



Dharrivaa Elders Group Incorporated
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ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2008



we will remember

Active DEG member Norma Suey left for the sky camp 23 March 2008. Highly respected friend of the DEG Ted Simpson passed away 26th August 2007. They are much missed by their brothers and sisters of the Dharrivaa Elders Group.

Images used with family permission.



DEG moves into new premises



The Dharrivaa Elders Group launched their new premises to invited guests in March. After being forced to leave their premises by Walgett AMS and receiving no help from government or Council, DEG found a benefactor to buy the building until the DEG can raise funds needed.

New Prime Minister listens



Left: Two weeks after the February Apology, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Jenny Macklin, made a flying visit to Walgett. They especially wanted to meet with George Rose and members of the Dharrivaa Elders Group. Housing, education, employment and health were the main issues discussed. The Prime Minister fulfilled a pre-election promise to George last time he was in Walgett, to return.

Baayaami gimbila ngiyangu dhiiyaan wilaygu milanda Dharrivaa. Giirru. *Biami let our people live as one through Dharrivaa. Amen.*

Grassroots governance



Kevin meets DEG

Kevin Rudd, Australian Labor Party leader, visited Walgett in September to meet with cockies about the drought. George Rose and Richard Lake introduced themselves and took the opportunity to have a quick kerbside meeting. He promised to return and meet with the DEG should Labor be elected to government. When this photo was taken he was referred to by members as “Kevin 07”. When he was elected PM he was referred to as “Kevin 007”.

Walgett receives Govt. apology

In February the Dharriwaa Elders Group organized an occasion to view the broadcast of the Commonwealth Government's Apology to the Stolen Generations. Significantly, it was the first occasion organized by the DEG with the Walgett Shire Council. Community members and school students joined the DEG members, staff and their friends to be a part of history. Primary school students danced and a high schools student made a memorable speech. We were honoured that George Rose OAM, a survivor of Kinchella Boys Home in the 1930s, was present, as were the children of other Stolen Generation survivors.



Elected representatives meet



Above: Mark Coulton, National MP for our Commonwealth electorate, made a quick introductory visit in May.



Kevin Humphries, NSW National MP for Barwon, met with DEG staff in December.



DEG Director Tim Creighton met Minister Kenneally (NSW Minister for Ageing) in Parliament House in March, to make representations for the DEG model.

DEG published policy



Above: A subcommittee of the DEG works in April finalizing a paper sent to Jenny Macklin, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs which had been extensively workshopped with members over the previous month since her visit to Walgett late February. The DEG wrote three substantial policy documents during this year.



Above: November meeting of a DEG subcommittee to discuss the DEG's submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Indigenous Disadvantage, which was submitted late November and is available on DEG's www site.

Walgett Shire Council's Aboriginal Community Development and Reconciliation Plan 2007 - 2010

a submission from the Dharriwaa Elders Group was published in January and can be found at www.dharriwaeldersgroup.org.au/reports.htm

Lee Rhiannon MLC visits in May



Member of the Legislative Council of NSW Parliament, and Leader of the NSW Greens, Lee Rhiannon visited Walgett 1 May, at the invitation of the Dharriwaa Elders Group. Tim Creighton had met Lee in Sydney as part of the DEG's ongoing campaign to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, currently the area known as OPA 4 which



borders on the Narran Lakes wetland, from the threat of potential damage by opal mining. She is seen above with her media advisor, Alison Orme, and DEG members Virginia Robinson, Tim Creighton and George Rose who were their hosts for the day. Ms Rhiannon reported in Hansard her thoughts after her visit with the DEG, twice.

DEG's ongoing voice re OPA 4



Representative of Canberra University scientists working at the Narran Lakes Nature Reserve, Scott Rayburg, visited the DEG in March to facilitate communication regarding their work with the Walgett community, and so that we could make sure their work will



be used by government to protect the wetland from the imminent threat of opal mining. Above right: DEG met with its legal advisors Gilbert + Tobin when Tim and Wendy were in Sydney in March to review the legal work to be done in the OPA 4 matter.

DEG assists scientists to review NSW Govt. reports re local environment



Above right: Terewah landholder Jamie Foster with DEG director Tim Creighton, during a June tour of Terewah undertaken by the DEG. The object of the exercise was to photograph examples of native vegetation, animal habitat and water flow areas in a property within OPA 4 which is



due to be mined for opal. The property is adjacent to the Narran Lake Nature Reserve and contains parts of the Narran Lake wetland, and the waterways that feed the wetland. For these reasons it was important that DEG's scientific consultants were aware of its features.



DEG encourages NSW to protect sites

Above: Interim archaeologist for the western region of NSW, Mariah Cotter, visited DEG for the first time to explain how the dept was preparing for opal mining at Narran Lake RAMSAR wetland in April. The DEG provided her with lengthy written advice after this meeting.

