Wednesday 26 May** in the St Peter & Paul's church hall, South Melbourne, albeit with limited numbers so RSVP's will be necessary. More details in May's *Mungo*.

Fabulous Festivals



Archie Roach performed his early protest songs at a concert at the Espy Hotel as part of the Yaluk-ut Weelam Ngargee in St Kilda.

I hope you got to enjoy some of the terrific festival events last month including Birrarangga Film Festival (films shown are available via www.birrarangga.world) and

Yaluk-ut Weelam Ngargee (YWN) presented by the City of Port Phillip. It opened with the Gareeal ceremony of dance, soundscapes and immersive art and continued with live shows such as *Replay: Koorie (1988)* concert of Archie Roach's early protest songs written when he lived behind the Village Belle Hotel; outdoor performances from stars like Monica Weightman, John Wayne Parsons, Amos Roach (*photo on page 5*) and Pirritu in Acland Plaza and South Melbourne Market, and more besides.

Promoting PPCfR

At recent monthly meetings, members have discussed how to promote our group more widely. Suggestions included articles in the Council's *Diversity* magazine - happily we did make it into their latest issue - potential connections with Port Phillip Focus Facebook group and sending out *Mungo* to local schools. Other ideas and suggestions are welcome.

Congratulations

To the City of Port Phillip Council's marking of Woman's History Month by highlighting local women on posters around the 'hood, such as artist Rubii Red, commissioned to design the background of the posters showing traditional First People's women's circles in purple, the colour of International Women's Day; to Karla Grant for hosting *Living Black* for her 18th year on NITV; to Carrillo and Ziyin Gantner for the largest-ever donation of Indigenous art for the inaugural exhibit at Shepparton Museum's newly-built home opening October; to Yorta Yorta soprano and composer Deborah Cheetham AO, appointed the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's inaugural First Nations Creative Chair.

Rosemary Rule

Next meeting: Tuesday 20 April, 6.30 pm, Koolin-Ngal Family Centre, 400 Clarendon Street, South Melbourne – entry in Napier Street. Covid-safe restrictions mean limited numbers so please RSVP to me on 0418 675 734.

YOO-RROOK COMMISSION ANNOUNCED

Last year, the Victorian Government said it would establish a truth and justice process to “*recognise historic wrongs and address ongoing injustices for Aboriginal Victorians*”. Since then, the government has worked in partnership with the First Peoples’ Assembly to figure out how that process would operate. On 9 March, the government and the First Peoples’ Assembly co-chairs announced the process would be run by the Yoo-rook Justice Commission, led by five commissioners invested with the powers of a royal commission. The majority of commissioners will be Aboriginal with at least one Elder and one with legal expertise in the group, tasked with laying down an authoritative account of Victoria’s history of colonisation, examining both historic and contemporary injustices. Victorian Deputy Premier James Merlino made the announcement at Coranderrk near Healesville, the site of one of Australia’s pivotal civil rights struggles. The holding of a truth and justice commission has been pushed for by the state’s First Peoples’ Assembly which is laying the groundwork for the negotiation of state-based Treaties in the future. (Probably the most high-profile truth-telling commission was South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined the torture, abductions and human rights abuses committed under that country’s apartheid regime). In Australia, a truth-telling process should not simply document history and investigate ‘historic abuses’. Rather, it should serve as a bridge to “*draw history into the present.*” The recommendations of the Commission would form part of the Treaty talks, and the minister has committed to accepting the recommendations that need to be addressed at a government level. Hearings are scheduled to end in 2024.

Note: The opposition’s spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs, Peter Walsh, said the Coalition would support the recommendations of the Commission if elected next year.



Wurundjeri and Woiwurrung Elder Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy, First Peoples’ Assembly co-chair Geraldine Atkinson, Deputy Premier James Merlino, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams and Assembly co-chair Marcus Stewart at the announcement of the Yoo-Rrook Justice Commission on 9 March. Photo: Simon Schluter.

TAUNGURUNG NATIVE TITLE CLAIM

A Victorian Aboriginal corporation says it is confident the land deal underpinning its \$34 million settlement with the Victorian Government will be reinstated after the Federal Court ordered it be set aside in March. The Court found

