

DHARRIWAA ELDERS GROUP INCORPORATED INC9883394 ABN: 26 795 240 948.
- a charity endorsed by the ATO. <http://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au>,
PO Box 174 Walgett NSW ph: 02 6828 2619. Contact: info@dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au

Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") members for the year 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013

written by Project Manager Wendy Spencer of Heuristic Video Pty Ltd.

Members News

Dharriwaa Elders Group staff and members mourned the loss of members Joan Morgan, Colin Kennedy, Malcolm ("Ted") Chapman, Harry Hall and Vera Dennis during this period. The loss of a significant donor to DEG's collection, U.Roy Barker, was also keenly felt by the organisation.

From 1 July 2012 – 14 December 2012 Thelma Thorne (Treasurer), Victor Hill (Secretary), William Kennedy, Marj Weatherall, Violet Morgan, Les Pitt, Gladys Walford, Ted Thorne comprised the Elders Council. From 14 December 2012 – 30 June 2013 Victor Hill (Speaker), George Fernando (Treasurer), Virginia Robinson (Secretary), Gladys Walford, Ted Thorne, Noreen Kennedy, Fay Sands comprised the Elders Council. Bill Kennedy and Ken Dennis were invited to join the Elders Council on the 28 June 2013.

During the period DEG's Elders Council secretariat prepared and held meetings 2 & 27 July, 2 & 31 August, 5 October, 2 & 30 November, 14 December 2012, 1 & 22, 27 February, 5 & 26 April, 31 May, 14 & 28 June 2013, prepared subsequent correspondence and undertook actions arising.

A governance workshop for directors 25 February 2013 was conducted by Geoffrey Simpson. The undertaking of police record checks of all directors and staff was introduced before the end of June 2013, with Working with Children Checks to be undertaken by directors and staff in the new year.

DEG contributed food vouchers to 13 families for Walgett funerals during the period.

Ministerial visits and other civic business of the DEG

Kevin Humphries MP, Minister for Regional NSW and Member for Barwon visited the Dharriwaa Elders Group 16 January 2013 and was lobbied regarding support for Walgett's cultural collection / keeping place. NSW ministers visited Walgett on other occasions but did not visit the Elders Group, despite community protocols established by the DEG in the past.

DEG hosted a meeting with Brian Gleeson and Rebecca Barnes (Office of the Co-ordinator General Remotes Indigenous Services) and James Christian (State Manager Dept FaHCSIA) 9 August 2012, and Elders welcomed them to Walgett at the Walgett oval during the Ricky Walford, George Rose Jnr memorial and Jenny Wright memorial football/netball gala 7 August 2012. Elders also attended other Walgett Community Festival activities, including the Festival dinner, and hosted visitors through that week.

DEG Elders hosted a meeting with WGACWP and Walgett Council candidates before Local Government elections 6 September 2012. On the 28 September the DEG made a submission to Walgett Shire Council to comment on Draft Local Environment Plan, after extensive preparation and consultations with NSW OEH, NSW Farmers, Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party members, directors and DEG Management Committee.

Negotiations continued with Walgett Shire Council, and NSW Lands regarding a location proposed by the DEG at Montkeila Bend / Namoi River for a cultural learning place (i.e. interpretive signs and picnic shelter) for visitors. DEG conducted a meeting on site with Walgett Shire Council to determine location of Montkeila Bend cultural learning places on 28 August 2012. This activity continues.

During the period DEG began liaising with legal advisors regarding an MoU with NSW Office of Water for management of Aboriginal cultural heritage water-dependent sites in August 2012 and liaised with NSW Water re October unit launch in Sydney and Elders' attendance. Legal advisors also assisted DEG with human resources matters.

The Environmental Defenders Office assisted throughout the period by preparing a draft MoU with Council, researched Council Development Control Plans, supplemented DEG's response to Council's draft Local Environmental Plan, researched rumoured changes to the NSW Western Lands Act to prevent Aboriginal people's access to country, and took over from NSW Legal Aid to assist DEG to resume access to the Barwon River via crown roads through currently locked gates. DEG prepared and sent a community petition and letters to Ministers objecting to closure and proposed sale of crown roads with EDO's help in April 2013.

