

National Link-Up News

National Link Up News Edition 28

edition >28

Contents

- 2. New South Wales
- 6. Western Australia
- 9. South Australia
- 12. Northern Territory
- 17. Victoria
- 20. Queensland
- 24. Contacts and Resources

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▲ NT Reunion
Story page 14

New South Wales

NSW Reunion



A large 'Back to Country', 'Back to Community', 'Back to Culture' Family reunion was held at Tamworth NSW this past month. Clients and family members had come from all over NSW to attend. The premise of this reunion was to go back to the land where their father/grandfather/uncle was from before being removed and taken to a country that was not his by birthright. As a consequence of this removal, a ripple effect was created and the family that came after this proud, wonderful father/grandfather/uncle had lost a part of him and never acquired a part of the people they would've become, hence the nature of this reunion.



The reunion began with a 'Welcome to Country' by a local elder who embraced all with her welcoming words. The venue, 'The Scenic Lookout' couldn't have been a better fit, overlooking the whole of Tamworth, the mountains to the east and the large expanse of the plains below. The Family Gathering was also held at

the Lookout and the general consensus of the choice of venue, was peace and tranquillity, a perfect choice.

The following day we boarded the bus and headed to Caroonna to the Walhallow Mission where their father/grandfather/uncle was born and raised prior to his removal. We were welcomed to the community by the newest generation, the children of the Walhallow Public School, who treated us all to a 'Welcome to Country', singing in language and dances that had been passed down, as they should be, a very special performance just for our clients which brought much praise and many tears.

The Walhallow Women's Group who provided lunch, as well as the obligatory Tea & Damper also welcomed us all with the warmth you could only hope would await your arrival. It was almost an



Jason showed us the original site of the old mission, where my grandfather and most likely theirs too was born and raised before heading out on the road as teenagers travelling from town to town shearing sheep as most of the men of that era and that place did. My Pop was one of the lucky ones the choices he made for his future were his own unlike the father/grandfather/uncle of the family we had brought back to Walhallow. Time was not our friend that day, too many places and too many more people to meet and no time left to do it all.

immediate bond, as Koori's are, they had stories to tell, information to sate the appetites of even the most curious and lots & lots of laughter. The brothers were also treated to a visit with a local elder who was born and raised on the mission and still lived there. She knew families of the past and could help piece together the family tree, who was who and how they fit into the knit of this large family.

Our wonderful guide Jason not only treated us to meeting the locals of this very small, very tight community and the beautiful land that surrounded them, but the local sites too. The tiny cemetery that was kept with such loving care, individual rows of family graves covered in flowers that would last forever. We were shown the site of the old cemetery, no longer in use, hadn't been from time out of mind. We speculated it was probably only created in the first place because there may have been a TB outbreak, but that was only speculation.



New South Wales



That evening local Cultural Tour Guide Lenny Waters treated the clients to 'Stories Under the Stars' accompanied with songs sung by Lenny's friend and colleague Buddy, there was a 'Bush Tucker Tasting' and a 'Smoking Ceremony' to cleanse and heal their spirits and to traditionally acknowledge their ancestors whom had passed many years before and to the most recent, the weekend before this wonderful family gathering.

All too soon this reunion was over, everything had fallen into place for them and all was as it should be. We had given this family, our clients, connections back to their land and the people who still lived there and that is the purpose of what we, Link-Up do.

Cindy Duncan



Wales

Robert Young Snr. & Robert Young Jnr



Link-Up (NSW) recently supported Robert Young Snr & Robert Young Jnr to be reunited with the Crothers Sisters and other members of the family in Adelaide South Australia.

The reunion took place over three days and included a Family Dinner, Smoking Ceremony and Family BBQ gathering at the Stolen Generations Memorial & Healing Garden at Stebonheath Park, Andrews Farm. There was also a visit to the Stolen Generations Memorial Colebrook Blackwood Reconciliation Park, site of the Old Colebrook Training Home. Robert Young Snr paid his respects by wearing his KBH Shirt (Kinchela Boys Home).

Link-Up NSW and Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia collaborated and worked well together to plan and organise the reunion. There were both tears and laughter among clients as well as Link-Up staff, as family members took time to reflect on the past. It was wonderful to see the family reunited.

The Reunion was a great success and the family have exchanged photos and are currently maintaining contact with each other.

Tracey Fitzgibbon

Western Australia - Yorgum

Cox Family Reunion



11TH-15TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Lynette Cox a 2nd stolen generation-Perth based-from family of 20+, wanted to reconnect to her father's family, in particular her grandmother Sarah Kathleen Evans. Sarah's last known address was in the South West of Australia and her granddaughter Lynette Cox along with her siblings was not given the opportunity to meet her when growing up.

Lynette had been searching for her grandmother for the last 42 years. It wasn't until she had signed with Yorgum Link-Up Perth that she would give it one more shot to try and locate her as well as connecting back to country and most importantly establish a form of closure. The process involved a referral to Yorgum Link-Up Research for a family tracing. In the meantime contact was also made to Esperance Tjaljraak Cultural Centre, Shire of Esperance & Kepa Kurl.

Given the circumstances of Lynette's situation with no idea where her grandmother was, Yorgum Link-Up with Lynette decided to go with a Ceremony at one of Esperance beaches as well as try and reconnect with local family groups & country through Tjaljraak Culture Centre and Kepa Kurl.

During this period of time Esperance Shire Historian along with Yorgum Link-Up Research were able to confirm Sarah Evan's burial plot at Esperance cemetery. This was located 4 weeks before the event. The family was brought into Yorgum Link-Up Perth and notified of the finding; the response was that of relief "We found her".

So began the 5 day trip 11th Sept 2017, with a total of 15 people in attendance:

2 x Staff

1 x Counsellor

12 x Family Members



It was an 8 hour bus trip from Perth to Esperance. Upon arrival all were tired and wanted to rest for the next day's activity. This was spent ½ day @ Tjaljraak Cultural Centre and a local Aboriginal member had conducted Welcome to Country. On completion of discussions and the family had some understanding of connection to country & family groups in the South West. They were then taken to meet with Esperance shire historian, who had played a pivotal role in Esperance and connecting the family to their grandmother's gravesite. The historian was also able to connect the family to their grandmother's abode from when she had lived in 1959. The current owner had invited the family to visit the home and have "a cuppa" with her.

