National Link-Up News

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Kimberley Hosts National Link-Up Conference

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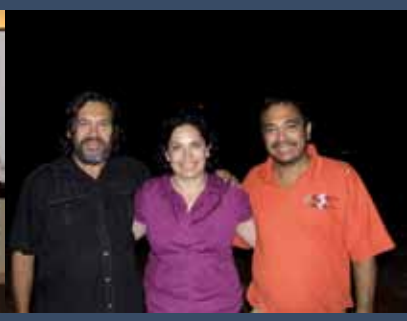

Western Australia

Kimberley Hosts National Link-Up Conference

More than 40 Link-Up staff from around Australia attended the 2009 National Link-Up Conference held in Broome, Western Australia, in May.

Co-hosted by Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation and Kimberley Link-Up (Broome), it was the first time that the Conference had been held outside regional centres.

The event coincided with National Sorry Day which was commemorated with a buffet dinner at Kimberley Generation Aboriginal Corporation. Local artists including the Pigram Brothers, Mervon Merlardy, and Pearl Smith performed. Participants also enjoyed traditional dancing by the local Torres Strait dancers and Karadjarri dancers.

Next year's Conference will be held in Albany and promises to be another exciting event.

Photos L-R: Local Yawaru Elder Susan Edgar, guest to this years National Link-Up Sorry Day celebration with Dr Mark BinBaker; Kimberley Stolen Generation members Elizabeth Sakarnie, Phyllis BinBaker, Marjorie Hunter and Daisy Howard at this years Sorry Day celebration; Staff of KSGAC and Kimberley Link-Up with coordinator Rosie Sahanna; Steven Pigram, Nancy Bates and David Pigram at the Sorry Day celebrations.

New South Wales

NSW Launches Book for Foster Care Children

NSW Link-Up's Family Link Service was host to the launch of the new Aboriginal 'My Life Story' resource by NSW Minister for Community Services Linda Burney during NAIDOC Week.

The Minister said, "More than 30 per cent of children in care are Aboriginal, and as a community, we must do more to address this intolerable situation."

The 'My Life Story' resource helps Aboriginal children in care to stay connected to their culture by developing strong connections to culture, community and family, and promoting positive self-identity.

Glendra Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer of Link-Up NSW said, "We work with adults who are trying to find family. But some time ago, we realised that we had to start working with Aboriginal children in today's welfare system as well. Unless every effort is made to find Aboriginal family members for the children taken into care today, there will be yet more generations who do not know their families and communities. Last year, a child thought to be without other family members, found family living in the next street, through Family Link."

Launching the exciting new Aboriginal 'My Life Story' with Bill Pritchard, AbSec CEO, and Glendra Stubbs, NSW Link-Up CEO

The resource was developed by the Department of Community Services to promote cultural identity and pride in Aboriginal children and young people. Activities include extended family trees, an exercise called 'Where is my mob/family from?', a section called 'My culture' which includes exercises about flags, nation and clan names, words and totems, and role models. There is also information about resources, services, literature and websites.

'My Life Story' can be downloaded from:
www.community.nsw.gov.au/lifestory

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Western Australia

Bringing Them Home

The Bringing Them Home and Link-Up teams in Albany have held various back to country and family reunions over the last few months, and have also assisted in finding the graves of loved ones and conducting gravesite reunions with clients:

1. The Woods family travelled back to Bremer Bay for a back to country and seaside reunion with their father who was lost at sea when they were very young children. Pictured is previous Caseworker Paul with Elder Bill Woods.

2. A reunion was held on 15-18 May for the Eades family of Albany who reconnected with a brother in Mullewa who they had not seen for a very long time. Pictured are Eliza Woods, Cheryl Colbung, Eddie Lockyer and Aden Eades.

3. From 1-3 May, Pearl Draper and her sisters, Sally Dickenson and Nola Benn, travelled back to their mother's country at Kellerberrin and then to Badjalling to meet some relatives they did not know they had. For the sisters, it was a very emotional journey. Pictured are Nola Benn, Winnie McHenry, Wendy Hayward, Sally Dickinson, Pearl Draper, and Olive and Richard Wilkes.

4. Don and Sylvia Collard and family said a graveside farewell to their son who lost his life as a child pictured below.

Below right: Cheryl, Wendy and Kenny have welcomed two new Link-Up team members, Ryan Humphries and Jude Allan.

Western Australia

Wangka Maya Travel the Distance

Wangka Maya's Outreach Program is a challenging one with long distances to travel. While driving for many hours is not necessarily a new experience for many people, in Western Australia those extra kilometres can place a strain on the working week.

Wangka Maya Caseworkers assist clients living in remote areas such as Jigalong, Nullagine or the more regional but still quite distant Carnarvon. Clients in smaller towns including Onslow, Exmouth or Marble Bar are among the many not forgotten but still far away!

The team is constantly thinking of better ways to service these clients more often but always return to driving as the best and only option. Catching a bus will leave you in the streets of Carnarvon at 3am and flying is too expensive and time consuming as it requires a round trip of Port Hedland-Perth-Carnarvon-Perth-Port Hedland!

Accommodation is a large part of these outreach visits and Wangka Maya have some interesting stories involving some not-so-nice truck stops as well as some lovely by-the-sea-cabins at Onslow. Recently, after returning from a Carnarvon trip, Manager Nadine declared the Hyundai car much too small to compete with the numerous oversize four-trailer road trains which can create some shaky moments!

Time is the most difficult hurdle when visiting remote clients. The normal Monday to Friday working week is restrictive and after each trip to Carnarvon, the team is left feeling frustrated by having driven so far and still only caught up with a handful of clients.

Other Link-Up Services in WA, the Territory and Queensland face similar challenges, and until Wangka Maya finds that more elusive, flexible and effective way, they will continue to 'drive the highways' to visit as many clients as possible.

Client Reunites with Retta Dixon Children in Darwin

Caseworker Beverley O'Brien accompanied a client to the Retta Dixon Reunion in Darwin from 31 August to 4 September.

Prior to the reunion, a search went out to all states looking for ex-Retta Dixon children and Wangka Maya found a client living in South Hedland.

At the reunion, participants enjoyed entertainment and visiting old sites by the Ex-Rettatonian. The Parliament House speech was outstanding and first-time recognition for all the children, who were very emotional. A lunch was enjoyed long with a photographic display at the State Reference Library. There were a lot of memories for everyone.

Families Come Together at Roebourne Reunion

Caseworker Susan Michael travelled to Roebourne from 13-17 July to assist with a family reunion.

