

Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group members for the year 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011

### **Members news**

The DEG mourns its member Eric Thorne, whose funeral was held on the 15 October 2010. On the 31 May 2011 DEG's Speaker Dick Lake was flown out of Walgett after his recent heart attack was discovered in DEG's Elders Health session.

### **Ministerial visits**

The DEG met with NSW Minister AA Paul Lynch on the 8 August 2010 with other community leaders at Gingie. On the 28 April 2011 the new NSW Ministers Dominello and Humphries visited the DEG.

### **RSD**

On the 17 August 2010 DEG's Chairperson Richard Lake was present at the signing of the COAG Remote Service Delivery Agreement ("RSD") Walgett Local Implementation Plan ("LIP") – a working document developed by government with some community input, which plans activities of the whole of government in Walgett for the life of the RSD. On the 19 October 2010 the DEG completed workshopping a discussion paper to form the basis for a Walgett LIP "Land and Culture Building Block", which was subsequently presented to the WAGCWP on two occasions. Apart from attending the all-day monthly meetings of the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party ("WGACWP"), the DEG's Speaker and Project Manager voluntarily attended other WGACWP meetings, e.g. to elect the WGACWP Chair 4 November, the meeting that DEG hosted on the 24 February 2011 with the two NSW State Managers of the RSD, James Christian (NSW AA) and Brian Stacey (FaHCSIA), and meetings with the Building Block working groups set up by the WGACWP to further the aims of the Walgett LIP. The Secretary to the WGACWP, Stella Sands, was housed in the DEG's Elders Centre until 15 June 2011. She was supported /trained in her role by the DEG's Project Manager. Since Stella left her role, shortly before funding for her position ended, the WGACWP has been without an employed Secretary, and has relied on voluntary contributions from the DEG's Project Manager and Walgett AMS.

### **Representation**

During the year DEG's Speaker Richard Lake represented the Dharriwaa Elders Group on the Namoi CMA Aboriginal Advisory Council, the members of which visited the DEG in Walgett 26 May 2011. This involved travel through the region. DEG was also represented on the Narran Lakes Co-management Committee through the year by Virginia Robinson. Richard Lake and Fay Sands were DEG's two delegates to the WGACWP. Wendy Spencer and Neil Weatherall were elected as their understudies by the DEG's Elders Council.

### **DEG activity highlights**

On the 28 September 2010 Virginia Robinson presented a paper written by herself and DEG's Project manager to the Bourke Rangelands conference regarding the DEG's cultural values maintenance activities.

DEG celebrated NAIDOC week by having a picnic on the river fishing on the 22 September 2010, and by hosting a dinner for Elders visiting Walgett for a funeral on the 6 October 2010.

Elders made presentations at the high and primary school presentations 8, 9 December 2010, and Elders learnt about how to make home power savings on the 2 December, and re home maintenance and Elders advocates on the 7 December 2010.

DEG produced its 2009/10 Annual Report for the AGM that was conducted 17 December 2010.

After the introduction of the RSD to Walgett, the DEG requested that its funding agreements be varied to reflect the work Elders and staff will be doing to assist the RSD. FaHCSIA varied the extended 2009/10 Indigenous Women's program so that the DEG would conduct 4 x Aboriginal women's workshops and produce a report that prioritised Walgett Aboriginal women's issues for the Walgett LIP. After community planning meetings that began in September, these workshops were conducted 2, 23, 30 November and 14 December 2010 and the Report was completed in February, endorsed by the WGACWP and distributed widely to government.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group participated in the Walgett Shire Council Aboriginal Heritage Report development, by meeting with consultants from the Australian Museum on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, and workshopping and producing a written response to Walgett Shire Council Draft Aboriginal Heritage Report in May 2011.

On the 15 December 2010 Kevin Humphries MP assisted the DEG to launch its third cultural exhibition "Memories of Living Outside Walgett" – a project a year in the making, funded by NSW Regional Arts and developed from information researched from the memories of DEG Elders and NSW State Records.

In March 2011 Wendy Spencer and CASE consultants completed the second version of the DEG's Cultural Values Register with funds from the DEG's extended 2009/10 Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities IHP project.

On the 23 January 2011 Richard Robinson began cataloguing DEG's collection – a task that continued intermittently throughout the year until the FaHCSIA Community Capability Fund money auspiced by Walgett Shire Council ran out in June after achieving 30% of the task.

The DEG was asked by the WGACWP to prepare a Welcome to Country protocol for Walgett, so it conducted an Elders workshop 22 February 2011 and prepared a final document which was endorsed by the WAGCWP.

During the week of the 15 February 2011 young people re-enacting the Freedom Rides met with the DEG to learn of places and events that occurred in the original Freedom Ride in Walgett, which the DEG are preparing heritage nominations for in the 2011-2012 year.

The DEG conducted a Seniors Week activity on the 23 March at Peppertree Bend.

On the 10 May 2011 the DEG met with the NSW Office of Water regarding planning for cultural values that require water and followed this meeting with a draft submission on the 30 May 2011. Subsequently the DEG has sought legal advice regarding information security and is awaiting a response.