DEG archaeological survey



In April the DEG conducted a second archeology training survey so that three local Aboriginal men who had already voluntarily attended some Aboriginal site identification training for the DEG last year. The aim is to provide the Aboriginal community with the skills to conduct surveys for the DEG resources permitting. Archeologists Heritage Concepts offered to provide the training exercise so they could



train their staff as well. In this way, the DEG could also undertake some surveys of private lands within the area known as OPA 4, which are threatened by opal mining. We aim to enter as many sites as possible into the NSW Dept of Environment and Climate Change's database, so that they can be better protected under NSW laws (if they are enforced).

Landholders meet

The Dharriwaa Elders Group called a meeting with landholders in the Opal Prospecting Area 4 in December to feedback results from our archaeological survey on their properties, and to discuss issues of common concern. We believe valuable information was exchanged and appreciated the opportunity to work to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in the region. Left to right: Richard Lake, Cath Deshon (Llanillo), Louise and Jamie Foster (Terewah), George Rose OAM.



Movement re AP Nomination

In 2002 the Dharriwaa Elders Group nominated Dunglear and Narran Lakes to be gazetted under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act as "Aboriginal Places". We have been advised that gazettal will protect against mining and other threats. After letters were written by DEG's legal advisors regarding protecting places of significance in OPA 4 from mining, the NSW Dept of Environment and Conservation acted. This year we heard that announcements were imminent.



Heroic Italian ranger visits

Cristina Rovelli, a wildlife ranger from northern Italy, visited Walgett with her family in May. Dharriwaa Elders Group members George Rose, Ted Thorne, Richard Lake and Lewis Beale took the party of travellers to the Narran Lake Nature Reserve so they could visit our internationally significant wetland and learn how important it is to the local Aboriginal community. DEG friend Frances Pike from the Border Rivers CMA organized the visit and provided translation.

Cuddie Springs dig continues



September 9th DEG elders Neville and Lewis Beale along with Ted Thorne and Project Officer Richard Lake attended another Sydney University open day at Cuddie Springs. About sixty people turned up for the event with the archaeologists.



September 19th Walgett's Kids Excel Class along with their teacher Deb Walford and Principal Jonathon Harvey were taken by Dharriwaa Elder Neville Beale and Project Officer Richard Lake to archaeology digs at Cuddie Springs. Judith Fields the archaeologist in charge remarked that this was only the second group of school children to visit the dig since it began about fifteen years ago.

NAAC representation

The Namoi Catchment Aboriginal Advisory Committee which includes Richard Lake - a delegate from the Dharriwaa Elders Group, met at Breeza Station in February. They learnt about nearby pasture regeneration projects, and discussed issues like the impending changes to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act.. The DEG looks forward to learning of outcomes from the Namoi and Western CMA Aboriginal Advisory Committees in the future.



Ongoing work with/despite government



Above: In April Pamela Young and Berenice Carrington from the NSW Dept of Environment and Climate Change used the facilities of the DEG to interview community participants in a DECC project carried out by the Walgett AMS.



Above: In November the DEG's members met with new Narran Lakes Nature Reserve ranger Mike Mullholland. Elders welcomed him to the area and updated him with their interests and concerns about the lakes.

Council forced to consult



DEG responded to a Council meeting agenda by making a written submission to the open forum of Council's November meeting. DEG's advice was ignored, in particular in relation to the spelling of the word "Gamilaraay" on a proposed road sign. Neither the Gamilaraay or Yuwaalaraay languages have a "k" sound, and to ignore this fact is insulting, especially when the local elders group provides a correction. A DEG member was so incensed that the Aboriginal community would have to put up with a road sign welcoming visitors to Walgett in "Kamilaroi" country that she made representation to Kevin Humphries (our local MP) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Once prompted by these authorities, the Acting General Manager, Emma Darcy quickly resolved the situation by consulting with the DEG in December. Progress!

Foundation Hall update



Left: Des Jones, the Chair of the Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corp, visited the DEG in February to discuss the future of the Walgett Community Hall, which it owns and agreed to give to the DEG. The DEG has worked hard to attract funds to renovate the derelict building, but got nowhere fast. Efforts were hampered by the Commonwealth which blocked the transfer of ownership. The DEG remains concerned that this community resource be accessible, but has been given no support by government or community to renovate it under DEG ownership. No practical alternative has been proposed.

Grassroots governance contd.



Left: the March monthly meeting of the Dharriwaa Elders Group Elders Council.

The second AGM of Dharriwaa Elders Group Incorporated was held 8 November 2008. George Rose OAM was returned as Speaker, Thelma Thorne Secretary, Lewis Beale Treasurer. Elders Councillors elected were Victor Murray, Ted Thorne, Marj Weatherall, Margaret Rose, Fay Sands, Tim Creighton, Leonard Simpson. During the year the members met monthly, as did the Elders Councillors.