On entering the home the family had dusted their feet at the door way and then began to take their first steps on a healing journey. The expression on their faces showed a form of trepidation and yet deep contemplation. The "cuppa" had turned into smiles, laughter, tears and a long awaited connection.

Afterwards some of the family members mentioned they could "feel their grandmother's presence in the home. The question was posed to the family on how they felt with the whole event of going to their grandmother's home; they stated that "they were happy and they had felt sad @ the same time to be given the opportunity to finally have an idea of where she use to live".

The next day flowed with doing healing activities as the family would be attending the gravesite later that afternoon @ Esperance cemetery. The healing activities involved "rock art & wreath making".

At the cemetery: On initial siting the family was a bit shocked with the state of the gravesite. But Lynette's brothers with a shovel and rake in hand began fixing their grandmothers grave. Once completed wreaths and rock art were laid down. It was a touching moment for all, after 42years of searching they were standing reconnecting and finding closure, all in one, this was healing.

One of Lynette's older brothers gave a small speech which went along the lines of "We love you grandmother even though you didn't know us". After the farewells all went back to the hotel exhausted. Some stated they had slept well that night.

The last day was spent connecting back to country with Kepa Kurl owner Gail Reynolds to visit Lucky Bay Frenchman's Peak aka "Mandooboornup"

Looking back the event exceeded expectations on all levels. It had progressed from a ceremony @ the beach to an actual gravesite reunion. Also to be connected back to country/family with the wonderful assistance from Yorgum Link-Up Perth Research Team, Esperance Shire Historian, Tjaljraak Cultural Centre and Kepa Kurl local Aboriginal guide.

Everybody was excited about the trip/event and a little bit of home was brought back with them to Perth.



Western Australia - Yorgum

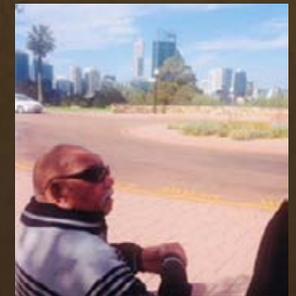
Lewis Nannup Reunion

On 20th October 2017, a reunion day was planned for Lewis Nannup known as Lew and was held at a beautiful restaurant in Kings Park overlooking the Swan River and the City of Perth. Link- Up staff Ken Blurton and Catherine Garlett along with community elders Walter and Leisha Eatts accompanied Lew and his wife Irene on a memorable day out.

We had a lovely "Welcome to Country" by Leisha Eatts (nee Garlett) who shared her connection to country and extensive knowledge of her Noongar people from the area.

Lew shared his story as well, and we soon realised what a hard working family man and great ambassador he has been to his family and community.

Lew thoroughly enjoyed his day and when asked about what healing meant for him he replied "Healing is a process and one cannot be healed in one day" ...He refers to his parents having a hard life with limited opportunities compared to himself. He also started When I see my children succeed, and doing well then that gives me healing.



Lewis Nannup Reunion

In May 2017, Harry Narkle along with some of his family members attended a 'Back to Country', Grave Side and Mission Reunion in the South West of Western Australia. Harry who is now sadly deceased was first stolen generation forcibly removed at the age of 6 years old, he was placed in the Wandering Mission near Narrogin WA. Harry led us on his journey with a couple of his relatives he shared a great deal of knowledge of the nearby Aboriginal reserves in and around the outskirts of Narrogin. One particular place he shared was the unmarked graves at Djuralling. Some members of the family were surprised and shocked to hear for the first time about the 18 burial sites. When we went out to the Wandering Mission Harry shared how his mother would walk long distance from Narrogin out to the mission to see him and his siblings, only to be turned away to walk all the way back to town. He tells this story with much grief of the love of his mother and the sacrifice she endured. Harry's wife Jenny nee Garlett also recently passed away the year before Harry went on his reunion. This left Harry with a broken heart. A remarkable man who will be sadly missed by all.



South Australia

Preserving voices and memories: the Hazel de Berg award and its true meaning



On 13th September 2017 Link-Up SA Historian Researcher, Karen George was awarded the Hazel de Berg award for

Excellence in Oral History by Oral History Australia. This award recognised her achievements in the field of oral history as an interviewer and educator over many years.

As well as many other projects, Karen was involved with two significant national oral history projects run by the National Library of Australia. Both of these projects came out of the recommendations of two major inquiries and reports: the Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997) and the Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - Report on Child Migration (2001) and Forgotten Australians - A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children (2004).

The Bringing Them Home [BTH] Oral History Project ran from 1998 to 2002. Over 340 interviews were conducted with members of the Stolen Generations as well as people involved with the removal of children. The Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants [FAFCM] Oral History Project ran from 2009 to 2012 and resulted in more than 200 interviews mostly with people who experienced institutional care. A smaller number of interviews were recorded with policy-makers, administrators and people who worked in or ran children's Homes.

A large number of the interviews recorded for these projects are available to listen to online through the National Library of Australia's website. You can locate these oral history collections via the library

catalogue or follow the links below to go to the catalogue entries. In each catalogue entry there is a link to the recordings.

BTH project <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359>

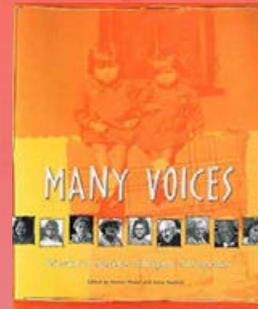
FAFCM project <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359>

In cases where interviewees have placed restrictions on their recordings, the audio is not available online but you can contact the Library to apply for access to the recording and or a transcript of the interview where one has been completed.

For Link-Up workers, the interviews in these two collections are a rich and perhaps lesser known and utilised resource for research. Where the interviews are available online, they are also keyword searchable because each interview has a timed summary attached to it as well as a listing of names of people and places. The interviews will also come up if you do a keyword search in the catalogue. This can be useful if you are looking for information about a particular institution.

For example if you are looking for information about Colebrook Home, an institution run by the United Aborigines Mission in South Australia, if you do a search for Colebrook Home and limit your search to finding audio, the search will display any interviews in which the home is mentioned. Using Colebrook as an example, you will see the collection includes interviews with members of the Stolen Generation who spent time in that Home as well as interviews with the superintendent of the home and his daughters.