In April and May 2011 DEG undertook a small project for NSW State Records researching community permissions regarding the use of Merv Bishop's photos taken while in Walgett, and in June assisted Museums and Galleries in the preparation of their resource materials for its September NSW Keeping Places Summit.

Throughout the year staff completed the production of the Yuwaalaraay teaching resource "Burruguu Dharriwaa-gu" centred around the Narran River and Lakes creation story. The book was launched on the 27 June 2011. DEG would like to thank NSW DET who contributed the time of teacher Daniel Robins to assist us with curriculum suggestions for teachers for the book.

In its continuing work to protect and maintain the Aboriginal cultural values of the area known as Opal Prospecting Area 4, near Narran Lakes, the Dharriwaa Elders Group prepared a response to the Lightning Ridge Miners Association's Barfield REF response in April 2011. DEG also attended a meeting with landholders on the 10 May at Lightning Ridge with retired judge Murray Wilcox, who was engaged by NSW Dept of Primary Industries to review opal mining in OPAs 1, 2, 3 and 4. Subsequently the DEG workshopped and completed a submission to Murray Wilcox Review on the 19 May 2011. Virginia Robinson completed her report examining the Cultural Heritage Values of OPA 4 in March 2001 thanks to mentoring from Phil Purcell of NSW DECCW.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group began to provide Sydney University archives with advice regarding its treatment of its Aboriginal-content archives, and to this end Wendy Spencer attended a meeting 11 November 2010 at the Sydney Uni archives.

The DEG continued to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Data Archive to advise it how to work with Aboriginal communities and to lodge for safekeeping DEG's exhibition and Yundiboo magazine data. This involved planning meetings throughout the year.

Staff continued to research possible locations for a cultural learning place near Walgett where the DEG could erect a picnic shelter and 5 x interpretive signs using FaHCSIA's Community Capability Funds. The plan is to find a location which will attract visitors to stop in Walgett and therefore contribute to the DEG's efforts to build a cultural tourism industry.

Staff updated DEG policies and presented the updated version to the DEG Elders Council in May 2011.

Throughout the year the Project Manager troubleshooted DEG's IT with the assistance of CASE, including replacing a power supply in one computer, and a drive in the DEG's edit computer. She also had to battle viruses which invaded one staff member's workstation twice during the year.

The DEG's Monday Elders Health program continued through the year, which involved a meeting 2 September 2010 to encourage WAMS participation. The Walgett Health Service and NSW Outback Division of General Practice regularly contributed.

Movie day was offered on Thursdays throughout the year. Westerns and occasionally comedies were shared.

DEG's general community development continued. On the 9 February DEG Elders and staff met with the Walgett LALC's consultants ARUP, regarding the future of the Foundation Hall. The NSW

Government's new Safe Families project met with DEG on the 21 February 2011 and 15 March 2011 to discuss. DEG met with NCOSS on the 5 May 2011 regarding Walgett youth programs, with GWAHS regarding the need for forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual assault, on the 18 May 2011 regarding the NSW Government's Sportsability program. On the 8 November 2011 Elders attended a meeting regarding planning for improved Walgett youth services at the Walgett Community Centre, and with Youth Off the Streets on the 13 October 2010.

On the 20 May 2011 the DEG was approached by a landholder offering a property ownership proposal for the community. DEG referred the landholder to the Walgett ROC and the WGACWP, after which the River Station proposal was born which continues into the 2011 /12 year.

### **Curriculum development and work with schools**

This year DEG continued to encourage schools to work with Elders in cultural curriculum development by meeting with Catholic Schools office 15 & 16 July 2010 and again 25 May 2011 in response to a request to provide cultural content for their spirituality teaching. Campion College visited the DEG 29 July 2010 and Aloysius College on 8 Dec St when students and their support staff were given presentations on DEG and Walgett.

The DEG continually seeks to increase Elders' involvement in the Walgett Community School, but contact was minimal this year. Meetings with the Principal Peter Cochrane was conducted 28 Oct, while DEG convened two meetings with head teachers from both campuses on 21 Feb to discuss plans for DEG's 2011\_12 Elders school program, and 12 May to discuss how participants in the long-awaited TAFE Aboriginal languages course could be continually motivated and employed by the Community School's language program.

The DEG's most substantial contribution this year to the work of the schools was the publishing of "Burruguu Dharriwaa-gu" – a resource for teachers centred around the Narran River and Lakes. Free copies were given to St Joseph's and Walgett Community School Principals and Daniel Robins for distribution.

### **DEG builds its relationship with Council**

On the 17 August 2010 DEG staff met with Walgett Shire Council to learn of its plans for a Walgett Aboriginal Cultural Centre. On the 23 August 2010 the DEG met the new Walgett Shire Council General Manager Don Ramsland. On the 1 and 13 September 2010 DEG members met with Christine Duigan to participate in the "Art across the Ages" project. DEG progressed its Aboriginal memorial garden proposal for the Walgett cemetery with the Council at a meeting 16 September, which was subsequently approved by Council. DEG requested a meeting with Walgett Shire Council representative to the Moree Regional Library to discuss the Moree Regional Library and the Indigenous Dhiyaan Centre, and met with Lianne Tasker 21 October 2010.