The week was full of activities including the welcoming night at the Roebourne Shire Hall, dance, music, family stories and photos, and the boys enjoyed fishing.

A day was also shared with the family at Burrup Peninsula where they saw magnificent Rock Art and ate watermelon by the sea.

Susan said, "I really enjoyed the welcoming night where both families came together as one. (This is true family spirit!!) Thanks to Yorgum Link-Up Mary Nannup and Donna Pickett who organised this family reunion and a Big Thanks to all the family members for letting us be a part of this journey."

NAIDOC Week Celebrated Twice

This year Wangka Maya celebrated NAIDOC Week twice, firstly in Port and South Hedland public areas in July, and then again at Pundlemurra College in September.

Staff manned a stall to offer information about services as well as showcase books and Link-Up magazines. Local kids enjoyed colouring copies of pictures from Nyaparu Gardiner's beautifully drawn colouring book. The day was great fun and Wangka Maya staff declared their stall to be the best!!

Wangka Maya staff manned a stall for NAIDOC Week to provide information about Link-Up services

Wangka Maya Catch Up

In the last five months, Margaret, Beverley, Susan and Trisha (new Admin person) have been enjoying the newly painted colours of their office as well as some busy training schedules.

Caseworkers participated in workshops and programs about Narrative Therapy, Marumali Circle of Healing, and an AIATSIS Workshop in Perth where internet and library research skills, especially those needed to navigate the Battye Library, were appreciated and put to immediate use. As an added bonus, the team all now have a First Aid Certificate.

Three team members attended the very well organised and enjoyable National Conference in Broome and came away full of ideas and valuable information.

Below: Sturt Desert Pea at Roebourne and Rock Art in Burrup Peninsula

Western Australia

Coming home from Pakistan

Yorgum Link-Up is assisting a family through the bureaucratic red tape of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian High Commission in Islamabad, Pakistan, to bring a family home.

In the early 1900s, a camel driver married a Yamatji woman in Mount Magnet and had three boys and one girl. After the death of the mother, the authorities were going to take away the children so, as a safety measure, the father sent his children to what is now Karachi, Pakistan (then British India). The father left Australia himself in 1932.

When the children grew up, they were refused entry into Australia because Aboriginal people were not then recognised as citizens. The White Australia policy also prevented their entry, until it was abolished in 1969.

While the mother came to Australia in 1989, it was only after legislative changes in 2007 that entry into Australia was possible for her children. Sadly, the mother had already passed away in 2005 and her wish to see her children in this country in her lifetime, died with her.

Yorgum Link-Up are now continuing this mother's dream by assisting all eight children to come home.

Retta Dixon – The Spirit of Darwin

Yorgum Link-Up assisted clients on their journey back to Retta Dixon Home in Darwin saying it was a time of joyfulness and sadness as past members remembered the home in their own way.

For many, there was a strong feeling of isolation and abandonment with one client saying, "We were hated by the white people but what hurt us the most was being hated by our own kind".

The Chief Protector of the Northern Territory touched the hearts of the Retta Dixon brothers and sisters with his thoughts of what the home meant to the people of Darwin: "A year has passed since the Prime Minister of Australia said sorry and today I stand here as the Chief Protector of the Northern Territory and say Sorry to the Children of Retta Dixon. I would like to acknowledge the members of Retta Dixon and say to you that you are the spirit in which Darwin was founded upon".

Retta Dixon reunion

Walley and Evans Families Reunite

Mr Walley, the only surviving male of Ms Evans children, passed away two years ago at the age of 94 leaving a family who had never met any of the Evans clan. So Yorgum and Wangka Maya Link-Up organised a reunion for the families at Roebourne in the Pilbara region from 12-17 July.

Approximately 150 people attended the celebrations including young children, teenagers and adults. A family member performed the welcome to country in Nyoongar language and spoke about his father's connection and cultural ties to the Pilbara. This was followed by entertainment and all family members enjoying a cultural dance while playing the didgeridoo and tapping sticks.

The Walley and Evans families also joined in yarning and sharing their knowledge through family trees, photos and connections. They played guitars and sang together, and there were many happy smiling faces with lots of hugs and kisses. They also enjoyed visits to the Aboriginal Art Galleries and cultural sites in the area at the Burrup Peninsula and Cossack.

The families were overwhelmed and thanked Link-Up staff for organising the event.

Dann and Woods Families Meet at Glendinning Park

Approximately 100 people attended the reunion of the Dann, Woods, Merrit, and McIntosh families from the Perth, Murchison, and Gascoyne areas from 21-23 April at Glendinning Park.

Family members enjoyed a BBQ and each other's company while sharing family trees, information and connections that they were not aware of.

The Elders sat around and told stories about their upbringing at Moore River Native Settlement and their spiritual connection to the Yamitji country. They travelled to Mullewa to visit sacred sites and to the Gunnadoo Gallery to see the beautiful Aboriginal Artworks on display. They also enjoyed a breakfast at the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service on the Wednesday morning organised by Geraldton's BTH Coordinator Jasmine.

The Elders thanked Link-Up staff for organising the reunion and were very happy to have met family members they hadn't met before.

Dann and Woods family reunion

300 Attend Warrell Descendants Family Reunion

Around 300 members from the Taylors, Wyatts, Nettles, Shea and Warrell families came together as one at the Warrell Family Descendants Reunion organised by Yorgum Link-Up at Mogumber from 28-29 March.

They enjoyed each other's company and discovered family connections that they were not aware of.

Ben Taylor, a descendant of the Warrell's and Elder, performed the welcome in Noongar language and spoke about his connection and cultural ties to the Yuat country. All the young people listened intently and found Uncle's words and explanation very interesting.

Link-Up Caseworkers organised a display of photos from past reunions at New Norcia/Mogumber. There were tears of laughter and sadness from those who were raised in the orphanages at New Norcia when they saw photos of themselves as 5 and 6 year olds.

The Taylor Elders and Wyatt families were also surprised by all the family information that had been collated from the 1800s to early 1900s.

The Elders were elated that the reunion took place at Mogumber because they had connections to the old people there and good memories of their brother William who recently passed away. "Our ancestor's spirits are here with us today," they said.

Collage of photos from the Warrell family reunion at Mogumber

Oral History Preserves Family Information

Yorgum Link-Up is in the initial development stages of developing an Oral History project to record and preserve family information. There is currently a lack of recorded information on family history and this project will help all generations to identify connections.

10th Annual ATSILRN Conference

The WA Link-Up Research Officer attended the 10th Annual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Library Research Network (ATSILRN) Conference in Broome from 15-16 April.