Walgett learns of CDEP takeover June



DEG was invited by FACSHIA staff to attend a community information meeting about the Walgett CDEP service in June. Elders and Staff attended but were asked to leave by Gary Trindall, the Chair of Walginnam ETAC, the local organization which has declined to run the Walgett CDEP in 2008/09. Left: FACSHIA officer Tracey Shillingsworth with Kathleen Shields of DEG note taking, and elder Fay Sands. Above: Dept of Family and Community, Housing and Indigenous Affairs' Tom Warren informing the community and CDEP participants.



Leadership activities continued..



Above: FACISA officer Tom Warren visited the DEG in June when it was convening the monthly Youth Subcommittee meeting of the Walgett Interagency. He is seen here with staff from the Community College, Council, Youth Off the Streets and TAFE. He was surprised to find that the DEG works hard to assist the effective implementation of youth services in Walgett.



DEG met with journalist Russell Skelton and photographer Brendan Esposito in May to discuss the poor planning by government for the future of Aboriginal communities in regional and remote NSW. The story "Where babies are a mixed bonus" was published by the SMH 17-18 May 2008 and contains accurate reporting of some DEG concerns.

DEG supports Walgett-Gosford “sister cities” initiative



Gosford City Council's Mayor Laurie Maher and Walgett Council Administrator Vic Smith sign the sister city agreement between the two councils in August. Above right: The mayor and his staff met with the Dharriwaa Elders Group when they first arrived in Walgett. The Rural / Metropolitan Sister City Agreement confirms a commitment between the two councils to “foster



relationships between the citizens of their shire and city to promote awareness and understanding of: business, culture, economic, education, industry, sports and tourism opportunities, as well as promoting excellence in local government, business and other fields through exchange and communication.”



DEG meets new Council GM

Left: Vic Beale, Walgett Council Aboriginal Liaison Officer, introduced the new General Manager, Ray Kent, to the DEG. He is seen here with Acting General Manager Emma Darcy and DEG members. The DEG tries to meet with all new service providers when they arrive.

Gosford cultural exchange



Left: Walgett elders and school children with Gosford elders in the Gosford Council chambers. DEG elders travelled to Gosford in March to visit elders at the invitation of the Gosford City Council. It was an interesting experience which helped DEG see its work in others' eyes.

Community Service Announcements produced for Walgett CDAT



The Dharriwaa Elders Group completed shooting its series of community service announcements for television with alcohol messages, in June. Seen here are Tim Creighton and Fay Sands being recorded by the Heuristic Video pro-

duction team. The producer Wendy Spencer will be completing the announcements in the new financial year. Financial assistance was received from the Walgett CDAT.

DEG's media production continues



Dharriwaa Elders Group 2008 calendar



Above left:: This year the DEG produced a fundraising calendar which provide popular with elders' families.

In June the Dharriwaa Elders Group completed shooting its tourism video which we expect to edit in the new year. Above right can be seen Leonard Simpson - one of the few elders with a speaking part in the project, with DEG Speaker George Rose during a break in the recording of a key scene down by the river.

Left: DEG continued to produce its monthly magazine Yun-diboo which is distributed to the community and schools.



DEG's Christmas activities



This year in December the Coolabah Motel donated lollies to the DEG. Thelma Thorne led female staff and volunteers Robyn Rose, Georgia Rose and Kiesha Sands, in gift-wrapping the lollies, and then presented them to preschoolers.



Members and staff attended a Christmas dinner offered by the Walgett Homecare and Balyarta services at the RSL.



Artists support DEG

Georgina and David O'Neill visited the DEG in January and sold us a series of paintings for a very generous price to assist the organization to raise funds to purchase its new premises. The DEG Elders Council and Stella Sands are seen at right with Georgina and the works.



Teacher induction experiment



Two teachers induction sessions were held at the Walgett Primary School on 24 July.

Elders and teaching staff watched the Dharriwaa Elders Group video "Welcome to Walgett". A question and answer session then took place. The DEG are hopeful these sessions help new teaching staff to settle in and to gain knowledge.

Teachers visit Angledool



September 4th and 18th a cultural awareness trip was conducted for teachers from the Walgett Community College, Primary and High Schools. The teachers were taken to the old reserve at Angledool where the totems the snake (dhuyu) and turtle (wayamba) were shown to them, the significance of these totems were explained to them. Also visited at the time was the Angledool Reserve Memorial which contains the list of residents who lived there before the reserve was closed down. On the return journey to Walgett lunch was eaten on the Narran River where Virginia Robinson told the story to the teachers of how the Narran Lakes was formed.



Above left: Ted Thorne presented Walgett Community College Director Peter Partridge with a two year screening license for the DEG's new cultural awareness resource "Welcome to Walgett" in July. Above right: Walgett Primary School Principal Jonathon Harvey introduced new teachers to Tim Creighton, Thelma Thorne and Virginia Robinson in July. They wanted to check some curriculum items they were introducing and discuss teaching generally.