

Mungo...



Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation Inc.

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The Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet, and we pay our respects to their Elders; past, present and emerging.

This newsletter is supported by a Community Grant from the City of Port Phillip, and we acknowledge Martin Foley MP, State Labor Member for Albert Park, for his ongoing support.

1 March 2022

FROM THE CO-CHAIR

First Meeting

It was terrific to have lots of people attending our first meeting for the year on Tuesday 15 February. Held via zoom, it was beautifully managed by Deb Stewart. We had some robust conversations on topics including plans for events, such as a Reconciliation Writing Competition for adults, ramifications resulting from the changes of Traditional Owners' boundaries, and ways to build on relationships established last year with local Early Learning Centres. News about events – a proposal to host a lunch to commemorate National Sorry Day on 26 May, etc. - will always be highlighted in *Mungo*. I remain optimistic that from March onwards, respecting applicable Covid regulations, we will be able to meet face-to-face and enjoy being in one another's company.

Constitutional Recognition

I felt privileged to be invited to attend two forums and hear Thomas Mayor, a signatory to and advocate of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, provide updates on the progress of the related Voice, Treaty, Truth campaign. As he has said: "*The campaign for a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice is the most important campaign in our lifetimes. It is the unfinished business that we must complete for the children of Australia today, so they don't need to deal with the same problems tomorrow.*" For Thomas, adopting the Uluru Statement is about recognition of our First Nations brothers and sisters, stressing that it is a practical, not just a symbolic, solution for the benefit of all Australians. Capitalising on widespread public support, an educational campaign is in full swing to bring about change and adopt a Voice to Parliament, and then a referendum is recommended to be held in the next term of parliament. I urge everyone to learn more about the From the Heart Campaign - see <https://fromtheheart.com.au> - and in the lead-up to the forthcoming elections, to also consider lobbying politicians to gauge their support for an enshrined First Nations' Voice. These are some of the ways we can all help reshape history, so that the next referendum will record a resounding Yes vote, just like that other most successful, highly significant one in 1967.



Margaret Hepworth (left), Executive Officer, Initiatives of Change, and PPCfR's Rosemary Rule with Thomas Mayor, holding two of his books, at the first of two forums he presented at the Initiatives of Change forum in Toorak last month.

Congratulations

To first-time author and Gunaikurnai woman Veronica Gorrie, winner of the \$100,000 Victorian Prize for Literature for *Black and Blue: A Memoir of Racism and Resilience*. Her book also won the \$25,000 Victorian Premier's Prize for Indigenous Writing; to the successful campaign to have the Aboriginal flag permanently displayed on the Sydney Harbour Bridge; to Noongar man Aaron Wyatt, the first Aboriginal man to conduct an Australian state orchestra.

Recommendation

Reading Henry Reynold's *Truth-Telling: History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement* was an eye-opener. I learned a lot and gained a new appreciation of the impact on First Nations Australians caused by the arrival of Captain Cook in 1770, the First Fleet two years later and the conditions created by the British Government - knowingly and unwittingly. Reynolds provides facts that might be seen as the 'great forgetting' of Australia's colonial history. This well-researched, insightful book by an eminent historian is highly recommended.

Rosemary Rule

Next Meeting: Tuesday 15 March, 6.30 pm
South Melbourne Community Centre, Hall 3,
Ferrars Place, (off Park Street) South Melbourne
All Welcome. Enquiries: 0418 685 734

FUNDING FOR HOUSING

More than 400 new homes are set to be built for the Victorian Aboriginal community as part of a \$150 million funding injection. In February, the Victorian Government announced it has set aside this amount to build the homes through various Aboriginal grants programs, helping to combat homelessness among First Nations People. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams said the extra money would go a long way to fostering self-determination and culturally safe housing options for Aboriginal Victorians. The new grants are available to Aboriginal households on the Victorian Housing Register and exist on top of a \$35 million upgrade to current Aboriginal housing, part of the state's \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build scheme. Under the plan, 12,000 new social and affordable homes are expected to be built over a four-year span in a bid to boost the state's housing supply by 10%. The projects, located across 38 local government areas, ranged from a 152-home development in Melbourne to several two-home developments in regional areas including Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton, Wodonga and Warrnambool. The State Government is chipping in \$740 million to the scheme with the rest of the bill footed by 22 community housing agencies. The first applications for funding under the Homes for Aboriginal Victorians round are open until early May. According to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service's 2021 annual report, one in six Aboriginal people in Victoria require homelessness assistance and are ten times more likely to contact these services than other residents.