The interviews in both the BTH and FAFCM collections are wide ranging and as well as potentially mentioning names, they can provide a detailed picture of life in an institution or in foster care at a particular time. This can assist to affirm a client's



memories and experiences or it create an image of what life might have been like for the parent or grandparent of a second or third generation

client. Interviews with welfare staff, superintendents, police officers and others involved in the welfare system can help to understand the policies, practices and attitudes that led to the separation of children.

When Karen accepted the Hazel de Berg award, she pointed out that the award should really have gone to her interviewees, the people who so courageously shared their stories with her, particularly through these two projects. In many cases, those who chose to share their story as part of the BTH and FAFCM projects did so for the benefit of others. They wanted their children and grandchildren to know and understand what happened. As one interviewee Nita, who was removed to Sister's Kate's Children's Home in Perth, said "Well everything that I've said there gotta go to all my family - grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great granny when he gets big enough." Another man who spend virtually all of his childhood in institutions talked of his 'brothers' with whom he shared his childhood, "I want to make my life a voice so that I can remember them in a small and a beautiful way". For this reason alone, making use of these interviews to assist other members of the Stolen Generations to connect and heal is honouring the wishes of these interviewees.

Dr Karen George
Research Historian

South Australia

Taingiwilta Men's Group



Over the last few decades Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders men's groups have become an invaluable space for men to come together to yarn and to look at critical issues that have and continue to impact on our lives. Issues as diverse as land rights, maintaining culture and language, substance misuse and arguing for political change just to name a few. Men's groups are an important men's business space where as brothers, uncles and elders we can take the time and space to yarn about what's important to us as first nation's men.

In late May 2015 Brad Hart and myself went for coffee and discussed the idea of a men's group for members of the Stolen Generations. As counsellors working with Link Up SA it had become increasingly obvious that there was a need for a space for these brothers to come together and to talk. Both Brad and I have a long history of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's groups so we were excited about the idea of a space for brothers to meet and yarn about their common experiences as men who had been removed. We wanted to provide a space for "yarning up" times where we could create a therapeutic space where these brothers could make sense of their experiences, how these experiences had impacted on their lives, and uncover the hidden stories that could be used to rewrite the narratives of their lives.

The pilot stage of the group occurred in the late half 2015 and was a great success. An average of eight brothers attended over the next few months and as they got to know each other the men developed their own sense of identity as a strong group of Aboriginal men who shared a common history and a common hope for the future.

The 9th of May 2016 saw the official launch of the Taingiwilta (Strong) Men's Group. It was a proud moment for the brothers who attended, standing front of everyone with the Taingiwilta Men's Group logo they had developed displayed on the shirts and hats they were wearing on the day. As the various staff and brothers spoke, followed by lunch with all who had attended the launch, it was obvious that the group and the brothers had found a strong group identity which has remained to this day. The rest of 2016 saw the group evolve with new members joining and the passing of one of the original members of the group. We also enjoyed men's camps on traditional country including Walker Flat (Ngarrindjeri Country), Port Victoria on the Yorke Peninsula (Narungga Country) and Camp Coorong (Ngarrindjeri Country).



2017 has brought greater consolidation for the Taingiwilta Men's Group through exploring alternative places to meet while renovations took place at Nunkuwarn Yunti and in revisiting what has been important to preserve and what future direction the group may want to head in.

Some of the themes that have emerged are a desire for greater cultural engagement, connecting and reconnecting with other Aboriginal men's groups, more camps and learning traditional skills including making didgeridoo's or yaki's. As I write this the group are planning for the their next camp at Marion Bay (Narungga Country) and there is excitement as to the prospect of visiting the Innes National Park and a day's fishing charter. While in some ways the Taingiwilta Men's Group is still young it has become a strong place for brothers in South Australia who are members of the Stolen Generations to uncover the hidden stories of their life journey and to rewrite the narratives of their lives standing as strong men together.

Bonny Gibson
Link Up SA Counsellor

New Team Member

Hello Everyone. My name is Lisa Besant and I am the new female Counsellor here at Link Up SA at Nunkuwarn Yunti. I started this role towards the end of October 2017. Previously, I was in Port Augusta where I worked in various fields such as Community Services, Mental Health & AOD recovery and Health in both mainstream and Aboriginal organisations. Since starting my Counsellor position, I have completed my Diploma in Narrative Approaches for Aboriginal People through Nunkuwarn Yunti's Training Unit and has been very valuable in gaining this role to work with Stolen Generation members.

My mother & Uncle were Stolen Generation members and being part of their journey connecting with family, culture and country has been a driving force for wanting to join the Link Up Team which I feel privileged to now be a part of. As a new counsellor at Nunkuwarn Yunti, I look forward to working with the Caseworkers and supporting the Link Up clients on their journey to reconnection & healing.

Lisa Besant
Counsellor

Australia

Certificate 4 in Stolen Generation Family Research & Case Management



Currently I am undertaking this course to assist with my role as a Link Up caseworker which is to assess eligibility for service, and to provide family tracing, reunion, case management and research services for members of the Stolen Generation. I wanted to do this course to get more knowledge about the history of the Stolen Generations as well as the challenges those people face. I also thought the course would provide me with best practice approaches on how to effect the best outcomes for my clients. I intend to apply what I learn so that I can deliver high quality services and results for my clients and the community.

I have completed the first pillar called Social and Emotional Wellbeing. The major points that stood out to me was that cultural respect and using clear communication are significant when

working with Aboriginal people. Also learning about approaches with regard to how to diffuse conflict was very useful and this has provided me with more skills, knowledge and confidence to deal with difficult situations.

In addition the training in the first pillar emphasised the importance of assisting with client's social and emotional well-being issues by making effective referrals. There was valuable information presented about Work Health and Safety in particular the consequences of not reporting hazards and incidents in the workplace can detrimentally effect other co-workers welfare. I really believe it was significant how self-care of workers was highlighted as it is so vital to ensure their health and ability to function effectively.

I found it very valuable to network with other workers in Link-Up services from different states. During role play exercises I learnt about how workers in other Link-Ups approach their work and it was good to share ideas and challenges with each other. Networking helps to foster working relationships in other states that is particularly useful when undertaking client case work interstate where I'm not as familiar with in terms of that State's processes and policies.