the Native Title Tribunal had failed to adequately consider points raised by objectors to the Taungurung’s Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) when it registered the agreement last year. The objectors behind the Federal Court action argue the ILUA, which precludes future Native Title claims over the land it covers, interferes with their sovereign rights as Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Ngurai Illum Wurrung people. The ILUA was a key part of the Taungurung people’s 2018 settlement with the Victorian Government. A group of objectors brought the Federal Court action, claiming the ILUA interfered with their sovereign rights, and the Victorian Government and Taungurung corporation, the main respondents in the case, have been ordered to pay the applicants’ costs. The Taungurung people’s 20,210-square-kilometre ILUA stretches across the central Victorian towns of Kilmore, Seymour, Alexandra, Euroa, Ovens Valley and Bright. The agreement, formally registered by the National Native Title Tribunal in April 2020, formed part of the Taungurung Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation’s 2018 Traditional Owner settlement with the Victorian Government. The \$34 million settlement included joint management of several national parks and funds to generate economic opportunities. Taungurung Land and Waters Council CEO Matt Burns said the corporation was “*very confident*” the ILUA would be reinstated by the Native Title Tribunal. “*In the long run, this additional scrutiny will only reinforce the strength of the process that we went through to get to what is hopefully a soon-to-be Taungurung ILUA registration,*” he said.

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

An Aboriginal man died in custody at Victoria’s largest prison Ravenhall on 7 March, the third Aboriginal death in custody to be reported in Australia that month; the cause of death will be formally determined by the Coroner. The chief executive of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), Nerita Waight, said the man’s death highlighted the “*urgent need for sweeping reforms to the justice system*”. VALS said the death would be the first to be dealt with under new Coroner’s Court protocols for investigating Indigenous deaths in custody. Under the new rules, introduced last September, a hearing to confirm an investigator and set a due date for the Coroner’s brief must take place within 28 days of the death. More than 450 Aboriginal people have died in custody since the Royal Commission’s final report was published 30 years ago.

Note: VALS has developed a COVID-19 recovery plan, Building Back Better, to advise the Victorian and Federal Governments on how to ensure that, following the pandemic crisis, the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are improved. The plan includes evidence-based, achievable policies for systemic change. They are disappointed at the lack of engagement of both governments on their proposals and recommendations.

CALLS CONTINUE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

Two key voices in the national debate, Thomas Mayor and Noel Pearson, are among many who continue to call on the government for a referendum on a Voice to

Parliament as outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In March, at an event organised by Initiatives of Change (IoC) in Melbourne to launch their vision to “walk with First Nations People in truth telling and truth hearing to build respect and inclusivity in our country,” special guest Thomas Mayor said: “Truth needs a voice, and that voice must be protected and enshrined in the Constitution.” Mayor, a signatory to the Uluru Statement of the Heart, was among a group of First Nations union members from around the country who’d visited Canberra lobbying for a constitutionally-enshrined First Nations Voice two weeks before submissions for feedback on the government’s proposed frameworks for a Voice closed. He also met with the ALP caucus and Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt and visited the Tent Embassy. Mayor told the 120 guests that: “a Voice cannot only be legislated, it must be protected in the Constitution because every other voice we’ve had in the past has been destroyed by hostile governments.” (Learn more about the IoC’s Our Uluru Response at www.au.iofc.org.)

In a speech at the National Museum of Australia, Indigenous leader Noel Pearson said Australia is incomplete without constitutional recognition of First Nations People. As leaders renew calls for a referendum on a Voice to Parliament, Pearson urged the government not to give up on the decades-long push for constitutional recognition and reiterated his support for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament to be enshrined in the Constitution, in line with the calls of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart. He said: “It is about the recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution, which empowers the parliament to legislate the Voice to Parliament as the means by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are recognised in the nation.....Australia doesn't make sense without recognition, Australia is incomplete without recognition.”



At the Initiatives of Change launch, Thomas Mayor is with RecStonnington’s Ro Bailey holding a signed copy of his book *Finding the Heart of the Nation*.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY – BRIDGING AUSTRALIA’S PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This is an edited extract of a thesis written by Alex McKay, a RecStonnington member, drawn from her Politics research thesis from the University of Glasgow entitled *Bridging the Past, Present and Future: Transgenerational Collective Guilt and Responsibility in Australian Politics of Reconciliation*.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand have a unique historical context where the very foundations of their nationhood were built upon the dispossession and attempted removal of Indigenous presence, referred to as ‘settler societies’ as the colonial intention was not to exploit resources or labour but to establish permanent settlement. In Australia, the colonial project aimed for the complete replacement of Indigenous peoples with colonial society through massacre, assimilationist policies and forced removal. As a nation, Australia needed to erase the reality of how it came to be and create a new colonial narrative. This new story of discovery, terra nullius and pioneering families legitimised settler claim to the land as well as grounded the sense of Australian national identity. The continuing existence of Australian Indigenous peoples and their claim to land brings into question the legitimacy of Australia’s national identity. If we did not discover an empty land and peacefully create Australia as we know it – then what does it mean to be an Australian? The Australia Day celebrations and unwavering pride in Captain Cook’s great ‘discovery’ masks the reality and consequences of how the nation of Australia was founded. Differentiating the ideas of guilt and responsibility can be helpful. As the true history of Australia begins to be unmasked through truth telling and research, there are growing calls for Australia to acknowledge its colonial past and for the Australian Government to take responsibility for the current effects and legacy of those colonial policies. This push for recognition and responsibility, however, is largely rejected as the majority of settler Australia asks: why should we feel guilty when we are not guilty? This question is crucial to the debate over historical injustice and collective responsibility. Can a nation feel guilty collectively? Should an individual feel guilt over the past actions of that individual’s state of which they are a member? How should present governments handle the injustice committed by governments of the past?