DEG corresponded with NSW Ombudsman re the future of the Dhiyaan Centre. Dharriwaa Elders Group requested NSW Ombudsman to ensure that the Moree Dhiyaan Centre collection (including Walgett cultural materials) was safe and not split by the Regional Library, and that it is managed according to undertakings made to the DEG by "change agent" employed by Arts NSW. NSW Ombudsman contacted Moree Council and organised a stakeholders meeting which DEG attended 31 August 2012. Moree's Dhiyaan Centre is now auspiced by NSW State Library, the collection is safe and funding to ensure its survival for the near future was committed by NSW Government.

On the 3 December DEG hosted a meeting with Jeremy Buckingham of the NSW Greens to advocate concerns re Aboriginal cultural heritage protection issues and mining.

DEG hosted a meeting with Mark Coulton MP 27 February 2013.



Left: Christine Smith (DEG Management Committee), Brian Gleeson (Co-ordinator General Indigenous Remote Service Delivery), George Fernando (DEG Director), James Christian (FaHCSIA NSW/ACT Director) after a meeting with Elders (below) at DEG 9 August 2012 in which James Christian acknowledged the value of the DEG to the Walgett community and undertook to ensure its future sustainability.



Left: DEG meets with Director of Schools Paul Loxley in August 2013.



Representation

Different combinations of the following members and staff were elected by the Elders Council to attend the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party (“WGACWP”) as the two Dharriwaa Elders Group’s delegates during the year: Annette Kennedy, Marjorie Weatherall, Virginia Robinson, Kathy Sullivan, Stan Sullivan, and Wendy Spencer. The DEG delegates attended the following meetings of the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party (“WGACWP”) during the period: 26 July 2012, 8,9,29 August 2012, 6 &17 September 2012, 19 October 2012, 19 November 2012, 11 January 2013, 6 & 27 February 2013, 18 March 2013, 4 April 2013, 3 May 2013, 26 June 2013. The DEG provided the WGACWP secretariat with office facilities during half the period, and inducted and worked with the Walgett RSD Co-ordinator Brett Burt until he resigned from his role in January 2013. In March and April the DEG delegates researched current Walgett statistics for the information of the WGACWP and some of the results of this research was presented to the community in the May 2013 issue of Yundiboo magazine in a paper “Evidence of the need for Aboriginal cultural advocacy services in Walgett”. In May DEG prepared a paper for the State Managers Committee of the IRSD.

During the period the WGACWP referred its member, DEG, to liaise with Graincorp and assist it to engage a local Aboriginal artist to paint a grain train. This action was the first implementation of Graincorp’s new Reconciliation Action Plan. DEG accepted this role out of goodwill towards a large Walgett employer of Aboriginal people. This activity took DEG some months and involved inviting local artists to meet the client, assisting artists to negotiate the brief with the client and legal advisors, and negotiating a correction in the final result. The process was a valuable learning experience for all. DEG organised with Graincorp to launch the train in the August Walgett community festival, however Graincorp cancelled at the last minute. DEG looks forward to building on this relationship with Graincorp in the future

Another project the Dharriwaa Elders Group began during the period to assist the WGACWP was developing with the help of PHD student Inara Walden, a Culture and Land Building Block and other policy documents for the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party. Negotiations with Inara, the WGACWP and legal advisors re an IP agreement proceeded and a workshop of WGACWP members was facilitated 17 September 2012, after which the revised Walgett LIP “Walgett Community Priorities” documents were produced through this partnership.

On 24 October 2012 DEG representatives met with NSW Aboriginal Affairs and WLALC re the Foundation Hall building (cultural heritage significance).

George Fernando and Christine Smith were the two DEG delegates to the Narran Lakes Co-Management Committee during the period although NSW Office of Environment and Heritage only accepted one DEG delegate, George Fernando.

On the 5 April 2013 Barbara Helen Fernando was elected to represent DEG on the Steering Committee for Moree’s Dhiyaan Aboriginal Centre.

George Fernando was selected to lay a wreath on behalf of the DEG at the Walgett RSL Anzac Day ceremony.

DEG director George Fernando attended the Western Catchment Management Authority Aboriginal Advisory Group as an individual (not a representational capacity) during the period.



Left: Comedian Sean Choolburra visited the DEG in August 2012. Behind the group can be seen the DEG's official documents and display of honoured members now deceased. Sean Choolburra, Violet Morgan (DEG director), Thelma Thorne (DEG director), Christine Smith (DEG Management Committee). Below: DEG Elders fundraising stall at the September Walgett Rugby League knockout 2012. Below left: DEG hosted meeting between WGACWP, Walgett Council candidates 6 November 2012. Below right: NSW Museums and Galleries meeting with DEG December 2012 to discuss formation of peak body for the NSW Aboriginal cultural sector.