Approximately 43 people from all over Australia, who work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, attended the national conference. Several community groups and programs displayed the work they were doing in their library networks.

The main focus of the Conference was encouraging libraries to allow the community into their environment and also to take the libraries out to the community. Participants also talked about changing the structure of the library environment to make it more community-friendly and how to make this easier for those who were finding the concept challenging.

Overall, the conference was a good opportunity to increase knowledge about resources that Link-Up can access.

Team Development

Yorgum Link-Up staff has recently completed various training courses to improve their service delivery. These included 'Signs of Safety' and 'Another layer of trauma' at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, 'The art of healing of creative conflict', and 'Stuck in the middle' (post traumatic stress syndrome) at the Community Skills Training Centre.

Staff went to Perth to attend training on research and archiving by AIATSIS. The training was in-depth, informative and provided many helpful tips and resources on researching family history.

Photo above: Retta Dixon reunion

Central Australia
Family Returns to Cave

The Central Australian Stolen Generations & Families Aboriginal Corporation (CASG&FAC) Link-Up team conducted reunions in Alice Springs and the gulf country around Borroloola in the last few months.

In September, the McMasters family returned to the cave from where their father was removed. Bill Masterton, known as the Redbank Hermit, lived in the cave for 45 years while he mined copper nearby with the help of local people.

The cave's old kitchen and cot areas have been sitting unused since the Redbank Hermit died in 1961. The McMasters heard about how the old people transported copper on horseback to the coast 100km's away. They also made contact and formed relationships with the Redbank Hermit's European family and Redbank Operations, the mining company which manages the site.

During the trip to Robinson River and Borroloola, the McMasters family met and yarned with some of the old Garuwa and Waanyi people who were able to tell them about their grandmother and other family. They even did some fishing but being desert mob 'the fish wouldn't eat our beef'.

Identifying Unmarked Graves in Alice Springs

In 2007, CASG&FAC received a grant from the Northern Territory Government's Community Benefit Fund (CBF) to identify the many unmarked graves of Stolen Generations people and their families buried in the Alice Springs Memorial Cemetery.

Twenty plain white timber crosses have been made on which the details of deceased individuals will be engraved. The crosses will be placed on the identified plots where Stolen Generation members and their families are buried. A plaque will also be placed at the entrance of the Cemetery to inform the public of the unmarked graves and the nature of the ongoing project.

CASG&FAC is now waiting on a response from the Alice Springs Town Council Cemetery Committee for permission and assistance to dig the holes and conduct a ceremony for each family.

Accessing Church Records

Many people were removed, transferred interstate, or adopted out with the assistance of different church missions in Central Australia. The Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican churches all have a strong history in the area.

Sometimes separation happened with the birth family's informed consent and sometimes without. With this history, it is rewarding for Link-Up Caseworkers to be able to access archives held by the different churches locally and interstate to help solve clients' cases.

Records have already been accessed from the Catholic Church in Brisbane as well as locally. In particular, the Marist Brothers at Santa Teresa have been helpful and although they were concerned that permission was needed from local families, they have granted access based on the authorisation forms signed by clients. The records accessed include the church registers of baptisms and marriages going as far back as the 1940s when the mission was located at Charles Creek and then Arltunga (Little Flower mission).

Although the records are stored in churches, presbyteries and archival collections all over the country, and sometimes in bad condition or missing, many churches have now put together books to help people find records. The books include 'A Piece of the Story' from the Catholic Church and 'Records of National Cultural Significance' from the Lutheran Church.

Photos below: Yarning with Aunty Kathleen in Robinson River; Identifying unmarked graves in Alice Springs; Brother Red Casey reading through the Santa Teresa Baptismal Register

Northern Territory

Maureen Hunter, Maria Tomlins and Nettie Cahill

Elders Meet Anthony Mundine

Elders Nettie Cahill, Lorna Nungala Fejo, Maureen Hunter and Maria Tomlins were guests of honour at the table of famous 'boxing son' Anthony Mundine at the Balunu Foundation Dinner Fundraiser on 18 September in Darwin.

The opportunity was made possible with the assistance of a silent sponsor who paid for the Elders to attend. They enjoyed great company, food and entertainment while raising funds for youth.

Reunions

The NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation recently assisted with the Garden Point Stolen Generation Reunion which was held in Darwin in July, and the Retta Dixon Stolen Generation Group Reunion held in August. Both reunions were a great success and well attended with many memorable moments for members.

A family reunion was also held in Tennant Creek which included visits to Ali Curung and Wauchope to meet family members who passed on oral histories to the Wauchope-Taylor family. It was an opportunity to hear the stories of removal first hand which can now be passed onto the next generation.

The second Croker Island Stolen Generation Reunion was held in Darwin in November. Staff from various Link-Up Services around Australia worked together to bring together another group of Croker Islander children for a memorable reunion.

New Ladies Arts & Crafts Group

The NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation received funding in June from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) for a Ladies Arts & Crafts Group.

Members meet every Tuesday from 10.00am to 2.00pm at the Stolen Generation Room in Malak and enjoy activities including jewellery making, painting, sewing, quilting, knitting, crocheting and flower making. All materials are provided and the ladies also enjoy lunch together. Already some beautiful artworks have been created.

Service Update

The Top End Link-up Service has now been in operation for just over 18 months after opening their office in April 2008. Rosie Baird has recently been appointed as Chief Executive Officer and Evelyn Perkins as Link-Up Caseworker. Evelyn has proved to be a competent researcher which is essential for family tracing.

The Counsellors have been upgrading their skills and knowledge with further training. The team has also organised special healing events and get-togethers, prepared clients for reunions and assisted with Group Institutional Reunions.

The service has been promoted at events including outreach services to the Katherine and Tiwi Island region, an Apology Celebration morning tea at the Saint Mary's Club, and a special viewing of the film 'Australia' at which staff received a large poster from the Darwin Cinema for their office. A special DVD is currently being produced with the Red Cross and the Garden Point members for Missing Persons Week.

This year, the team completed a Risk Assessment with guidance from the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the results have brought the standard of service up to the next professional level. Documents produced included Policies and Procedures, and Board Induction Flipcharts.

For further information, see www.ntsgac.org

South Australia

SA Link-Up Celebra

On 1 December 2009, Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA Inc. SA Link-Up Program celebrated 10 years of service to the community. In celebration of this and other achievements by the organisation, Nunkuwarrin Yunti hosted an open day for the public to see the range of services provided.

Over the ten years, SA Link-Up has seen a significant increase in new client referrals, particularly after the National Apology Day. SA Link-Up has worked tirelessly to establish partnerships with Bringing Them Home Counsellors statewide and to consolidate ways of working with other Link-Up Services, state support and research networks.

