

Annual Report June 05

Baayaami galumala nhalay biibabiiba, gimbila ngiyangu dhiiyaan walan ngaalinhay binaal. Baayaami gimbila ngiyangu dhiiyaan wilaygu mi-landa Dharriwaaga. Giirru. *Biami bless this book, let it make our people strong and peaceful. Biami let our people live as one through Dharrivaa. Amen.*

Independence Day for Dharrivaa Elders Group

In February 2003 the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service requested that the Dharriwaa Elders Group that it had auspiced since 1998, become autonomous.

With the generous assistance of legal advisors Gilbert + Tobin, in particular Martin Thorpe, the DEG negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with WAMS about how the separation will proceed. This took up considerable administrative time over 16 months which delayed other DEG projects.

On 11 March 2005, the Dharriwaa Elders Group became an Association which was registered for incorporation on the 18 March 2005.

The MoU with WAMS was signed by



George Rose OAM, Speaker for the Dharriwaa Elders Group, and George Fernando, Chairperson of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service.

The DEG became fully separate from Walgett AMS 1 July 2005 .and received confirmation from the Tax Office of its charitable status. The DEG thanks Walgett AMS for its support.

Right: Dharrivaa Elders Group Speaker George Rose OAM and George Fernando (also Chairperson of Walgett AMS) after they signed the MoU of how the separation between WAMS and DEG will occur, on 30 June 2005. They are witnessed by Dharrivaa Elders Group member Lewis Beale and WAMS CEO Christine Corby.

Above: The Dharrivaa Elders Group became an Association 11 March 2005. Pictured anti-clockwise from left: Nellie Copeland, Lewis Beale, Thelma Thorne, Mary Creighton, Tim Creighton, Hazel Winters, Val Collis, Phillip Kennedy, Tom Martin, Fay Sands, Ted Chapman, Colin Kennedy, George Rose and Richard Lake.. At the end of June 05 the growing DEG had 27 members.



Partnership with Walgett Community College



In May 2005 Dharrivaa Elder Thelma Thorne officiated at the Walgett Community College reconciliation assembly. She is seen at left cutting the cake with District Director of Schools Jane Cavanagh. The DEG tries to attend all College assemblies to provide a presence and also to occasionally perform official functions. Right: In October 04 Marilyn Parker and Yvonne Hill, Aboriginal Education Consultants NSW Department of Education, met



with Program Manager W. Spencer to advise how the elders program would fit into the existing syllabus. During the year the DEG has been working towards introducing into Walgett Primary School an elders program that would achieve the outcomes of the previous Dharrivaa Walaay, "Elders and Youth Camps". It received strong support from senior education staff, but was blocked at the local level. We know now that the elders program began in September 2005, but in the 2005 financial year

the DEG continued to develop its partnership with Walgett Community College in other supportive ways.

Below left: Carmen Ryan and a teacher introduce the business enterprise program to the DEG, and below right: Jane Cavanagh (Director Of School Education) and Maree Angus (Director Walgett Community College) introduce the new principal of the Walgett Primary School, Phil Halpin, to Tim Creighton, Lewis Beale, Thelma Thorne and George Rose. In Jun 2005.



Right: Dharrivaa Elder Mary Creighton represented the DEG by awarding purchases bought at auction by Walgett Community College students. This program is supported by the Commonwealth Bank and aims to give students saving and purchasing skills. Community College dollars are earned by students during the month, and at the end of the month an auctioneer is invited in to sell items for these hard-earned dollars. The DEG decided to support this worthwhile program to encourage numeracy learning, budgeting and achievement.



Below: DEG elder Nellie Copeland performed official duties at the Presentation Night for the Walgett Primary School. She is seen here leading the procession into the hall, December 04.



DEG encourages making and enjoying music

In July 2004, the Dharrivaa Country Music Band first performed in public at the Walgett RSL Club at a Seniors Function (see below). In Sept 04 they performed at the hospital benefit at the Walgett Sporting Club (see right), and on Melbourne Cup Day November 2004 they performed at the Walgett RSL Club, where they were introduced by George Rose, Dharrivaa Elders Group Speaker. (see below right). On May 05 the Dharrivaa CMB performed at a fundraiser in Singleton. The Dharrivaa Elders Group is proud of the DEG members of the band, Neville Beale and Richard Lake, and plans to provide opportunities for them and other DEG members to enjoy making music, in the future. Stay tuned.