Discussion of Australia’s colonial history has frequently been framed through a lens of guilt and blame, resulting in defensive rhetoric. Decision makers and political leaders have defended Australia from this insinuated blame and thrown out attempts at redress for historic injustice by arguing: how can we be guilty of something that happened before we were born? It is a line of argument that has continuously worked to evade political action and shut down deeper discussion into Australia’s colonial past and the legacy of injustice faced by Indigenous communities. Responsibility, however, is different from guilt; it can be collective and can transcend generations; connecting past, present and future and can be a powerful tool for political change. It enables societies to feel sorrow and shame for past injustice, without

implied blame. Removing implied blame or guilt allows for honest dialogue, acknowledgement and accepting responsibility to make amends. If we look at Australia's history through a lens of collective responsibility, it enables and empowers non-Aboriginal Australians to acknowledge our past, better understand our present and to move forward to a better future.

RECONCILIATION GROUPS

For updates on news and events, particularly those being held during National Reconciliation Week starting on **Thursday 27 May**, visit RecVic - www.reconciliation.vic.org.au; and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR) Vic – <https://antarvictoria.org.au>. Their shop also stocks a wide range of merchandise.

WOMEN WHO CHANGED/SHAPED PORT PHILLIP

The City of Port Phillip shared excerpts of the stories of twelve significant women of Port Phillip, past and present, to celebrate International Women's Day and Women's History Month. #IWD2021 #WomensHistoryMonth #ChooseToChallenge. They included Senior Boon Wurrung Elder and local community leader Parbin-ata Dr Carolyn Briggs AM, and Eva Briggs, (1939 to 1991) a Boon Wurrung Elder and humanitarian, who, despite major adversity in her life, unselfishly worked and cared for the disadvantaged in the St Kilda area. Eva's links to St Kilda were strong; her great grandmother, Louisa Briggs, was born on the coast south of Melbourne, prior to the settlement of Melbourne. Read their stories online: <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/IWD>.

TORCH WRAP-UP

In their annual wrap-up, The Torch explained how support allowed them to be active with 488 participants in and out of Victorian prisons, sell 990 artworks, license artists' artworks 96 times, hold two online exhibitions, and take part in the Geelong Reconciliation exhibition, Koorie Art Awards and Linden Postcard Show. Expressing gratitude to their supporters and staff and the men and women in their program, the organisation remembered the statistics: that Indigenous Australians make up around 2% of the Australian adult population yet still represent 28% of the national adult prison population. The Torch continues its aim to reduce the rate of re-offending by encouraging participants to explore identity and culture through art, develop confidence, and define new pathways upon release from prison.

CLOTHING THE GAP

Clothing the Gap is an Indigenous owned and run brand which doubles as a social activist platform, with a flagship store at 744 Sydney Road, Brunswick. Co-founders Laura Thompson and Sarah Sheridan employ fifteen young Aboriginal people in their business, designing health programs for Indigenous communities as well as Aboriginal-designed merchandise, unisex streetwear clothing, T-shirts, singlets, caps, hoodies, exercise tanks and shorts, kids clothing and beanies, reusable coffee cups and collections built around campaigns, like Change the Date, Free the Flag and NAIDOC Week. See clothingthegap.com.au

ARTS

Firestarter – The Story of Bangarra is a film taking the viewer through Bangarra's birth and growth over four decades, recognising Bangarra's early founders and how three young Aboriginal brothers – Stephen, David and Russell Page – turned the newly-born dance group into one of Australia's leading performing arts companies. In cinemas and on the ABC during NAIDOC Week.

Koorie Heritage Trust's *Building Aboriginal Cultural Competency* online workshops for individuals and small groups foster and develop awareness of Aboriginal culture and identity; develop awareness of the strengths of Aboriginal culture and people; assist in making the connection and understanding the impact of colonisation and past policy for Aboriginal people today and motivate and support participants in their cultural competence journey. Dates: **7 April, 3 May, 8 June, 7 July, 2 August, 7 September, 4 October, 9 November, 6 December**. TryBooking or KHT's Bernadette Atkinson, 8662 6337.

Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum: *Gung | Create, Make, Do, Love* is a new exhibition by Wergaia/Wemba Wemba artist Kelly Koumalatsos whose practice merges traditional Wemba Wemba and Wergaia possum skin cloak making with printmaking.

BOOKS

The Boy from the Mish is by Gary Lonesborough, a Yui man who grew up on the Far South Coast of NSW. It is a funny and heart-warming queer Indigenous young adult novel set in a rural Australian community about seventeen-year-old Jackson who is finding the courage to explore who he is, even if it scares him. Allen & Unwin.

Born Into This is Adam Thompson's debut short story collection. The emerging Tasmanian Aboriginal (pakana) writer, living in Launceston, credits Denise Robinson, Aboriginal Arts Officer at Arts Tasmania, for pushing him to seek opportunities to develop his writing.

Songlines: The Power and Promise by Margo Neale and Lynne Kelly weaves deeply personal storytelling with extensive research on mnemonics, offering unique insights into Indigenous traditional knowledges, how they apply today, and how they could help all peoples thrive into the future. PPCfR member Tom Moloney recommends it and the Youtube video of the authors - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=DQEmDI8yCoY>

Great Book Swap - Registrations are open for schools, libraries or organisations to hold a Great Book Swap anytime this year. Organised by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, it aims to raise \$350,000 to gift to 35,000 culturally-relevant books to children in remote Australia. <https://www.Indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au/contact-us>

MUSIC

Live at the Bowl presents:

Blaktivism by First Nations owned and operated Gaba Musik, celebrating Australia's proud First Nations communities. Yothu Yindi, Bart Willoughby, Deline Briscoe, Emma Donovan, Allara, Tasman Keith and others, **Saturday 3 April**.

Spinifex Gum - a powerful musical performance with young Indigenous singers Marliya Choir together with Emma Donovan, The Cat Empire's Felix Riebl, Ollie McGill and guests, **Friday 9 April**.

Pasifix - an all-ages celebration of culture, music and tradition from Pacific artists across the archipelago with the big pop sounds of Ngaiire, viral hip-hop drill crew *No Money Enterprise* and Aussie-Poly rap group *STNDRD*, **Saturday 10 April**.

At Sidney Myer Music Bowl: liveatthebowl.com.au.

SPORT

The AFL has announced that AFL Commissioner Professor Helen Milroy will join Paul Briggs AM to co-chair of the league's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council as part of new changes to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes across all areas of the game. Professor Milroy is the the 2021 WA Australian of the Year, Australia's first Indigenous medical doctor and the AFL's first Indigenous Commissioner. The Council will seek to drive greater alignment across the industry and strengthen the competition-wide approach to the implementation of their Enhanced Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Strategy. Chair of the AFL Players' Association Indigenous Advisory Board, Shaun Burgoyne, is joining the Council to provide direct input from the AFL playing group.

ANCIENT KANGAROO ART



Australia's oldest rock art of a kangaroo has been dated to 17,300 years old, painted by ancestors of the Balanggarra People of the Kimberley. Photo courtesy of Peter Veth, Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation. Illustration: Pauline Heaney And Damien Finch

That quintessential macropod, the kangaroo, is the subject of Australia's oldest-known rock painting after Traditional Owners and researchers dated Australian

paintings in the 'naturalistic' style to between 17,000 and 13,000 years ago, thanks to a 17,300-year-old roo, portrayed in dark mulberry paint on the ceiling of a rock shelter in the Kimberley. It is one of a suite of animal depictions and human-like figures unveiled in *Nature Human Behaviour*. Archaeologists extracted charcoal from fossilised wasp nests under and atop the paint to calculate the minimum and maximum ages of the artworks, and worked with Traditional Owners to calculate the age of the rock art in Drysdale River National Park, painted by ancestors of the Balanggarra People. See <https://www.nature.com/nathumbehav/>

GARMA EXHIBITION

The Yothu Yindi Foundation invites submissions from across Australia for a pictorial gallery to be exhibited on the ceremonial grounds at Gulkula during the Garma Festival, **Friday 30 July- Monday 2 August** in northeast Arnhem Land. The exhibition is called *Facing our Nation - Reflections on Indigenous Australia in 2021*. Image, illustration, or artwork in a hi-res format invited. First prize: free trip to Garma 2021 (including return flights to Nhulunbuy). Details: admin@garmafestival.com.au by **Monday 24 May**.

YALUK-UT WEELAM NGARGEE – AMOS ROACH



Amos Roach, one of Australia's best didge players, performing at the South Melbourne Market as part of the Yaluk-ut Weelam Ngargee Festival.