I look forward to Pillar 2 about Family History Research and incorporating that information into my work role.

Jenny Lo
Caseworker

New Team Member

Hello everyone! I recently joined the Link Up team as a Case Worker, and I'm happy to be working for the organisation and looking forward to supporting and working with all the clients. I've worked within the Aboriginal Community for over 25 years now and I've had some great opportunities travelling to many of the Aboriginal communities in South Australia. I have been as far as the APY Lands when I worked for Aboriginal Family Support Services, (previously known as Aboriginal Child Care Agency), as a Special Needs Project Officer within the child protection sector. I've also

worked with Aboriginal Community Care SA as a Home Care Package Coordinator assisting the elders providing home care packages. I'm married with 2 daughters and I have 2 grandchildren, and a big Dobermann. I love gardening and I grow herbs, flowers and veggies and fruit trees and I spent most of my time potting in the garden. I look forward to meeting all of you.

Gina Mezzino
Caseworker

Northern Territory - NTSGAC Link-Up

From the CEO Case Team



It's 17 months since I was appointed CEO for the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation, a position I feel privileged to hold. I was raised and educated in Darwin, having been born in Thursday Island, and have been a business owner/operator and company director since the 1970s. I have also been Chairperson, President and Board Director for various organisations over the years. I am the recipient of the Order of Australia Medal, Australian Sports Medal, and an inductee of the NT Hall of Champions.

Becoming CEO has been a huge learning curve for me, even though I have been involved in research for many years – particularly on my family. The position has given me more in-depth knowledge of the history of the Stolen Generations peoples. I grew up with many of them, not realising the trauma and suffering they had experienced and endured. Many changes have been made in the way we operate to comply with our funding agreement terms and conditions, budget, objectives, Rule Book and the CATSI Act, which governs our organisation. This is to ensure that our funding from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is maintained, and keeps us in good stead for future funding.

Our Link-Up team is phenomenal. I have never seen a team so passionate and dedicated in what they do, and actually do, for our clients and Stolen Generations members. They have taught me heaps. Our staff work harmoniously as a team in all facets of their duties, and continue to provide other general community assistance to our Elders. Most are undertaking training to gain further qualifications and certificates, which will assist them in their current and future employment, e.g. Certificate IV in Leadership and Management, Certificate III in Business, Cert IV in Stolen Generations Family Research and Case Management and nationally accredited qualifications specifically designed for people working in Stolen Generations organisations and dealing with Stolen Generations peoples.

We have hosted a number of events and forums, and recently held commemorations of the 20th anniversary of The Bringing Them Home Report and National Sorry Day. The Northern Territory Chief Minister announced that a Museum will be built on the site of the Kahlin Compound, where many of our Stolen Generations peoples were institutionalised, and which will incorporate the NT Stolen Generations. The NT Government acknowledges the significance and importance of our history. The Stolen Generations element of the museum project will be a form of compensation/reparation for all our NT Stolen Generations peoples – alive and who have passed on, and the mothers of the children, who were forcibly removed from them.

Finally, I acknowledge our Chairperson, Mrs Eileen Cummings, who works tirelessly for the betterment of our members – voluntarily and at times without a thank you.

Maisie Austin
NTSGAC CEO



Reunion held in Darwin that NTSGAC supported with VACCA and SA Link Up's.

In January 2017 a family reunion was held in Darwin, 3 Link-up services were involved in reuniting family members of a person who had been adopted some 40+ years ago. Unfortunately his birth mother had passed but he was able to meet up with 2 of his siblings, 5 Aunties and many cousins. The Aunties who played a huge part in the reunion were able to fill in the blanks about his Mother and family background by sitting around talking and showing photos. Several activities were carried out over the 4 days and enjoyable time was had by all.



Stolen Generation Elders - Nancy Gibbs, Kathy Mills with NTSGAC Chairperson Eileen Cummings cutting the National Sorry Day & BTH 20th Anniversary Commemoration cake.

This was a Back to Country reunion in Western Australia. This reunion was from a transfer of the client's file to NTSGAC from Yorgum in Perth, WA. The client had requested to locate other relatives in the south west of Perth in the wheat belt of WA. This was back to country and graveside reunion with living family of the client. It enabled the client and her siblings to see where their father was removed from and locate relative's graves in their father's country. In all it was a great reunion that the clients know where their father's families came from and where they are buried.

This year, NTSGAC combined National Sorry Day & the "Bringing Them Home Report" 20th Anniversary Commemoration with special celebrations with stalls and local entertainment from Milingimbi Culture Dancers, Schools and guest speakers. Our members released purple balloons in remembrance of those who have passed away. Art paintings were presented to the NTSGAC Elders from Rosebery Middle School. The students of 7 schools also hosted the day by walking the Elders and guests along the red carpet to their tables and served morning tea and lunch to the Elders whilst they enjoyed watching the performances and listening to music.



Northern Territory - NTSGAC Link-Up

Poetry for Healing



Left-Right: Kathleen Mills, CEO - Maisie Austin, Kormilda College students, Link Up Well Being Officer - Daniel Fejo, Chairperson - Eileen Cummings. Stolen Generations members Peter Hansen, Aunty Emily Hansen, Florence Cleary and Sydney Rusca

FRIDAY, 12TH MAY 2017, NTSGAC BOARDROOM

Heal our Past. Build our Future

Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary "Bringing Them Home" Report

Poetry was written and presented by Stolen Generations Members, Kathy Mills, Emily Hansen and Luke Morcomb. The language of poetry is used to tell their life stories and express their individual thoughts and emotions about their life journey. Thank you to all who helped to make it a lovely morning.

Our Link Up service has been invited to speak to medical students at Charles Darwin University at their campus situated at the Royal Darwin Hospital. These presentations are a vital link for these students to gain an understanding of the Stolen Generations people. In having this opportunity locally our service is able to deliver presentations and talks in community awareness to the wider public.

Reunions



In July 2017 NTSGAC held a reunion at Daly River, which is 222 km (138 miles) from Darwin. We assisted 3 clients with their families to go back to their mother's/grandmother's country. Their mother (now passed) and her sibling had been removed from Daly River and taken to Croker Island.

