

Disability Services Commission: Focus Story

Local area coordinators help celebrate reconciliation

More than 120 women from all walks of life joined together to celebrate International Women's Day in Derby on Monday, 8 March 2004.

Traditional Nyikina Elder Lucy Marshall opened the evening by welcoming everyone to her country. She was followed by a group of young girls from Looma Aboriginal community who impressed the audience with their moves. Disability Services Commission Local Area Coordinator Mandy Gadsdon reports that "it was unanimous, they were too deadly".

The night brought together women from as far as Fitzroy Crossing, Looma and Pandanus Park Aboriginal communities, along with those residing in Derby and at Mowanjum Aboriginal community.

The night was filled with entertainment that included dancing, singing, speeches, and best of all, a series of impromptu activities, designed to test the dance moves of all guests.

Tables were called on at random to demonstrate their interpretations of such music classics as the *Hokey Pokey*, *Nut Bush City Limits*, the Wiggles' *Rock-a-bye-a-bear*, *The Twist* and much more.

Guest speaker Magistrate Sue Gordon treated participants to an

historical overview of International Women's Day. The venue had one side of the wall covered in stars recognising the many outstanding women in Derby for their contributions and achievements to the local community. Indigenous women were especially recognised on the night because 2004 was the last year of the decade of Indigenous people.

The principles of reconciliation were evident in every aspect of the event. The community also supported the celebration and without sponsorship support from local businesses and the Derby Aboriginal Health Service, the night may not have been such a success.

The evening was made possible through the commitment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous committee members Mandy Gadsdon, Ronda Clark, Stephanie Roe, Sue Ferguson-Hill, Bernadette Cullinan, Vanessa Poelina, Narelle Dep, Shelley Kneebone, Kay Wilson, Regina Taylor, Linda Boyle, Jane Edwards and Simone Brady.



Looma Dance Group.



The Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service and Derby Aboriginal Health Service's 'deadly' women show us how to do Nutbush City Limit!



Iris Prouse presenting Magistrate Sue Gordon with a gift.

Equal Opportunity Commission: Overview

Encouraging equal opportunities for everyone

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) encourages recognition and understanding of the principles of equal opportunity.

Laws alone do not end intolerance, prejudice and discrimination in the community, so education is a vital part of the commission's function. The EOC also provides a means of redress to individuals who experience unlawful discrimination.

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act* (1984) it is against the law to discriminate against someone based on his or her racial background, sex, marital status, age, health, disability or spent conviction.

The law may also apply to a relative or a person who has a close relationship to a person affected by these grounds of discrimination.

The EOC established an outreach program in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas after a review of Aboriginal participation within the complaints process in 2000. This review was conducted as a result of concerns with the high rate of lapsed complaints lodged by Indigenous people. It identified the need for greater face-to-face contact between commission officers and Indigenous people who were lodging complaints.

Indigenous people face discrimination on a daily basis in many areas including employment, tenancy applications and services offered to the general public. Through the outreach program the EOC provides culturally appropriate services to explain the provisions of the Act, how to lodge a complaint and the process for handling complaints. The establishment of this program has resulted in:

- Rights-based workshops conducted in a range of regional centres and towns including Bunbury, Collie, Moora, Merridan, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Broome.

- Community worker sessions conducted in regional centres.
- Meetings with a range of agencies and peak bodies including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Aboriginal Legal Service, medical services, educational and housing groups and language centres.
- Participation in talkback radio with the ABC and FM stations, PRK Radio in Halls Creek and Radio Goolarri in Broome.

If you have been treated unfairly on the basis of the above, you are encouraged to contact the EOC's Indigenous staff, Zeta Binge and Stephen Goodall, who are available to assist you.

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Equal Opportunity Commission: Focus Story

Ngali-Ba Wangka — We are all talking

Seven Wongatha people are talking for their people who need to access State and federal equal opportunity agencies.

They were trained in a joint project with the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, after consultations in Kalgoorlie-Boulder found that there was a lack of information about legal rights and obligations and lack of appropriate consultation with Indigenous leaders in matters impacting on Indigenous people.

The week-long training program for Indigenous community leaders in Kalgoorlie-Boulder last year resulted in the formation of a group of people – Ngali-Ba Wangka – who can act as advocates for their local people who need to access state and federal equal opportunity agencies.

In May 2002, the WA EOC and the federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission held consultations in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region.

Ngali-Ba Wangka advocates can:

- Provide appropriate referrals about State and federal anti-discrimination law.
- Discuss options for dealing with allegations of discrimination.



Wongatha people participating in equal opportunity training.