Achievements in 2009 alone include 37 reunions, five clients supported to attend the Rita Dixon Institution Reunion in Darwin, and nine clients returning to Darwin in November for the second Croker Island Institutional Reunion.

In October, SA Link-Up was invited to Western Australia to deliver case and risk management training to four Link-Up Services.

This year, SA Link-Up has also invested time in establishing best practice models, case management plans, counsellor frameworks and quality improvement. Community visits and presentations at schools have been paramount in promoting the valuable work of Link-Up Services.

The Destined Reunion of Two Sisters

SA Link-Up's Nancy Bates came across an ironic connection this year between two clients when she discovered their birth certificates had the same biological mother.

At the same time, Counsellors Deanna Roberts and Sharon Betty just so happened to be in Coober Pedy on a community visit where the clients', Mary Hammond and Georgina Dingaman, family were.

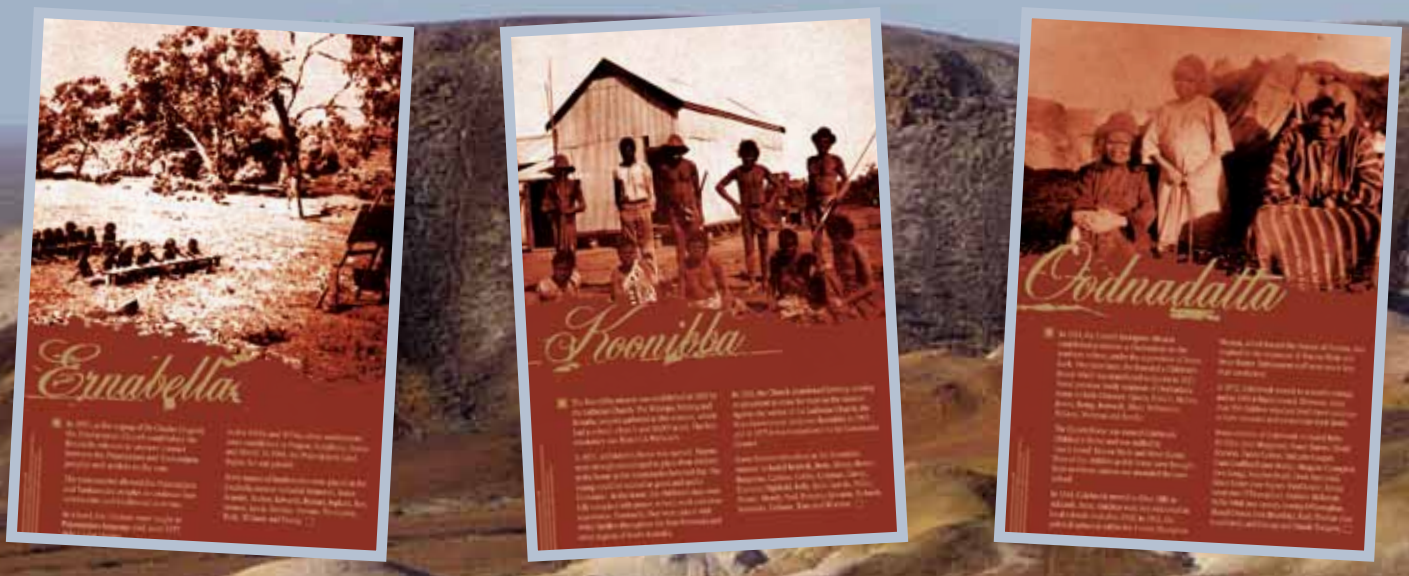
Deanna and Sharon spent some time at Umoona Aged Care and met with Mary's brother Monty O'Toole and other family to discuss plans

Monty O'Toole and family

Family gathering at Umoona Aged Care

for a reunion in consultation with Bringing Them Home (BTH) Counsellor Colleen Daar.

In preparation, Mary and Georgina exchanged photos and had several phone link-ups before personally connecting. The girls said having a photo was very helpful when yarning on the phone as they could put a face to the voice. Phone link-ups assisted with planning the reunion and gave both Mary and Georgina an opportunity to share their hopes and dreams, what was important for them in meeting, and then sharing this with other family members, particularly the Elders at Umoona Aged Care.



ates 10 Years

Cultural experience to the Breakaways

Mary and Georgina

Dates for the reunion were confirmed and Mary arrived from Mackay/ Queensland on June 21 staying overnight in Adelaide before meeting Georgina for the first time on Monday June 22. Georgina's partner, Ridgeway Rankine was present to support her.

The sisters communicated easily and Mary gave Georgina a gift of homemade mango chutney. SA Link-Up then took the sisters to the Sempahore Palace Hotel on the beachfront for lunch.

Georgina stayed with Mary for the evening and shared photos and stories before departing to Coober Pedy the following morning. On arrival, the group checked into the Mud Hut before visiting Umoona Health where they were greeted by BTH Counsellor Colleen Daar and Program Manager Nola Bolan.