STOLEN GENS REDRESS SCHEME BROADENED

Descendants of Stolen Generations survivors who died after the Commonwealth announced its redress scheme can now apply for and accept payments on behalf of their deceased relatives through to 28 February 2026. The update, announced with little fanfare on the government's website in early February, broadens the eligibility for potential applicants. Previously, descendants could only make a claim if their family member died in the six months leading to March 2022, when the government will begin accepting applications. Healing Foundation's Fiona Cornforth welcomed the move and said it rectified a critical misstep from the scheme's announcement last year. The \$379 million reparations scheme compensates survivors of the Stolen Generations who were removed in the Northern Territory, ACT and Jervis Bay (federal jurisdictions as opposed to state). Individuals are eligible for up to \$82,000, comprising a \$75,000 payment and an additional \$7,000 'healing' payment. The reparations scheme from the Commonwealth comes after decades of campaigning from survivors and descendants, including a class-action lawsuit, since the landmark Bringing Them Home Report in 1997.

DISTRESSING SUICIDE REPORT

The latest statistics from the Victorian Coroner show that since the publication of the results of the Mental Health Royal Commission in 2021 there has been a

75% increase in Indigenous suicide, with young people, men and those in regional communities most at risk. The Victorian Coroner found the stressors that led to suicide were complex and included substance abuse, insecure housing and contact with police and the justice system close to the time of death. Gerry Georgatos has spent more than a decade coordinating the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project and said poverty was overwhelmingly the root cause of suicide for Indigenous people. "*What takes your life above the poverty line is 20, 30, 40 times more likely to take your life below the poverty line, and that number is even higher for First Nations People. In the end, poverty alleviation is the major driver, in fact, that will reduce suicides, and we can dramatically reduce them with significant poverty alleviation.*" National data shows around 40% of Indigenous Australians fall into the bottom 20% of income distribution. The weekly average income for Indigenous households has decreased by almost 5% since 2015, while over the same time period, Indigenous suicides have been increasing, with one in 17 deaths now attributed to suicide. Mr Georgatos said governments had the power to fix the problem, but money was not being spent where it was needed. The mental health system has been put under record levels of demand in recent years, and the Victorian Government's 10-year plan to overhaul it is only in the early stages. This will involve increasing the number of Indigenous people in the mental health workforce and building culturally safe healing centres, but the projects are long-term, so communities will have to wait years to see the benefits. Early access to Aboriginal-run mental health services has proven to be one way to tackle high suicide rates.

ABORIGINAL CHANGE MAKERS' RESOURCE

A special presentation by Dr Lois Peeler AM, Principal of Worawa Aboriginal College, celebrated the release of Aboriginal Change Makers last year. The development of Aboriginal Change Makers was based on the historical record, cultural protocols, community connections and family corpus. Whilst the authors have worked with particular texts and gathered stories and information from a number of primary and secondary sources, this resource is, in essence, the coming together of the various stories of the amazing and courageous Aboriginal leaders who have made important political and social changes. These stories and events are told to educate young Victorians about the role of Aboriginal Change Makers. Stories are told by Aboriginal Elder and Educator Dr. Lois Peeler, widely known as Aunty Lois, a recognised Elder in the Aboriginal community with ancestral connections to many of the esteemed leaders and Change Makers, like William Cooper. Available via vicparl.news/acm.

STONNINGTON RECONCILIATION NEWS

There is a great exhibition at the Melbourne Museum in a small gallery off Bunjilaka called *Still in my Mind* about the Wave Hill Walk-Off. The name comes from Vincent Lingiari, saying: "*That land.... I still got it in my mind*" and

commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Walk-off and the beginning of the land rights movement. It consists of artworks, photos, displays of tools and utensils, and an episode of *4 Corners*. There are some wonderful artworks. In one, the artist pictures her mother carrying a wooden yoke with buckets of sewerage which she was required to take out into the bush to get rid of. This artist also speaks of people having to do the milking but not being allowed to have any of the milk. She states that they did not have milk in their tea until they left Wave Hill. It is easy to see why the Walk-off occurred. If you are able to see it, you won't regret it. It is quite a moving story, another episode of our sad and shameful history. The exhibition closes on 15 May. At our December meeting we decided to have an information presentation at each meeting this year due to the influx of new members who may not be as informed as Keith and myself who have been in the Reconciliation movement for 22 years.