- Assist concerned individuals to make contact with the EOC.
- Assist in preparing complaints.

The consultations also identified the need for an Indigenous Consultation Protocol between the Wongatha Regional Council of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), Kalgoorlie Boulder City Council, Safer WA Interagency committee and the Kalgoorlie Boulder Coalition. Other departments and agencies were also invited to commit to the protocol.

Consistent with respect for human rights and Indigenous cultures, the protocol is expected to set out the issues about which the parties agree to consult and the timing and format for consultations.

Department of Consumer and Employment Protection: Overview

Raising awareness on consumer rights

Indigenous people will have better access to consumer protection information and education under a plan developed by the Consumer Protection Division of the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP).

Indigenous education officers Wayne Bynder and Tammy Solonec are working with DOCEP to implement the plan, which has 12 key commitments.

- To work in consultation to deliver information and services in a culturally appropriate way.
- To ensure general consumer information and education initiatives do not alienate or ignore indigenous consumers.
- To focus information delivery in the areas of motor vehicles, general retail, bookup and pin numbers, tenancy issues and basic rights.
- To continue to monitor the marketplace to ensure the focus of information remains relevant.
- To refer Indigenous consumers to other relevant organisations when appropriate.
- To work with other relevant agencies to ensure Indigenous people have ready access to a variety of relevant information.
- To reassess the design and content of existing consumer protection publications to ensure they meet the needs of Indigenous consumers.
- To expand the network of distribution points for information, particularly in regional Western Australia, and increase the use of the regional telecentre network to ensure information is available to Indigenous Australians.
- To expand its participation in events relevant to Indigenous people.
- To continue to explore ways of using the media to reach Indigenous consumers.
- To expand the range of community meetings held in metropolitan and regional WA targeting four specific groups including Indigenous Australians.
- To promote the use of the Call Centre to Indigenous

people as an easy and convenient way to access information.

Since joining DOCEP in February 2004, the Indigenous Education Officers have met with community people in Albany, Bunbury, Perth, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Carnarvon, Roebourne, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Kununurra to raise awareness of the DOCEP services.

“We have had some excellent feedback so far but there is still much to be done,” Mr Bynder said. “Over the next 12 months we plan to introduce a number of new strategies such as an Indigenous advocate database.

“We also plan to create a series of publications and a website geared towards the Indigenous community using lots of pictures to help illustrate the information. Initially we will be focussing on tenancy, buying cars, credit and debt and intellectual property,” Ms Solonec said.

“We also hope to run workshops and seminars for Indigenous community members as well as providing cultural awareness training for DOCEP staff.”

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Department of Consumer and Employment Protection
Government of Western Australia



Department of Indigenous Affairs
Government of Western Australia



Department of Consumer and Employment Protection: Focus Story

Labour relations

An education campaign to encourage Indigenous people to learn more about their rights and obligations in the workplace is underway by the Labour Relations Division of the Department of Consumer Employment Protection (DOCEP).

The 30-second radio advertisements promoting the department's Wageline's service are being broadcast on commercial radio throughout the State and will be translated into Aboriginal languages throughout the Kimberley.

Wageline is a call centre operated through DOCEP. For the cost of a local call employees and employers can find out about pay and entitlements and legislation dealing with employment matters such as unfair dismissal.

The Wageline service is offered to all West Australians, but Indigenous people are often unaware of their basic rights. The department has developed culturally appropriate strategies to encourage Indigenous people to 'know their rights'.

The radio commercials will complement the community workshops being conducted by the Department's Indigenous education officers Wayne Bynder and Tammy Solonec.

They have been travelling to metropolitan and regional centres to raise awareness of the Wageline program and other DOCEP services that promote fair and flexible employment practices for Indigenous people.

The department is also producing a brochure to promote the basic rights and responsibilities for Indigenous employees including areas that cultural obligations may affect such as funeral and family leave.

The Labour Relations Division has



Wayne Bynder and Tammy Solonec promoting the Wageline service in Geraldton.

commenced research into Indigenous specific types of employment such as Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), Indigenous traineeships, cadetships and apprenticeships.

The study will inform staff on the issues that may arise through these employment initiatives. Officers are also participating in cross-cultural awareness training in time for the campaign.



Public Transport Authority: Overview

New MetroRail project activities

New MetroRail (NMR) is the division of the Public Transport Authority (PTA) responsible for the planning and implementation of the Southern Suburbs Railway project.

This initiative by the State Government will provide a safe, fast, comfortable and convenient electrified passenger rail service from Perth to Mandurah. Services to Mandurah are scheduled for commencement by December 2006.