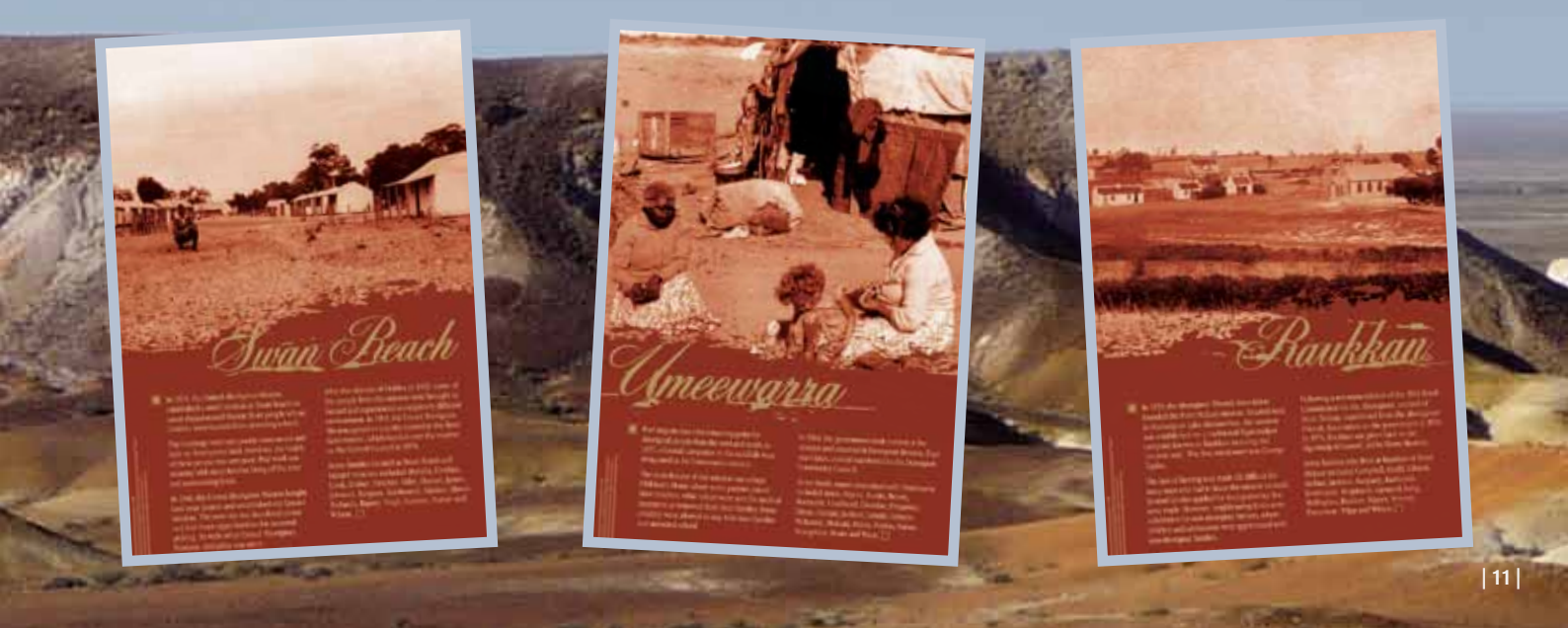
They spent the afternoon looking around the town and planning for the reunion. The group also went to the 'Breakers' and Georgina shared stories about growing up in Coober Pedy while Mary shared stories about life on the farm with her foster family.

The following day, the reunion was held at Umoona Aged Care. Mary connected with her brother Monty O'Toole who was an outpatient at the adjoining hospital and both sisters chatted with residents and heard stories about family. The Elders stories were particularly significant as they are the last remaining keepers of family history relevant to both clients, particularly about their mother. Other family members came throughout the afternoon which gave Mary and Georgina time to spend with individual family members.

The next day, the group visited Oodnadatta and had lunch at the Pink Roadhouse. Then they met World Champion Kyle Vander Kuyp who just so happened to be visiting the local school. Mary and Georgina had photos taken with Kyle and he shared his story of adoption and journey to find his biological family.

The group visited all the significant sites in Oodnadatta including the memorial plaque from the community reunion coordinated by SA Link-Up in 2007. Georgina also met one of her friends, Christine Dodd-Hunt, who grew up in Umewarra mission with her - they had not seen each other since they were kids. Georgina and Christine shared stories of growing up on the mission with Mary.

Whilst at the Oodnadatta Museum, Georgina found a photo of Mary's father Larry O'Toole. Seeing a photo of her father for the first time was a very moving experience especially given her sister Georgina had found it.



Congratulations SA!

The next day, the group flew back to Adelaide and Mary returned to Mackay the following day. The two sisters have maintained regular contact since the reunion. Caseworker Nancy said, "This reunion was very uplifting for the spirit as both clients had a great sense of humour and genuine warmth that radiated out to everyone they met. It is truly inspirational to share stories with clients who are so closely connected with their values, hopes and dreams and choose to embrace all the positive experiences in their life."

Haydyn Bromley, Bookabee Tours

Flinders Ranges Cultural Camp

From 19-24 October, SA Link-Up took clients on a cultural camp excursion in Andyamathanha country. Aboriginal guides from Bookabee Tours Australia shared creation stories and took the group to traditional significant sites in the Flinders Ranges whilst teaching them respectful ways of walking their country.

Clients enjoyed the following activities:

Day 1 - Visit to the Nepabunna Aboriginal Community with modest dorm styled accommodation at the Nepabunna Aboriginal School. For many participants, this was a 'coming home'.

Day 2 - Walk through a scenic creek bed to an Aboriginal rock art site, visit Ithalowie Gorge to look at bush food plants and hear an Adnyamathanha creation story, and an evening of campfire with traditional cooked kangaroo, songs and stories.

Day 3 - Visit Urrakul, Wakarla and Wildu (magpie, crow and eagle), and see Wildu Vampata and Aruwarapanha mountains. After morning tea in a tree lined creek, drive to Copley and then head south to Wilpena Pound, seeing spectacular gorges and geological rock formations on the way, as well all the animals including the Yellow-Footed Rock Wallabies.

Day 4 - Walk to Wangarra Look-out and see spectacular views inside Wilpena Pound, hear more creation stories including the Story of the Akkurras and formation of Wilpena Pound. Adding to the cultural significance of the day was a visit to Adnaymathanha Ikara Instillation site and Pertawinna cultural site.

Day 5 - Learn about the creation of Wilpena pound through rock art and then walk to spectacular views of Chace Range. Journey back to Adelaide and process learnings from the Aboriginal guides, the country, and camp participants.

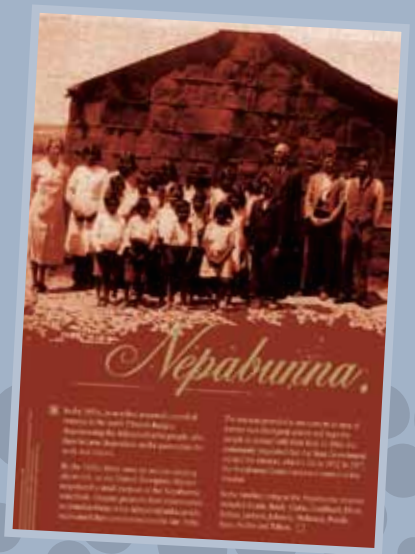
SA Link-Up believes opportunities to experience Aboriginal culture is an important process in reclaiming identity and finding a connection to Aboriginal spirit. "By walking the land and learning its story through and alongside her people, we learn respect, and how to do cultural business 'proper-way'.

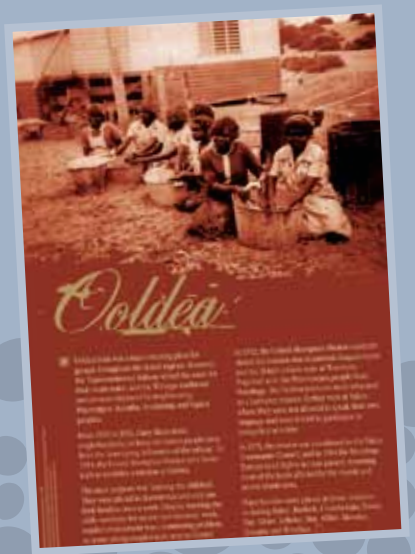
At the same time, we share our story, and our story stays in that place, with those people we have shared it with. We make each other strong. Aboriginal people need opportunity to learn not only their own culture but also the culture of the many other Aboriginal people in this big country."