We all travelled by road in three vehicles, the drivers were Team leader, Raelene Rosas, Well-being support person Daniel Fejo and myself, due to the clients bringing their partners and children - 17 people in total.

We arrived at Woolianna 5 km east of Daly River which is a camping and Caravan Park on the banks of the river, and stayed at Lee and Jenny's Bush Camp which has a beautiful set up for singles and families.

We dropped off our bags and headed into Nauiyu Aboriginal Community, home to the Roman Catholic Mission and Merrepen Arts Centre where Aboriginal paintings and artifacts are sold. Our clients were able to meet and talk with renowned artist Miriam Rose and family members, and were taken to the Daly River where they experienced a "blessing". The people of Daly say this is so the spirits will know their smell and welcome them.

Family members, renowned artist Regina Wilson from Peppiminarti and others also joined the clients and families for a BBQ supper and information of kinship, skin names were given to the clients.

Everyone had a great time and with mixed emotions we had to leave the caring people of Daly River, a big thank you to Nauiya for all your help in assisting us with this reunion.





Some captions of what our clients have said about the reunion:

"We are so excited to finally be returning back to our Mumma's homeland, our homeland and walking the soil our Mum once walked."

"A fantastic experience, well-paced, relaxed enabling me and my family to fully absorb the entire experience."

"The staff were experienced and professional along with being supportive and understanding."

"I'm really looking forward to seeing the pics u got of us meeting our family at the camp site.... what an amazing job u have x"

"The whole experience was truly amazing, and for me personally, very healing."

"Knowing that we were finally able to make Mum's wish come true, and knowing she was with us in spirit, gives me so much inner peace and that is something I will forever be grateful for as it would not have happened without NT Stolen Gen's assistance, so thank you x"

RAELENE ROSAS – TEAM LEADER LINK-UP

The Link Up Case Team has had 15 reunions to date in 2017. We have 30 clients that we are assisting in family tracing and reunion management. Our Case Team farewelled Caseworker Gerard Hurst, who has moved on to another change in his career, and who we enjoyed having on our team. We now have a new Male Caseworker – Steven Hayes, a part-time Assistant Research Officer – Donna Hunter and a trainee Caseworker – Diara Croker. We are working well as a Case Team and have been working really hard to streamline our service delivery and adhere to our best practice model. In all we are looking forward to bigger and better things for our clientele, communities and organisation.



The reunion in Elliott was for a client that has been a client of the NTSGAC Link Up service for the last two years and the Caseworker was doing family tracing and collecting oral histories from community and family members from the Elliott region. The Link Up Caseworker – Raelene Rosas and Wellbeing Support Officer – Daniel Fejo met with Cultural Advisers to find out who the clients families were.

Through discussions with families in the Elliott region Raelene and Daniel were able to find the key family members and the key places of significance. The proposed reunion itinerary was set and the reunion arrangements were organized and locked in with the client and community in Elliott. The quote below is from the client which was part of the evaluation after the reunion.

"In a nutshell the journey was indeed a spiritual journey of healing for me on many levels. This opportunity enabled me to connect my mother's spirit back to the country and people that she was taken from when she was a very young child. Unfortunately she never has the opportunity to return so it was a blessing to be able to return country. This process also enabled me to meet the family I always knew existed but never had the chance to meet. My family made me feel so welcome.

The professionalism, respect, sensitivity and care you demonstrated, made me feel very safe at such a vulnerable time and for that I have so much gratitude. I was so amazed at how you coordinated the whole journey! You do such amazing work of healing and I am so proud of you and what you do. Your deep knowledge and commitment is to be commended. Once again, thank you so much and keep up this healing work you do for our people. Many blessings to you all."

Raelene Rosas
Team Leader Link Up

Northern Territory - Congress Link-Up

CAAC Link-Up team update

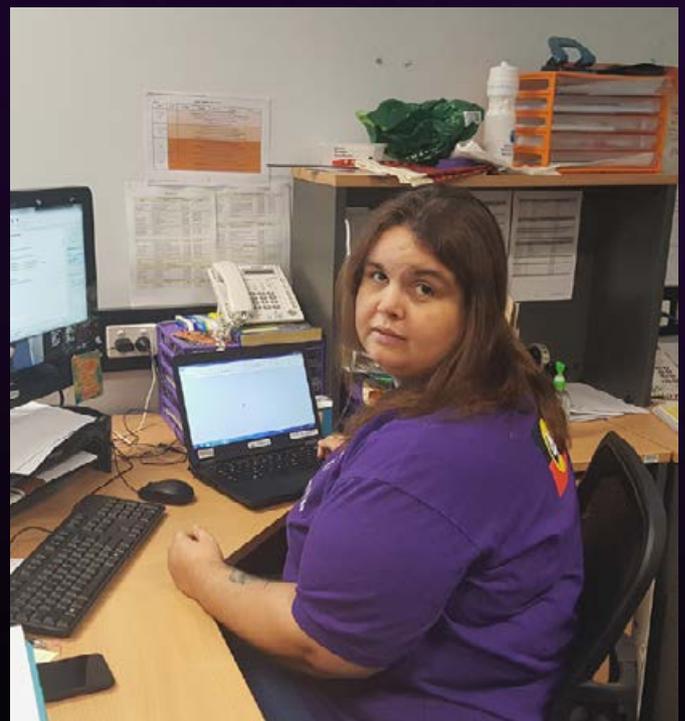


Congress welcomes Fiona Haddon as our new Link Up Service Team Leader. Fiona commenced in September and is a welcomed strength to the team and service. Fiona is local Arrernte woman, with strong leadership experience, having previously worked in leadership positions in the commonwealth government and previously led the Congress SEWB section of Congress.

The Congress Link Up Service as a new service with a large footprint covering the Central Australian region. To ensure the region is aware Congress is now delivering the service and to promote access to effected members, the team has focused on developing an Engagement and Promotion Plan. The team attended a recent promotional visit to the Ltyentye Apurte Community – 80kms south east of Alice Springs with a population of 588. The visit proved to be productive with the Team engaging with local community members including the Art Centre, the Men’s Shed, and the various service and program providers within the Community. The team also facilitated an in-service with our staff in the Mpwelarre Health Service on the Link-Up service and referral to our service. The Ltyentye Apurte Community were very welcoming of our promotional visit and appreciated been informed on our service.