Jean Gibbs entertains

In October 2004, song writing legend Jean Gibbs dropped in from Narrabri, to give an impromptu performance for the DEG. She attracted an enraptured audience as she played a few songs in the DEG office and caught up with long lost friends and younger fellow musicians.



MAKE A DONATION !

www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/donate.htm

Youth Plan Subcommittee of the Walgett Interagency

The Dharriwaa Elders Group proposed to the Walgett Interagency in March 2004 that the two work together to improve services for Walgett's youth. After conducting a survey of current services, the DEG wrote "Walgett Youth Priorities" – a whole of community plan for Walgett's youth with a subcommittee of the River Towns Service Provider Network in July and revised in August 2004. Since then DEG has convened the sub-



committee to work towards addressing needs for supported youth accommodation, a youth centre and activities and a community patrol. *Above Mark Sheverdisze (DoCS) and Megan Callinan (NSW Dept Sport and Recreation) met with Lewis Beale and Nellie Copeland and Wendy Spencer, from the Walgett Interagency Youth Plan Subcommittee, to meet with housing representatives in Dubbo to lobby for supported housing for youth 15 - 25 yrs in May 2005.*



Left: The NSW Dept of the Attorney General, visited the DEG in March 05 to discuss how a community night patrol might operate in Walgett - an important element in the community's plan for Walgett's youth. It would be operated by workers and elders and provide a soup kitchen service, troubleshooting youth needs, feeding them and taking them home or to a safe place. Such a program should also provide events for elders and young people to bond. DEG wrote an eoi for the program this year.

Yetta Dhinnakkal Advisory Committee

Right: DEG elders participate in the community advisory committee to Yetta Dhinnakkal, the corrections centre near Brewarinna. Lewis Beale, Margaret Rose and Tim Creighton are pictured here in January 2005 on one of their trips to the Centre.



AJAC consults

Left: The Dharriwaa Elders Group met in September 04 with Lenny Frail, Chair of Aboriginal Justice Advisory Group, and the Walgett Circle Sentencing Project Officer, Leslie Tighe, to discuss the introduction of Circle Sentencing in Walgett. The DEG made many suggestions for how the program could work in Walgett, none of which were accepted by AJAC, or later the NSW Attorney Generals Dept which took over the administration of Circle Sentencing.



Circle Sentencing planned for Walgett



Above: Lesley Tighe, NSW Dept of the Attorney General Circle Sentencing Project Officer organized a community meeting with DEG to discuss the introduction of circle sentencing in Walgett 15 October 04. Children from St Josephs School sang and elder Nellie Copeland welcomed everyone. Left: In December 04 George Rose OAM welcomed elders from Dubbo and Nowra to Walgett. They had travelled the long distance to Walgett to encourage the Walgett elders of the benefits of circle sentencing in their communities. The evening was convened by Leslie Tighe, who was assisted by the River Towns Facilitator from Brewarrina.



Left: In February 2005 Lesley Tighe and the DEG devised and conducted a workshop to work through the protocols of Walgett circle sentencing. Below: In July 05 Lesley Tighe, acted on a request of the DEG and organized a lunch with elders and Walgett court workers. Barry Rogers, Clerk of the Court, and Fiona Tooth, magistrate on the western circuit, discussed wide ranging issues. Afterwards the DEG felt they had a wider knowledge of the criminal justice system in this region, and what they will be working with when the circle sentencing starts in Walgett.



Above: DEG met with Probation and Parole to discuss the need for sentencing options for the circle. DEG discovered there is much work to do to introduce alternatives to jail in this region.