Developing Risk Management Tools

Over the last few months, SA Link-Up has been working on a risk management framework to examine the intricacy of their work and what the chances are of something happening that will have an impact on the achievement of their objectives.

Risk management looks at managing potential opportunities and adverse effects by applying management policies and procedures while identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and communicating risks.





As there are several risks involved in Link-Up work, it is a very important concept and one which will create opportunities for staff working at the community level by identifying areas which need to be better supported.

SA Link-Up has developed their tools so that it is not another management-driven concept imposed on workers but tools that workers can use to let management know what systems need to improve.

Auntie Elsie (Nancy Bates)

Alter-ego Aunty Elsie, who has been involved in training all staff at Nunkuwarrin Yunti in risk management, has kept the energy level high with humour only a 'Black Woman' epitomises.

Improving Service Delivery

The SA Link-Up team has undertaken a variety of training sessions and workshops to improve their service delivery.

Nancy Bates, Sharon Betty, and Simon Finlayson attended the 'Recognise and Respond to Disclosures of Rape and Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities' workshop conducted by Yarrow Place, and Sharon and Simon followed on with a workshop by Narrative Practices Adelaide on 'Responding to the effects of trauma and abuse in women's lives'.

The Narrative Practices workshop explored a range of narrative practices that provide opportunities for locating practices of violence and abuse in social and historical contexts and identifying responses to trauma and working with blame, shame, guilt and self criticism.

Five staff of Nunkuwarrin Yunti including SA Link-Up Sharon Betty attended a workshop facilitated by Garth Dodd. Key practices were explored in preparation for facilitating 'Through Young Black Eyes' which looks at all aspects of the impact of family violence and child abuse in families and the community.

Kay Goodman-Dodd, Lorelle Hunter, Nancy Bates and Sharon Betty also attended the Marumali Risk Management Workshop, facilitated by Aunty Lorraine Peeters, which consolidated previous learnings from the inaugural program. The program helps to look at Stolen Generations issues as social and emotional rather than mental health. Grappling with issues of identity are central to healing in a culturally appropriate way when the emphasis is holistic and includes the spiritual dimensions of healing.

Deanna Roberts and Sharon Betty were also members of a steering committee for the inaugural national meeting for 'Those Who Work in Post Adoption' held on September 15-17 at Nunkuwarrin Yunti. Participants came from all over Australia. Holding the first meeting in an Aboriginal health organisation was significant in acknowledging history and the inclusion of the Aboriginal voice. The meeting began with a smoking ceremony by Major Sumner which was a highlight for many interstate guests.

Some of the important issues discussed were the differences in legislation between states and the impact of TV adoption shows. One of the most vital recommendations was the acknowledgement that future meetings should be coordinated in partnership with the Link-Up Service in the state where the meeting is to be held.

'Afternoon Tea with Auntie Elsie' (Nancy Bates, SA Link-Up Caseworker) was a highlight. She consistently provides humour and insight into Link-Up work and the community.

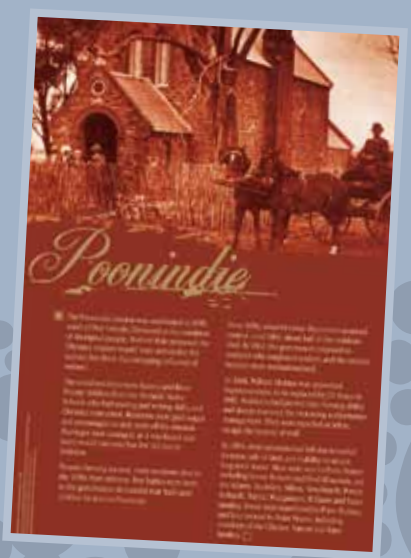
Jessica with her father Fred Graham

Welcome Jessica Graham

SA Link-Up welcomes Jessica Graham, a Narungga woman, as Administrative Support Officer. Jessica's family is from the Point Pearce community and Western Australia. She returned home to Adelaide in April 2009 after living away for a long period of time and commenced with SA Link-Up in August.

Jessica said, "I feel content to be back and to contribute to the positive work being done by Nunkuwarrin Yunti. I feel extremely lucky to work at SA Link-Up and privileged to learn from clients and my endearing and talented colleagues and Program Manager."

Photos: Left - Mission Posters; Right - Kay Goodman-Dodd, SA Link-Up Program Manager with Polly Sumner, CEO Nunkuwarrin Yunti



Queensland

NAIDOC Celebrated around the State

NAIDOC celebrations commenced on Friday 3 July with Link-Up (Qld) Mick Angeles attending the Flag Raising Ceremony at the town square in Caboolture. The ceremony was hosted by the Moreton Bay Regional Council to symbolise their commitment to enhancing and continuing community relationships. Mayor Cnr Allan Sutherland, Cnr Chris Whiting and Cnr Greg Chippendale along with three young people and three Elders, raised the flags to cheers from the audience. Entertainment was provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers.

The Deception Bay Library opened a 'Welcome Place' decorated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artifacts to commemorate NAIDOC Week. A group of young Aboriginal children performed traditional dances and the ceremony ended with a variety of traditional and non-traditional foods for afternoon tea.

The official opening for NAIDOC Week was held in the Brisbane City Hall. Link-Up (Qld) Mick Angeles and Ruth Loli visited the stalls and the LIVE entertainment.

On Tuesday 7 July, staff attended the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Councillor Campbell Newman's luncheon held in the Balmoral Room of the City Hall. Councillors, Brisbane Elders and representatives from various Brisbane Indigenous organisations were invited to attend.

The Annual NAIDOC Golf Day was held on 8 July at Nudgee Golf Club. Despite poor weather, 85 players made the field. The skies cleared and some actually played golf while others just hit a white ball around the course! A large number of players attended due to the Link-Up (Qld) membership drive.

Koobara Kindergarten hosted its annual NAIDOC celebrations on Thursday 9 July. Link-Up (Qld) Pamela Frith and Mick Angeles set up a stall and passed out information and giveaways. Mick's twin sons, Vanyn and Jian, unknowingly volunteered to assist on the stall. A large crowd attended including Councillor for Sandgate, Cnr Victoria Newton. Link-Up (Qld) sample bags and giveaways were exhausted by lunchtime.