Michael Sullivan, our Group's Minute Secretary, volunteered to present on Changes to Melbourne's Registered Aboriginal Party Boundaries following the recent changes affecting Stonnington and Port Phillip and other council areas. His presentation was most informative and appreciated. It covered topics such as What is the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council; Water Defined the new Boundaries; What are Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs); and How Does the VAHC define Traditional Owners. Michael is willing to give his presentation to PPCfR if they are interested, as the changes affect their area similarly. At our next meeting on **Wednesday 9 March**, another member will give a presentation on the address given at Initiatives of Change by Thomas Mayor on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. All welcome, contact Ro Bailey on 0438 285 588. In other news, we will be taking part in Pets in the Park, organised by Stonnington Council at Central Park, Malvern East, 11.00 am-3.00 pm on **Sunday 20 March**. We will have a children's art activity, decorating small wooden cut-outs of native animals and an information stall for the grownups. Come along and say hello to us. We look forward to seeing you there. *Ro Bailey*

EVENTS

Art Auction: Works of art by Indigenous women artists from Central Australia's Utopia region including Gracie Morton Pwerle, Kathy Petyarre and Bessie Petyarre will raise funds for Initiatives of Change Australia's Trustbuilding Program, co-designing with Uncle Shane Charles and First Nations leaders. **Thursday 24 March**, 6.00 pm-9.30 pm, online and in person at Armagh, Initiatives of Change, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak. To register and bid, contact Jennifer, 0434 352 692.

Talks: *Marking Life: Indigenous Reflections on Continuing/Maintaining/Living Rituals* is presented by Agency Projects. Leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative thinkers, artists, architects and creatives from across metropolitan and remote Australia share knowledge and exchange ideas through workshops,

panel discussions and performances. **Monday 21-Wednesday 23 March**, 7.00 pm, MP Pavilion, opposite the NGV, St Kilda Road.

Music: The Port Fairy Folk Festival is on from **Friday 11-Monday 14 March**. Artists include the Port Fairy Folk Festival Artist of the Year, Kutcha Edwards, and the legendary Archie Roach. <https://portfairfolkfestival.com>

BOOKS AND LITERARY FESTIVALS

Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival based in Naarm (Melbourne) runs over four days, celebrating the diverse expressions of First Nations writers, covering all genres from oral stories to epic novels, plays and poetry. Director Jane Harrison has invited a stellar range of writers such as Tara June Winch, Bryan Andy, Tony Birch, Ellen van Neeren, Alexis Wright, Larry Walsh, Daniel Browning and Richard Frankland. Wheeler Centre and other venues, **Thursday 17-Sunday 20 March**.

Mission: Essays, Speeches and Ideas is a book by Noel Pearson - lawyer, activist and founder of the Cape York Institute. This remarkable man has assumed a highly significant stature in Australian public life over the past 30 years in roles of insider and outsider, agitator, intellectual and politician. Over 600 pages of some of the best of Pearson's portraits of political leaders - Keating, Rudd, Whitlam, Turnbull and more - an exploration of a Voice to Parliament leading eventually to the Uluru Statement from the Heart and analyses of major issues. Black Inc.

Dear Son collects letters written by First Nations men about life, masculinity, love, culture and racism. Along with his own vivid and poignant prose and poetry, author and editor Thomas Mayor invites thirteen contributors to write a letter to their son, father or nephew, bringing together a range of perspectives that offer the greatest celebration of First Nations manhood. They include Noel Pearson, Stan Grant, Troy Cassar-Daley, John Liddle, Charlie King, Joe Williams, Yessie Mosby, David Wirrpanda, Joel Bayliss, Daniel James, Jack Latimore, Daniel Morrison, Tim Sculthorpe and Blak Douglas.

Sister Girl is a new edition of Jackie Huggins' book which includes updated essays, reflecting the career of a strong black feminist activist/advocate, academic and historian.

NITV HIGHLIGHTS

True Colours is a new 4-part crime drama featuring both Arrrente and English language - an Australian first;

Off Country follows the lives of seven Indigenous students over a year who become boarders at Geelong Grammar School; and *Larapinta* is a six-part environmental documentary told through the eyes of young presenter Talia Liddle.

SCAR TREE RETURNED

A Scar Tree that has been at the Melbourne Zoo for around thirty years was returned to Wollithiga Country near Echuca in February. Wollithiga Elder Professor Uncle Henry Atkinson was interviewed by the ABC about the significance of the Scar Tree, why its return is so important and how it will now be cared for by local landowners.