On 5 April 2013 the DEG Elders Council resolved to manage the finances of the Aboriginal Women of Walgett ("AWOW"), provided that invoices, receipts and evidence of approved orders by the AWOW management committee, are presented appropriately to DEG, and that this arrangement will be reassessed by DEG and AWOW after a period of 6 months or the length of their first funding agreement (whichever is shorter).

DEG staff and a director attended an evaluation re the IRSD organised by Dept FaHCSIA 24 April 2013.

DEG activity highlights

Elders provided formal cultural information and talks to an unarranged visit on 6 July 2012 of Kempsey Elders. Elders and staff provided informal cultural information and talks to visitors on 15, 16, 30 January 2013, 27 February 2013, 14 March 2013, 2 April 2013, 28 May 2013.

During the period, DEG hosted weekly TAFE Yuwaalaraay / Gamilaraay language teaching sessions with Elders, conducted by Beth Wright. These will not continue due to changed TAFE priorities.

2 July DEG organised a screening of the "Ningla-A-Na" film by Allesandro Cavadini about the Canberra Aboriginal Tent Embassy, for the community during NAIDOC week.

DEG hosted a meeting with NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, the Walgett and Pilliga LALCs regarding a reburial repatriation project 25 September 2012.

On 8 October 2012 DEG hosted a meeting with NSW Director of (Flood) Response and Recovery) and Elders to debrief re our major flood event.

On 31 October 2012 DEG conducted an Elders workshop to prepare content which staff delivered during attendance at a Western CMA workshop 1 November 2012 regarding its Catchment Action Plan. On the 8 November DEG staff attended Workshop on cultural burns at East Mullane with the WCMA and on the 12 November attended Bangate Station with Western CMA re the removal of Wilbil Weir.

DEG facilitated a meeting regarding establishing new NSW Aboriginal cultural organisations' association with NSW Museums and Galleries, in December 2012.

During the period Elders were consulted by Namoi CMA and NSW Fisheries and members contributed content to a publication regarding the Lower Namoi River.

DEG undertook with the assistance of a group of workers supplied by the Narrabri Office of Environment and Heritage ("OEH") and the Walgett CDEP a cultural heritage maintenance project at Dungalear – a place of high significance to Walgett's Aboriginal community. It began to be organised the previous year, and continued through August and September 2012 until DEG held a meeting onsite with CDEP supervisor on 18th Sept to finalize details. DEG travelled to Dungalear on 19th Sept with CDEP participants and conducted a cleanup of the cemeteries. A meeting with NSW Office of Environment and Heritage was held 20th Sept to organise fencing materials, and follow up arrangements were made throughout October with NSW OEH, Walgett CDEP and landholder. Work began Monday 5th Nov to clean up and fence the two burial grounds at Dungalear and was completed on Wed 14th Nov. DEG Elders hosted a morning tea to thank those involved and celebrate the achievement 6 December 2012.

Arrangements were made during the period for NSW OEH to provide fencing materials & machinery for the clean-up of Borokaville burial ground to be completed by June 2013. DEG also began consultations during the period with the Western CMA Aboriginal Advisory Group to assist this project. The successful project with Dunglear greatly assisted our negotiations. A reburial of ancestral remains was organised with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage staff and Walgett LALC and landholder on 7, 14 January, 7 February, 10 April, 8, 16, 23, 29, 31 May, 12, 13, 26 June 2013. DEG undertook a cleanup of Borokaville burial ground to prepare for reburials 3 May 2013 and a DEG elder travelled to Sydney 29, 30 May 2013 to receive remains and returned them to country 30 June 2013.

On 9 May and again on the 30th August DEG organised a visit to Gingie Burial Ground with Weeds Inspection Officer from Castlereagh Macquarie County Council, DEG staff and Elder to spray and inspect spiny burr grass. Regrowth was discovered to be resprayed and continue monitoring. DEG proposed meeting to WLALC, OEH, Western CMA and Namoi CMA to discuss the need for a thorough cleaning of the site and erection of new fencing.

DEG staff attempted two visit to Narran River fishtraps and Buudhaa's tree during the period and both were inaccessible – due to flooding and new fencing.