DEG advocating for community to government

During the year, The Minister appointed Hugh Percy from Queanbeyan, to administrate the Walgett Shire Council, replacing the Councilors sacked by the Governor. Mr Percy introduced forums at the beginning of each Council meeting where the public may speak on agenda items. The Dharrriwaa Elders Group has used this opportunity to voice its members' opinions on a number of matters. Below right: In September 04 Tim Creighton spoke to present the Walgett Aboriginal Land Council's case for naming the new Barwon River bridge the "Eric Monty Morgan Bridge" after the bravery medal recipient, long-time bridge worker, and

member of the Morgan family who is always associated with that place. Left: Richard Lake presented the Dharrriwaa Elders Group proposal to name the Namoi River bridge after Dorothy Nicholls, a World War II veteran from the Walgett Aboriginal family associated with the area of town known as "Nicholls Bend" on the Namoi River. In another Open Forum the DEG advised the Administrator that an additional subcommittee should be set up to advise him on Aboriginal Affairs, as it doubted that the Precinct Committees would accurately present the voice of Aboriginal people to him. He rejected this advice but soon realised he had made a mis-



take, and admitted this to a meeting with Aboriginal representatives, including George Rose pictured at right, in April 2005. The DEG proposed that the Community Working Party make



recommendations to Council meetings regularly, which he accepted. Next year the DEG plans to negotiate an MoU with the Council

to iron out protocols and processes. Below left: Dick Lake, Tim Creighton and George Rose met with the RTA and Walgett Shire in August 04 to discuss the proposals from the Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Dharrriwaa Elders Group for naming Walgett bridges. Right: DEG met with the community and a consultant appointed by DEST from Alice Springs to develop an action plan. This is the most recent of many

plans for Walgett developed by DEG members and the community. Previous plans had not been studied so the DEG found the process wasteful of its time, but politely attended anyway.

The COAG Murdi Paaki trial has directed that each community develop a plan which will lead to shaping Shared Responsibility Agreements between community and government.



DEG concern re future Aboriginal governance

In September 04 the DEG attended the “Our Voice Our Future” Summit in Sydney. The summit was convened by NSW Aboriginal peak bodies, ATSIC and DAA to discuss the future governance of Aboriginal peo-

ple in NSW after June 2005. It brought together up to 300 Aboriginal delegates and considered a range of possible models and characteristics that could be considered in a new model. Below right: In November 04

Dharriwaa Elders traveled to Lightning Ridge to workshop the NSW Government Review into the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act. There they met members of Aboriginal land councils from the north west region.



DEG hosts “enrol to vote” promotion



The Dharriwaa Elders Group invited Les Knox of the Australian Electoral Commission to attend the Ricky Walford and George Rose Jnr football and Jenny Wright Netball tournaments to promote enrolling to vote to the Walgett Aboriginal community.

Left: Les and George Rose Snr are pictured after the “Elders Tent” was first set up that day. Right: DEG member Jenny Wright presented her shield to the netball winners of the day.



DEG lobbies Ministers

Left: DEG Speaker George Rose attended the Talking About Grog II meeting which followed up after the NSW Alcohol Summit, in August 04. He took the opportunity to chide Minister Refshauge about the disappearance of promised funds to renovate the Walgett Community Hall and received the good news that it will be scoped soon.. During the year letters were sent by DEG to the Minister for Education about concerns with the primary school environment, and to the Minister for Community Services in February 05 about concerns for the Walgett homeless, and to the Premier regarding Walgett community housing concerns in March 05.

Aboriginal Heritage Protection and Promotion



Throughout the year the Dharriwaa Elders Group continued its cultural management activities. They included submission writing, promoting DEG's visibility and knowledge to the community. Scientists that study soil, water flow, fish, native vegetation and climate, working for the Murray Darling Freshwater Co-operative Research Centre based in Goondiwindi held a science field day at Narran Lake in May 2005. They were working together to understand how the Lakes work, and from this information government and other decision-makers will hopefully learn how to sustain them into the future. Aboriginal elders from Walgett and Lightning Ridge attended, pleased that scientists were finally learning about the area after years of elders' lobbying government to protect it. Below left: In April 2005 Nellie Copeland travelled to Wee Waa with DEG staff to attend a meeting with the new Namoi Catchment Management Authority. It will be a significant partner in Aboriginal heritage including environment protection work with the DEG in the future. Since then staff of both orgs have met to discuss projects. Below: The DEG met with the Chair and CEO of the Western Catchment Management Authority in December 04 to discuss future joint projects. The new CMAs need to be educated about how they can benefit from working with DEG.



Above: An April 05 DEG meeting with property holder Joan Treweek who is assisting the DEG to progress the reburial of Aboriginal human remains on local properties. Right: DEG Speaker George Rose met with National Parks and Wildlife Service officers Paul McInnes and Robert Smith. DEG is now planning with these men regular elders' retreats to East Mullane, a property now owned by NPWS.