### **Staff and Directors Training**

Staff and directors undertook Aboriginal tour guide training 8 – 11 November 2010, directors and staff completed Governance training with BCA national on the 28, 29 March 2011, and on the 9 June staff attended a dementia workshop conducted by Alzheimer's Australia in Lightning Ridge. Kim Sullivan continued Cert III in Administration with JCE Positive Outcomes. Throughout the year on-the-job training was provided by the Project Manager and Cultural Values Project Officer.

### **Theft**

On the 25 January staff discovered the DEG's Toyota Prado had been broken into overnight while parked at the rear of the DEG Elders Centre. The culprits have not been found by police yet.

**Community events the DEG participated in** were the postponed Jenny Wright netball carnival, and the 18 September 2010 Walgett Rugby league regional knockout. DEG celebrated the 4 October 2010 Walgett Aboriginal Connection win of the NSW Rugby League Knockout at Gosford, by decorating the Elders Centre, posting cards to the winning team and preparing a PowerPoint presentation for the WAC celebration dinner which was held in Walgett with the team 22 October 2010. The highlight of the year for DEG members was the celebration of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service's 25 years in the week 11 – 14 April 2011.

### **Crisis for DEG's sustainability**

As can be seen in the 2010 – 2011 financial statements DEG's income from funding dropped by 50% after 30 June 2010. We were able to extend spending some 2009/2010 projects into this year, but we were still seriously worried about the ability of the Dharriwaa Elders Group to continue offering its services. After reducing staff hours, and asking Heuristic Video's Wendy Spencer to provide voluntary services as required, to work to recover DEG's financial sustainability, the directors determined to continue the organisation.

Funding submissions were written this year to Community Action Grant Program of Dept of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 1 August 2011, Ageing Disability and Homecare 20 August 2010, two submissions to Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet and one to Dept of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 21 January 2011, and one submission to AIATSIS re support to attend September conference 4 May 2011.

An urgent meeting to discuss DEG's funding sustainability crisis was conducted with the RSD Director and Regional Manager of NSW Aboriginal Affairs Anjali Palmer on the 30 June 2010. Meetings to discuss the DEG's sustainability were held 30 August 2010 with Peter Lupton from NSW Ageing, Disability and Homecare, and on 8 February 2011 with Alison Bentick of DEEWR. DEEWR offered DEG a project for a consultant to produce a Strategic Plan and Project management succession plan, so on 22 March 2011 first met DEEWR consultant Shannon Brennan to discuss the strategic plan and again on 21 June 2011. Wendy Spencer attended the first National Aboriginal Aged Care conference 2 – 5 August 2010 in Adelaide and NCOSS conference 6 August 2011 in Sydney, at no cost to the DEG, to improve DEG's networks and seek guidance and information to aid DEG's sustainability.

On the 15 June 2011 DEG prepared a timeline re DEG sustainability funding support attempts – Leigh Leslie of the Walgett ROC accelerated the issue and on the 26 June 2011 a brief was prepared for the FaHCSIA RSD situation report which outlined the requests the DEG had made to the ROC and agencies regarding its sustainability crisis and the poor responses received. A meeting was held 29 June 2011 with the NSW State Managers of FaHCSIA and DEEWR and Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health within the Dept of Health and Ageing.

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

DEG staff this year were Cultural Heritage Project Officer: Virginia Robinson, Elders Cultural Support Officer: Neil Weatherall, Elders Support Officer: Kim Sullivan. All staff were employed as casuals except for Neil Weatherall who was employed as a permanent part-time employee working 20hrs a week under the Commonwealth Government's National Jobs Package.

Wendy Spencer of Heuristic Video provided project management, bookkeeping and resources production services, to some extent as a volunteer. After moving to Wagga Wagga in December 2009,

she has been driving to work in Walgett for two weeks monthly, and at other times working remotely using VPN from her home office in Wagga Wagga.

CASE Inc supplied network administration and software development services. Keith Whiteman of Carrigan and Co provided auditing and accounting services. Richard Robinson was employed casually by Walgett Shire Council using FaHCSIA Walgett Community Capability Funds to catalogue DEG's cultural collection. Individuals supplied art and exhibition content for the DEG shop, publications and exhibitions. Various local and other suppliers provided operational goods and services.

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

1. The Commonwealth Government through the
  - Indigenous Culture Support program of the Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet
  - National Indigenous Heritage Program of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
  - Indigenous Women's Program of the Department of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs
  - Regional Arts NSW
2. The NSW Government through
  - NSW Ageing Disability and Homecare
  - NSW Industry and Investment
  - NSW Aboriginal Affairs community language program
  - NSW DET provided 2 days of teacher Walgett Daniel Robins to provide curriculum advice
3. And by the following companies and individuals
  - NSW Outback Division of General Practice
  - Gilbert + Tobin
  - Blakes Dawson
  - NSW Legal Aid
  - DEG directors
  - CASE volunteers
  - Heuristic Video Pty Ltd
  - Phil Purcell of the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
  - Claire De Lacey of Bangalay Botanical Surveys
  - Walgett RSL Club fundraising monthly raffles