On the 30th August 2012 DEG visited Galigurrunga mound spring which showed signs of contamination so DEG contacted Walgett Shire Council to discuss the contamination and steps to clean it up and to prevent any further contamination.

Two days of Aboriginal cultural values recognition & maintenance training was conducted by trainer Peter Thompson with DEG staff in December 2012 and Grawin Waterhole.

Staff met the Executive Principal and Director of Connected Communities 7 February 2013.

DEG hosted its Elders Christmas Party 14 December 2012 after its 7th Annual General Meeting.

Another important activity was to continue advocating / developing cultural tourism opportunities and a DEG-proposed cultural learning place for visitors to Walgett. DEG staff and Elders attended a workshop facilitated by Inland Tourism NSW in Lightning Ridge 30 May, and made presentation to Walgett Shire Council meeting 28 May regarding a proposed tourism walkway. DEG wrote a submission to the NSW Environmental Trust Protecting our Places program to extend the scope of the program, submitted 31 May 2013. This activity continues.

DEG hosted a meeting with families of Elders recorded by historian Heather Goodall and return to them copies of the recordings made and advise ATSIDA of families/ preferences regarding future access to recordings, 16 April 2013. This activity continues.

DEG convened a community meeting to devise a design for the Walgett cemetery memorial garden on the 19 April. This memorial garden was successfully lobbied for in previous periods by the DEG, and this activity continues.

On 14 May 2013 the DEG hosted a workshop presented by Thiyamali Family Violence Service on Elders Abuse.

During the period the DEG produced with support from Dept FAHCSIA, one of four special, reduced-size issues of Yundiboo magazine that it had previously produced monthly for 10 years until June 2010, with the first issued in May 2013.

Other advocacy activities during the period included: meeting with NSW Office of Environment and Heritage regarding the Aboriginal place nominations DEG had made for Angledool and Dunglear on 14, 30 January; meeting with the Western CMA and letter writing regarding the proposed boundaries of NSW Local Land Services 14 January, 2 May 2013, participating in town planning activities for Harmony Day 21 February 2013, hosted Jimmy Little Foundation visit to unveil plaque 2 April 2013 and a consultation by Burns Aldis regarding Preliminary Needs Assessment Far West NSW Medicare Local.

An important project continued during the period was to work with Indigenous Community Volunteers (and provided accommodation with staff) to undertake cataloguing of DEG's cultural collection 10 – 14 February, 27 April – 3 May 2013. This activity continues.

The Dhuningarraay-gal dhiyaan dhiirali (old people teach families) project was begun in February 2013 and the Project Officer Christine Smith was engaged 29 April 2013. Dharriwaa Elders Group completed Part 1 of its first - session project on 5 August 2013 with a graduation ceremony for the year 9 and 10 student participants witnessed by Elders, parents and community on the first day of the Walgett Community Festival. The project's main aim was for the DEG to establish a relationship with the students, their parents and caregivers, and provide knowledge about family relationships and other key cultural identity matters including the families' relationships to places of high Aboriginal cultural value near Walgett. DEG also introduced the students and their families to Aboriginal women with a range of careers and education levels who spoke of their lives and their worlds of work and further study. The Dharriwaa Elders Group has a responsibility to pass on cultural information and promote the wellbeing that comes from belonging to family, community and country. A greater involvement in the girls' education has commenced and DEG plans to follow the progress of the families and support them to achieve better education outcomes for their girls.

Virginia Robinson judged the exhibits entered into the Dharriwaa Elders Group Gamilaraay / Yuwaalaraay language sections of the Walgett show 10 May 2013.

13, 14, 15 March 2013 DEG hosted a work session with Darrell Burkey, President of Computing Assistance Support and Education Inc to upgrade computers and administer network improvements. We also trialled unmanned aerial vehicle photography and how the organization may find it useful for management of country.



Above: Meg Bishop, Indigenous Community Volunteer, continued to assist the DEG to catalogue its cultural collection in February and May 2013.



Above: DEG organised a reburial of ancestral remains project with landholder, Walgett LALC and NSW Office of Environment and Heritage throughout February – June 2013. Photo taken 7 February 2013.



DEG accompanied Frances Peters- Little and Jimmy Little Foundation directors to unveil a Dr James Little memorial plaque in April 2013.



Left: DEG hosted a visit by Moree Aboriginal Elders visit 16 April 2013.