Musgrave Park ('Black Ekka') was again the focus of NAIDOC Week with huge crowds attending on Friday 10 July. Link-Up (Qld) and surrounding stalls were depleted of stock by lunchtime and most were packed up by 1.00pm. Link-Up (Qld)'s 'Black Elvis' performed to an enthusiastic crowd.

Link-Up (Qld) Mick Angeles, Pam Frith and Ruth Loli attended the three day NAIDOC celebrations at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre in Wacol from Monday 27 to Wednesday 29 July. The entertainment included live band 'the Huntsmen', Torres Strait Islander dancers and outstanding performances from the detainees' traditional dance troupe consisting of 24 boys and 8 girls. Michael Connolly played the didgeridoo and a demonstration was given on how to shred coconut in the traditional island way. Attendees then enjoyed a feast of traditional fare including

Photos - P14: Dancers during NAIDOC Week; Inset - Michael Connolly playing the didgeridoo. P15: Above L-R - Annual NAIDOC Golf Day; Link-Up (Qld) stall at Koobara Kindergarten; Crowds at Musgrave Park during NAIDOC Week; Below L-R - Flag raising during NAIDOC Week; Children enjoy the jumping castle.

kangaroo, possum, wallaby and emu meat delicacies and lemon myrtle meringue pie.

Reunions unite Family Members from Far Away

Link-Up (Qld) took a client and family from Cooktown to Cairns for a graveside reunion at the Cairns Old Cemetery on Friday 21 August. After the gathering, members enjoyed lunch at the Australian First Nations Academy with other family members, Link-Up (Qld) and AFNA staff and Bringing Them Home (BTH) Counsellors. Link-Up (Qld) worked with BTH Counsellors from Cairns for this long-awaited reunion.

Two brothers met for the first time following the placement of a photo in the local newspaper of an Indigenous Digger. Link-Up (Qld) received many telephone calls with information about the man and the two brothers finally met.

Two more reunions held in Brisbane recently involved clients and family members travelling from as far as Tasmania and Cairns.

From 31 August to 6 September, Caseworker Jody Jackson supported clients who attended the Retta Dixon Home Reunion in Darwin. The Aborigines Inland Mission was founded by Miss Retta Dixon in 1905 and in 1946 was renamed after her. The home was closed in 1980.

Social & Emotional Wellbeing Update

Darcy Bolton, Link-Up (Qld) Social & Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor in Rockhampton is in the process of updating all Aboriginal organisations in central Queensland, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Mackay and Townsville.

Darcy represents Link-Up (Qld) on the Rockhampton Community Justice group and Murri Court. He has been a guest speaker at Mental Health, ATODS, Community Health, Aged Care assessment team and PCYC 'which way - this way', and is also on the Central Queensland Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing working party. During NAIDOC week, Darcy managed a stall at some venues and earlier in the year he gave an address to the community about the apology.

Darcy's new regions include from Hervey Bay to Townsville/Palm Island, a distance of around 1500kms which he services once a quarter and results in a week on the road every month.

Queensland

Clients and Staff enjoy Healing Camp

Link-Up (Qld) hosted its third Healing Camp for clients and families. The 3½ day camp was held in the beautiful, tranquil setting of the Mudjimba Apex complex on the Sunshine Coast.

Forty-two clients and staff enjoyed vision boarding, massage and yoga therapy, jewellery making, hair salon, yarning circles, LIVE entertainment with ABBA and Elvis, an impromptu performance by the Indigenous Belly Dancing troupe and more. The ladies (and men) took advantage of the hair salon, treating themselves to colours, foils and cuts to look absolutely fantastic for the Saturday night entertainment ... after watching the Broncos defeat the Dragons!

On the Sunday night, the group was invited to join a yarning circle with the St Brendan's Catholic College football team at their fire pit. The team, which included a number of Indigenous players, was holidaying at the complex at the same time. This spontaneous gesture lasted well into the night with everyone sharing their stories.

Marumali Training

Caseworker Pamela Frith and Research Officer Ruth Loli attended the five day Marumali Program in Adelaide from 31 August to 4 September to learn strategies that will assist clients to deal with trauma and commence a process of healing.

The program, facilitated by Aunty Lorraine Peeters and Maurice Walker, provides awareness of removal practices and the resultant issues which affect the Stolen Generation, their descendants and communities today. It provides participants with a greater understanding of:

- Colonisation and dispossession
- Past government policies and practices
- Grief and loss
- Issues of trauma associated with removal practices, including trans-generational trauma
- Support and risk management strategies
- Identity and connection
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Marumali journey of healing model

Welcome to New Staff

Link-Up (Qld) welcomes Dr Melisah Feeney as the new Chief Executive Officer and Brian Marshall as Team Leader. The staff look forward to fulfilling their vision of an organisation that is collaborative and responsive.

Melisah Feeney, CEO

Melisah Feeney commenced in early September. She has been involved in a wide range of social and emotional wellbeing projects with Indigenous communities over the past 15 years as a psychologist and community activist.

Prior to moving to Brisbane, Melisah was the Director of the 'Footprints in Time' project that focuses on helping create a more positive future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in a diverse range of communities across Australia.

Whilst living in Canberra, she was a committee member of the ACT Journey of Healing and involved in organising Sorry Day events. Melisah said, "What a celebration it was to see the National Apology finally come to fruition!"

Melisah recently helped the Stolen Generation Alliance to develop models of healing suitable for members and was also involved in establishing an Indigenous trauma, loss and grief network for people working with Indigenous children and young people. Over the past five years, she has been guiding the social and emotional wellbeing work of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and in teaching psychology has tried to help students take a more holistic view of Indigenous mental health.

Melisah said, "I am very excited to be working for Link-Up (Qld) and am keen to strengthen our efforts in supporting families from the Stolen Generation reunite with their families and ensure quality support and counselling is offered to help people who need it. I'm very interested in creativity as a medium for healing and would like Link-Up (Qld) to facilitate an art exhibition next year of paintings from clients of Link-Up and the Bringing Them Home Counselling services across Queensland.

"I have Celtic roots and my convict family settled in Sydney and the NSW North Coast and we have recently found an Aboriginal uncle on my father's side from Northern NSW. I come from a large though dispersed family and have been through my own experience of reuniting with siblings that I was separated from when I was growing up including an adopted Aboriginal sister. My passion is to help create a society that openly acknowledges the past and honours the diversity of people's healing journeys."