With just over a year of full operation as a Link Up Service, Congress is proud to announce that we are preparing for our first reunion in Adelaide in late November, in partnership with Nunkuwarrin Yunti SA Link-Up. Another two potential reunions are currently being explored and researched. Our promotional efforts have been effective in promoting the service and having clients present for support.

Our Casework/Aboriginal Family Support Officer, Tellisa Ferguson, has commenced the Certificate IV in Stolen Generations Family Research and Case Management with Nunkuwarrin Yunti in SA. The certificate provides a tremendous opportunity to invest in Tellisa that will strengthen the skills and capacity of the Congress Link-Up Team.



Victoria

Link-Up Victoria



Members of the National Link Up Leadership Group Network meeting in Melbourne, March 2017

As we start to count down the weeks before the end of another busy year it is timely for a bit of reflection about our past work and to start thinking about plans for our future work. For us in Victoria there have been a number of highlights that have provided us with the evidence that we are making a difference to the Stolen Generations and their families. For Link-Up Victoria It is also important that we continue to strongly advocate for the needs of the Stolen Generations in whatever way we can and ensure that their changing needs and aspirations are met.

NATIONAL LINK UP LEADERSHIP GROUP NETWORK MEETING HELD IN MELBOURNE

It was an honour to host the 2 day National Link Up Leadership Group meeting in Melbourne and this time it was held at one of the best places to visit if you are ever in Melbourne – the Koorie Heritage Trust at Federation Square. This organisation overlooks the beautiful Yarra River or as it is known by the local Traditional Owners – Birrarung Maar (means River of Mists in Woiwurrung language) and it is a place that is teeming with cultural art, materials, resources and objects that reflect the rich cultures of Victorian Aboriginal people.

NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL APOLOGY TO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

The day that the then Prime Minister of Australia, Hon Kevin Rudd said “sorry” remains a defining moment in our history and it still stands as one of the most solid examples of how the government of this country can, through its words and actions, be a shining beacon of truth, when it comes to the impact of colonisation on our people. The Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations is one day that we like to share with everyone and this year it was again organised with the City of Darebin, our local council and held at the Stolen Generations marker that has now become a well known landmark in Preston. It is always a great pleasure to work with our local council and to welcome all our guests to a very special ceremony held each year.



Caption: Jack Charles, Muriel Bamblett, CEO, VACCA, Kim Le Cerf, Mayor, City of Darebin, Stuart McFarlane, City of Darebin, Bev Murray, Link-Up Victoria outside Council offices in Preston at our event to commemorate the Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations

Victoria

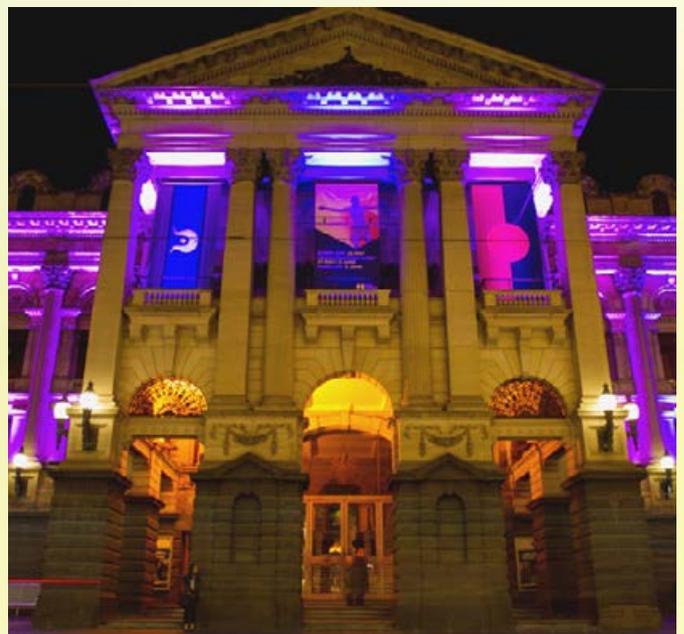


Caption: National Sorry Day – Guests enjoying the peaceful surroundings of Parliament Gardens, Melbourne

NATIONAL SORRY DAY

The 2017 year marked the 20th Anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report, another pivotal moment in this country's history. There have been some great outcomes for the Stolen Generations following this report but there is still a long way to go especially given that what was needed back in 1997 is not necessarily the same as what is needed now. This year's event to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Bringing them Home report and the 19th Anniversary of National Sorry Day was a great demonstration of the value of partnering with others. The day was jointly organised by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Connecting Home and the Healing Foundation whose generous grant made it possible to run two major events.

There were two major events organised, the first was a morning of cultural ceremony, entertainment finishing off with a sit down lunch. The afternoon was spent at the steps of Parliament House where lobbying about the Stolen Generations first began all those years ago. After speeches were made the crowd walked to Parliament Gardens, another significant place in Aboriginal history, it is here where many a rally for Aboriginal rights ended up and it is here where the statue of Pastor Sir Doug and Lady Gladys Nicholls, two prominent fighters for equal rights is located. There was a very touching Smoking Ceremony conducted by Traditional Owner Ian Hunter and Stolen Generations well known identity Andrew Travis. This event was capped off with the lighting of the fountain, the Arts Centre spire and the Melbourne Town Hall in purple as well as the VACCA head office which is located in one of the busiest streets in Preston. There was also a collection of films about the Stolen Generations shown on the big screen at Federation Square. Next year we hope that there will be buildings across the country who will join us in making the night a memorable and touching one for all the Stolen Generations, past and present. Our appreciation to City of Melbourne, the staff of Parliament House and management of Federations Square and the Melbourne Arts Centre.



A splash of purple lights up Melbourne City on the night of National Sorry Day



Our deadly presenters Ross Morgan, Reunions Officer and Lillian Arnold Rendell, Client Support Officer

2017 SNAICC CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

It is important to continue to spread the word about our work and to let others know how we are still bringing our people home. We present to a wide range of audiences and it is always heartening to notice how there is great interest in the stories we tell about our experiences working with the Stolen Generations. We were very honoured to be selected to present at the 2017 SNAICC Conference held in September, 2017 in the ACT. Our two workers were very well received by their audience and have been congratulated by the VACCA Board for their efforts.