Left: DEG convened a meeting of families recorded by historian Heather Goodall 16 April and returned to them CD copies of recordings (that DEG had made from recordings deposited with DEG by ATSIDA).



Left: DEG Elders participate in photography for brochure to promote DEG's cultural training, and posed in front of the DEG-designed Welcome sign in a Walgett's Trevallion Park, May 2013.



Above: DEG attended a meeting convened by Walgett Shire Council to discuss closure of the Walgett District Sporting Club 14 June 2013.



Left: During the period DEG obtained legal advice regarding closure of crown roads leading to Barwon River near Walgett and undertook advocacy and community education activities.



DEG volunteer Virginia Robinson judging entries into the Dharriwaa Elders Group Walgett Show Aboriginal Language sections, 10 May 2013.

Dharriwaa Elders Group sustainability

Efforts to build the capacity of the Dharriwaa Elders Group (an Aboriginal Walgett community cultural organization of 14 years standing) were continued during the period. The main achievement was to attract the support of Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party to include DEG's sustainability as one of its 13 Community Priorities (for implementing Walgett's IRSD Local Implementation Plan). DEG staff drafted a paper for the IRSD State Managers meeting 4 May 2013 which included an appeal for DEG's sustainability and lobbied Brian Gleeson Co-ordinator General of IRSD on 19 March 2013.

Short-term projects were granted to DEG by the Dept Education and Employment and Workplace Relations PACE program and the Dept FaHCSIA for a contract to produce 4 smaller issues of Yundiboo magazine. The Department of Health and Ageing granted the organisation additional funds immediately preceding 30 June 2013 to assist the organisation to deliver its HACC services, and these funds were used to improve DEG's client meeting and kitchen facilities, train staff and revise the organisations policies. Staff produced a brochure to promote the organisation's provision of local community awareness training for the IRSD State Managers Committee, met with Western Institute of TAFE and Interrelate to promote DEG's training capabilities, developed projects and wrote submissions to NSW Regional Arts Fund, Dept SEWPAC Your Community Heritage fund, and NSW Environmental Trust Protecting Our Places program. As in past years, a 3 x year submission was made to Indigenous Community Support program of the Dept of Regional Australia, Local Government, Sports and Arts, but for the first time an annual or triennial submission was not written to the Indigenous Heritage Program.

In August & September 2012 staff undertook a self assessment process for the organization using HACC Community Care Standards. In October 2012 staff prepared fire plan and fire ready premises and arranged a visit of the Fire Chief 26 October 2012 to ensure fire safety of the premises. DEG obtained legal advice and conducted discussions in September, October 2012 with directors & management committee re constitutional change to ensure capacity and governance improvements.

Dharriwaa Elders Group wishes to acknowledge the following for their valuable contributions:

DEG project staff this year were (for six months) Cultural Heritage Project Officer: Annette Kennedy; Elders Cultural Support Officer: Neil Weatherall; Elders Support Officer: Leah Sullivan; Dhuningarraay-gal dhiyaan dhiirali (old people teach families) Project Officer: Christine Smith. All staff were employed as casuals part-time except for Neil Weatherall who was employed as a permanent part-time employee working 20 hrs a week under the Commonwealth Government's National Job Package. No Elders Support Officer was employed for the first 6 months of the year due to lack of funds.

Wendy Spencer of Heuristic Video Pty Ltd provided project management, submission writing, bookkeeping, IT and resources production services, often as a volunteer.

CASE Inc supplied network administration and software development services.

Keith Whiteman provided accounting services. Meg Bishop of Indigenous Community Volunteers provided librarian services. Individuals supplied art and exhibition content for the DEG shop, publications and exhibitions.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group was supported financially or in kind by:

1. The Commonwealth Government through the
 - a. Indigenous Culture Support program of the Dept Regional Australian, Local Government, Arts and Sport
 - b. National Jobs Package Program of the Dept Regional Australian, Local Government, Arts and Sport
 - c. The Dept of Health and Ageing HACC Program
 - d. The Dept of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs RSD Program
 - e. Dept of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations PACE program
2. The following companies and individuals
 - a. NSW Far West Medicare Local
 - b. Gilbert + Tobin
 - c. Blakes Dawson
 - d. Environmental Defenders Office
 - e. NSW Legal Aid
 - f. Dharriwaa Elders Group directors
 - g. CASE volunteers
 - h. Heuristic Video Pty Ltd
 - i. Ms Heather Redmond
 - j. Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service