Brian Marshall, Team Leader

Brian Marshall is from the Bundjalung nation in NSW. He has a Bachelor of Archaeology (Hons) from the Flinders University of South Australia and is currently undertaking post-graduate studies.

Brian said, "It is an honour to be able to work with the Link-Up (Qld) team as their Team Leader.

"It is very refreshing to have the opportunity to work with an organisation that has a positive impact on the Indigenous community."

His previous employment has been within the University sector as a lecturer and researcher. Brian's current vocational study is a collaborative approach with his father to tell his story as a Stolen Generations man. He said, "It has been a very difficult journey for both of us, but one that has allowed us to laugh and cry throughout our journey together.

Photos: Clients and staff enjoying various activities at the Client Healing Camp

Brian Marshall (cont'd)

I believe that there are many other Stolen Generations members out there who need to have the opportunity to find where they are, and who their families are and also have the opportunity to laugh and cry throughout the journey."

Victoria

Supporting Reunions around the Country

Over the past few months, Link-Up Victoria has supported one interstate family reunion, coordinated a family reunion in rural Victoria, and supported six clients to attend two interstate reunion and commemorative events. The team also worked closely with the Top End, Queensland and South Australian Link-Up Services to support clients on their reunion in Darwin.

Retta Dixon Home Reunion

Lance James, Manager of Link-Up Victoria, attended the Retta Dixon Reunion in Darwin from 31 August to 4 September 2009 to provide support to clients and families who travelled from Victoria.

The reunion, organised by the Retta Dixon Reunion Committee and supported by the Top End Link-Up Service, incorporated several key events including:

Monday 31 August - a morning church service followed by a BBQ dinner at Karu Park where the cottages were.

Tuesday 1 September – visit to Bagot Community, where the Retta Dixon Dining Hall was, to place a plaque. The group then went to Parliament House where photos were displayed and a brief speech was given by Chief Minister Paul Henderson followed by a light lunch.

Wednesday 2 September – A plaque was placed at Casuarina Beach, an area known as one of the camp sites, followed by lunch and yarns.

Thursday 3 September - A plaque was placed at Coomalie Creek, an area also known as a camp site and where the children attended for school holidays, followed by lunch.

Friday 4 September - Rest day to prepare for the dinner dance held at the Filipino Community Hall. This was a very emotional night for some Retta Dixon ex-residents, remembering sad times, bad times and good times, as well as reminiscing in memory of the lost ones. Speakers at the dinner were Chief Minister Paul Henderson and Danila Dilba Chief Executive Officer Paula Arnol.

About the reunion, one of Link-Up Victoria's clients commented, "The reunion was fantastic and we enjoyed the time together, catching up on the intervening years. I would like to thank you all for making this reunion possible. We are ever so grateful... There were some sad moments as well as great ones."

Forgotten Australians Acknowledged

On Saturday 19 September, the Forgotten Australians were acknowledged at a commemorative event in Sydney that began in the Botanical Gardens with the unveiling of a memorial plaque followed by morning tea at government house. The Premier offered an apology for the maltreatment and suffering caused to many children who were placed into institutions, foster care and made Wards of the State. Link-Up Victoria sponsored three clients to attend this significant event, having spent several years in homes in New South Wales.

'Linking In' for Clients

Link-Up Victoria's Megan Cadd has developed a 'Linking In' program for clients and other Stolen Generations members to help them connect to or reconnect with their Aboriginal identity and introduce them to some special Koori services and places around Melbourne.

The program includes smoking ceremonies, weaving and didgeridoo workshops, excursions to the Koorie Heritage Trust, Bunjilaka (Melbourne Museum), jewellery making and boomerang workshops, as well as yarnin up circles. 'Linking In' has been a huge success with all clients giving positive feedback and looking forward to the next session.

New Image for Link-Up Victoria

Link-Up Victoria has been working closely with Dreamtime Public Relations to develop a very impressive range of promotional items for clients and for distribution at community events, as well as uniforms for staff. We are also developing a new website that includes a moving video of Kutcha Edwards telling his story of being removed from and reunited with his family.

Team Update

Irene Sazdov commenced full time employment with Link-Up Victoria as Coordinator of Administration on 1 July 2009.

The team was also pleased to welcome Samara Ahmat in the role of Caseworker/Counsellor. Samara is a young Torres Strait Islander woman, born in Mackay, Queensland, and travelled a lot as a child, eventually settling and spending most of her life in Shepparton, Victoria.

Samara moved to Melbourne three years ago to commence her employment with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, firstly in the Family Services team and then in the Corporate team. She comes to Link-Up with a wealth of administrative knowledge and coordination skills, and is looking forward to the challenge of working directly with the community to help trace and reunite clients with their families.

Honouring Our Elders

Link-Up Victoria, along with many of the Victorian Koori community was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Aunty Ollie Jackson/Harrison (nee Smith). Aunty Ollie achieved many things in her life and was a great leader of our community. Amongst her many achievements was raising a great family of nine children including daughter Muriel Bamblett (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Chief Executive Officer), son Eric Harrison (former Link-Up Senior Caseworker) and granddaughter Kooramyee Cooper (Link-Up Victoria Caseworker/Counsellor). Link-Up Victoria would like to extend its deepest condolences to Aunty Ollie's family for the loss of a truly beautiful and well-respected woman.

Only a few short weeks ago, Lance James, Manager of Link-Up Victoria, was admitted to hospital with a variety of problems including one with his heart. We would like to thank everybody for their well wishes and speedy recovery messages sent to Lance from throughout the National Link-Up network.

Recently Angela Swindle visited her aunty in hospital who was admitted for heart trouble. As they began to take a walk around the ward she saw someone she recognised in the room opposite. On going in to say hello, she found another Elder in the room who was also admitted for heart problems. In the same week, yet another Koori Elder was admitted to the same hospital having suffered a severe heart attack.

Thankfully all four Koori Elders are recovering well.

Almost all of us are losing those around us at a rapid rate and in many cases the losses are coming too soon in the lives of those we love. This is a good opportunity to honour our Elders - those who have passed before us and also the very precious ones we are still fortunate to have with us.

Our Elders pave the way and teach us how to move forward. We must use every opportunity to show them the respect they deserve, listen to their lessons and put these lessons into practice while they are still here.

This is also a quiet wake-up call for all Kooris to take care of themselves. We are either Elders of the future or Elders already. We need to take care of our health today to be there for the generations to follow. Be healthy, strong Kooris and set a good example for the young fellas.

Pictured: Some of the promotional items produced by Dreamtime Public Relations for Link-Up Victoria including keyring, banner and magnetic photo frame

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