REDRESS FOR VICTORIAN STOLEN GENERATIONS

The call for a redress scheme for Victorian Stolen Generations is not new but lately it has become more louder given that Victoria may be the only state left that has not provided one. All Stolen Generations have suffered from their experiences and it should not matter what State or Territory they live in, redress should be provided, as a matter of justice, to all of them. Link-Up Victoria has joined with other Aboriginal organisations to strongly advocate for the Stolen Generations in Victoria. There will be a community meeting in November, 2017 to discuss a strategy to lobby our State Government about this issue.

OUR FIRST INTERNATIONAL REUNION



All reunions are special and we are very honoured to share in the journey with our clients and their family. This year we held our very first International Reunion, it was between a mother and her daughter who came all the way over to Australia from the UK. The reunion started off on Boonwurrung country in St. Kilda where family came together for a very emotional first meeting.

The reunion proceeded with visit to Wemba Wemba country for a special smoking ceremony with Elders on the banks of the mighty Murray River in Swan Hill and a quick visit to the very small town of Moulamein just over the border into NSW. Overall, the reunion was a combination of providing our client who grew up in England with a taste of Melbourne city life, an introduction to culture from both her traditional countries and of course lots of time spent with family, especially her mother, her two sisters and her nephew and nieces.

Photo: A very touching farewell at the International Departure Lounge, Melbourne Airport

Queensland

Queensland Sailor Reunion



My name is Kali Sailor, I've lived all over the Eastern Coast of Queensland including Brisbane, Gold Coast, Townsville, Cairns and Kuranda to name a few. I've worked many places and learnt so much, but my passion was working with or for families that were for whatever reason disconnected with one another, because of my situation. You see I was adopted out at birth, born in Brisbane and adopted into a non-indigenous family, this had an enormous impact on my life, not knowing where I came from and who and where I belonged. I always felt like the token black growing up and overhearing my adopted great grandmother talking about me when I was in Primary School took away my innocence, realizing then I was different.

I had 5 children to 1 man, being so young and not coping, we separated and I adopted our youngest daughter out at birth, I requested she be placed with an indigenous family, and remember telling her 'I hope your life is better than mine'. I was determined that Carolyn would grow up with a connection to the Indigenous Community!

My 2 older children were supposedly adopted by my adoptive father and his second wife, this was to be a temporary arrangement. I tried to develop our relationship moving back to Brisbane in 1992 visiting my children and them visiting me. My goal was to take my children back and grow them up, my adopted father's second wife started getting territorial with my children and after several arguments I left Brisbane alone. In 2000, I found out that this 'adoption' wasn't true and I was shattered, thinking how does someone do this to someone, keeping us apart all these years. I applied to Adoption Services Queensland in 2014 to track any documents regarding the 'adoptions', there were none on record. I will continue to look for answers and hopefully find the truth.

In 1991 my new partner and I were given a girl then in 1993 a boy by their grandmother, my husband's aunty. So, I dedicated my life to growing them up as my own.

I contacted Link-Up (Qld) several years ago because I wanted to meet my birth mother and family. It was then I became aware of the 'no contact clause' in my adoption papers and was told I could not contact my mother. This had a huge effect on me, depression and suicidal thoughts took over me, 3 years down the track I am still having counselling but coping much better.

The Link-Up (Qld) worker I first connected with gave me some good advice. I was told 'let go of what you can't control and have no say in, focus on what you do have control over'. So, I decided to try and reconnect with my daughter, letting go of my search for my mother, cleared the way and I found my daughter after 33 years.

It took several years of working with different Link-Up (Qld) Offices and staff due to my moving around, when I received a phone call from Link-Up (Qld) asking if I was ready, everything had been confirmed, and Carolyn was keen to meet.

The 2 weeks before the reunion I couldn't sleep, anxiety levels were high, I was nervous and excited. Carolyn had also asked if Jai my son could also be a part of the reunion, that made me emotional, thinking about seeing them together for the 1st time meant so much to me. I knew my middle daughter wouldn't join us, she is very bitter towards me and that is going to take a long time if ever, to reconcile, so I concentrated on getting well enough to attend this reunion. Doubts were creeping in, would it go ok, would I be accepted, would my grandchildren accept me, did they know about me?



We flew into Brisbane on Friday 15th September 2017, Kathleen Bobongie, Sylvia Wright from Cairns Link-Up (Qld), Rhonda Duffin my support person and I. From Brisbane, we drove to Coolangatta, I was so excited going full circle.

Friday night in my room I had the most amazing experience, a calming peaceful presence overcame me and a feeling of love I have never experienced before filled the room. I felt it was my unborn children and acknowledged the fact that this was the 1st time I had been back in 33 years. I also realized that I had gaps in my memory, I couldn't and still can't remember certain things...

Saturday the 16th arrived, we drove around looking for a spot for the reunion, it was very windy so we decided not to go to the beach, I took notice of a park we drove past on Friday, it had an ANZAC memorial, and we saw the Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Australian flags blowing in the wind on the sand. The Memorial was important as I remembered Carolyn's children observe ANZAC Day for her adoptive father who had recently passed away, I had to honour his role in her life as well, it was a no-brainer, that's where we were going to meet up.

The reunion was very emotional to start with, but when we sat down to yarn, it's like we'd never been apart, then Jai joined us and we sat for ages talking & laughing. There was no judgement, only love and respect and we began connecting the dots. Our little family agreed this was the perfect spot to rebuild our lives, to start the healing process, where it all began.

Sunday morning Carolyn was bringing her children, husband, adoptive mother & brother to meet us. We met which was very emotional again, I was meeting my grandchildren for the 1st time and I could thank Meredith personally for doing what I couldn't. To hear stories about Carolyn and from Carolyn made me realise we had a lot in common, like sleeping the same way, walking the same, dreaming about 1 certain animal and her sporting skills gave me a sense of pride. Photos were taken then I asked my granddaughter if she wanted to yarn and she just lit up and we had some quiet time together. There was another moment when a photo was taken of me and my grandchildren and the youngest Carter just climbed up on my lap, I was so happy, I was finally holding one of my own grandchildren.

I came away from the reunion feeling stronger, I still have other aspects of my life that need healing, but I have a purpose now and I feel truly blessed to have had this opportunity. Nothing could have been done better, Link-Up (Qld) were amazing and so thoughtful, down to the smallest thing, everyone's wellbeing was respected and thought of. It was great debriefing with Kathy and Sylvia at the

Airport while we waited for our respective flights. Rhonda kept the support going by coming back to Townsville to spend another night with me which was very appreciated.

I can't thank Link-Up (Qld) enough, their CEO Pat Conlon, Kathleen Bobongie, Sylvia Wright, Rhonda Duffin, Jai, Carolyn, Caleb, Meredith, James and Alira, Trei, Kaylis and Carter for making the weekend such a special time. Not only did they help me reunite with my daughter and her children, my son was reunited with her and his niece and nephews. It was awesome meeting Meredith & we are staying in contact and planning a holiday soon, hopefully over the Christmas holidays. Link-Up (Qld) made us all confident and comfortable which was key to us having a good reunion, it could have been very awkward but it wasn't. Link-Up (Qld) has also given me information to continue the healing process with updates on legislation around adoption, getting DNA tests done to confirm who my father is & options to help me get closure on these and other issues in my life.

A special thank you to Rhonda Duffin my support person, who has supported me over the years on this and knew my story. Last but not by anyway the least I need to publicly thank Meredith (Merry) for being such an amazing mum to Carolyn and for having such a generous heart, I look forward to sharing time with our new extended family and for that I feel truly Blessed.

I have now read my file which I hadn't been able to without heartache, pain and tears, the healing has begun.



Queensland

Queensland

Len White Reunion



How do I begin to tell a story that has taken 75 years to be revealed, & now that I have started to understand some of it, things are going so fast that I am finding it hard to take it all in. I first approached Link-Up (Qld) to help with my heritage some months ago & since that time I have finally come to know that my ancestors were indeed indigenous. I have so many people to thank that have helped me to this situation so far, but I am constantly told that my story is just beginning.

I first approached Link-Up (Qld) for help to trace my heritage some months ago & they have wasted no time in supplying me with the information that I always imagined would apply to my background & where my ancestors originated. My wife & I have just returned from a reunion accompanied by Sloane Stallon & Rob Frescon, these amazing young men helped me through difficult times & there were many when I felt like I was struggling but they understood all my emotions & were always there with the support I needed & this saw us through those moments. They were constantly professional but always laughing when we laughed & cried when we cried, just by being there they made our adventure all that better & we will always remember this experience with gratitude.

Sloane & Rob took us to many places where we met people who were able to help us unravel the puzzle that has always surrounded my background. These people we met were always warm & inviting & we have contacted them since our return to thank them for their support, we have made so many new friends & found so many people that we can call family.

We travelled to Charleville by plane arriving mid-afternoon & were soon talking to Pat at CWAATSICH & later in the evening she introduced us to many people who helped with more information that I can certainly use in my search, the next morning we left very early & travelled to Cunnamulla where we met Allen Wharton at the Primary Health Centre, once again we were overwhelmed by the warmth & generosity as he continued to give us all the help he could with his knowledge of the area, we then left for Norley Station & was welcomed by John & Kate Dandridge, who once again were eager to help showing us records that were left on the station, here we left a dedication plaque to my mother Emily, John helped attach it to a stand that supported the old dinner bell, we could imagine my mother ringing this bell as she called the station hands to meals, this was a very moving moment & we left feeling a degree of sadness that soon left when we arrived in Thargomindah. Irene Woods who worked at the library was immensely involved in research around the area & once again offered to find any information & send it on to help in my family connections. After our return to Charleville we all agreed we needed a goodnight's sleep, the driving Rob & Sloane had shared throughout the day was long dusty & tiring.

The next morning we managed to squeeze a visit to the aged care nursing hospital where an old family member lived, we were sad to see her condition had progressed to the point where she did not remember me, so we made our way to the airport for an early morning flight back to Brisbane.



Desmond Wright Reunion

I have been trying to track down my father, Gordon Charles Wright for many years now. I have not had contact with him since I was working at Apia Hostel, this was before they changed the name to Elle Bennett hostel, here I worked as a night watchman and cleaner/maintenance worker. My Father came to stay for a short period and that was the first time I had ever met him. He then decided to travel before finally settling in NSW, I never saw him again.

Over the years my siblings and I were always thinking of him, where he might be and how he was going. Then I finally decided I had to see him again, this is why I contact Link-Up (Qld) as I had heard that they may be able to track him down. Link-Up (Qld) Researchers did a search for my father and found that he had passed away. The research came back and stated that my father's place of burial was at the New General Cemetery Inverell. I was very saddened to find this out, but was grateful to know that Link-Up (Qld) was going to support myself with traveling to his gravesite for a reunion.

It was a beautiful morning when Link-Up (Qld) Staff, Sloane Stallan and Glen Evans arrived to pick me up for my reunion. It was a long drive from Nambour to Inverell NSW but also a wonderful experience as we were able to stop along the way to take in the sights and also get our photo taken. A highlight was stopping at the Queensland and NSW border, at this time it was winter and very windy and cold. Throughout the journey the Link-Up (Qld) staff were very supportive of myself and were checking in to make sure I was comfortable and feeling okay. We arrived in Inverell that afternoon and booked into our motel.

Early the next morning we arrived at the cemetery, as we were looking for the grave site a kangaroo came from out of nowhere and bounced beside the car almost like directing us toward my father's grave. As I laid out the ornaments and flowers that I had brought to place on my father's grave I became a bit emotional. I thought of how I had only met him the one time many years ago and here I was now saying my final goodbye. It was a very moving moment for me.

I would like to thank Link-Up (Qld) Caseworkers, Counsellors, Researchers, and the CEO for the great support I have received from my first inquiry, to becoming a client, and finally to the reunion event of visiting my father's grave.

I now have enough information to build onto what I already have been handed by Link-Up (Qld) & with the continual support of Sloane & Rob I am sure that my search will have a very happy ending, it will always be my wish that all people will have access to their Aboriginal heritage & that older men & women can overcome their fears of the past & teach their own to be proud of their own people & culture, this way future generations will walk proud & tall with their knowledge, I know this will stop a lot of heartache.

Saying our goodbyes to Sloane & Rob left us feeling a little down, but we know Link-Up (Qld) is always there to help.

Len & Claire White



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