The PTA recognises as key stakeholders those Indigenous people with associations to the land used for the railway.

In addition to meeting its obligations under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972, NMR has committed to hold quarterly meetings with the relevant Indigenous groups throughout the life of the project. These meetings are designed to keep these groups briefed on the progress of the project, address any concerns that may arise and enable any further opportunities for cooperative initiatives to be realised.

The project's biggest contribution to reconciliation will come through the public art component of the new Esplanade train station that will be built adjacent to William Street on the Perth Foreshore. In recognition of the significance of the area to the Perth Nyoongar community, the public artwork will incorporate Nyoongar cultural themes, which will be developed in consultation with the Nyoongar community.

This location is ideally suited to the promotion of reconciliation through such artwork. The station will be in close proximity to the Swan River providing a link to an area of particular significance, and the Indigenous activities and stories associated with the river.

The artwork will have exposure to a large number and diverse cross section of people. The inner city station

is expected to be heavily patronised and will also attract a large number of overseas visitors due to its proximity to the new Convention Centre.

Indigenous people will be able to contribute ideas through involvement in the selection of an artist to complete the work. A key component of the artists brief will be to include an element of community participation, preferably with the involvement of young Indigenous people.

By visibly promoting such public displays of Indigenous art, the PTA hopes to promote a greater awareness of the Indigenous culture thereby fostering the aims of reconciliation.

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Department of Land Information: Focus Story

Creating employment opportunities

The Department of Land Information (DLI) has sourced an Indigenous trainee from the Australian Medical Association (AMA).

Workforce Services Manager Martine Martin said that Hank Hill, who works in Customer Services, has been a valuable addition to both DLI and the team in which he works.

“Hank picks up new skills and learns different systems really fast,” she said.

“In fact, we have sometimes struggled to provide him with extra work because his is so quick to learn and complete tasks.”

Like other Indigenous trainees before him, Mr Hill has been trained in all facets of office administration. His current role is within the sales and marketing area.

His job entails processing customer requests and assisting surveyors with their land documents, titles and surveys. A large part also involves dealing with DLI’s wide range of customers, and assisting his colleagues as much as possible.



Indigenous trainee Hank Hill on the job.

When successful applicants commence their traineeships, the AMA provides them with an Indigenous mentor and a training consultant, so they are fully guided and supported.

Not only do the traineeships offer young Indigenous people a wonderful opportunity to acquire new and up-to-date skills but they can also benefit employers.

“There are financial incentives for employers in the form of rebates on salary and these can

be quite substantial and exposure to different cultural groups is great for all concerned” Mr Martin said. “The traineeships are a win-win situation for everyone.”

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Department of Education and Training: Overview

Education holds key to reconciliation

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides a holistic approach to reconciliation through its mandate to teaching Aboriginal Studies in all schools. All staff have to undertake cultural awareness training and every school is required to have a plan for Aboriginal education.

Aboriginal studies have been integrated in the teaching curriculum for the first time this year to help promote a greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous people, their histories, cultures and languages.

DET recognise that some teachers posted to regional and remote areas in Western Australia may suffer extreme culture shock. As part of the department's commitment to cross-cultural awareness all staff are expected to undertake the *Our Story* Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training program for the Education sector. Trained staff from District Offices deliver this program.

The Aboriginal Education and Training directorate is focusing on two major areas to address Indigenous disadvantage through retention and participation programs.

The *Attendance Grants Program* provides funding to projects that engage intervention strategies for improving Indigenous student attendance in WA government schools. There have been some important revelations for future funding and project successes thus far have significant implications for best practice.

The *Follow the Dream: A Secondary Aspirations Strategy for Aboriginal Students* is designed to improve the access, participation and retention of Indigenous students in post-compulsory and tertiary education.

Key targets seek a graduation profile of at least 100 Indigenous students per year by 2008 gaining a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) that will allow immediate entry into university. This program is being conducted in 14 schools across Western Australia and will be extended to other locations in the future.

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Office of Multicultural Interests: Overview

Eliminating racism in Western Australia

One of the key objectives of the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) is to work towards the elimination of racism in all its forms.

An Anti-Racism Steering Committee, chaired by the Premier to oversee the formulation of Anti-Racism strategies, drafted the *WA Charter of Multiculturalism*.

The draft Charter affirms the shared rights and responsibilities of all Western Australians, while recognising our differences. It promotes a multicultural or differentiated citizenship that is based on the principles of democratic pluralism, which strive to safeguard and protect the rights of all Western Australians to participate as full and equal members of society.

Importantly, the draft Charter acknowledges Indigenous people as the First Australians and builds on the State Government's approach to Indigenous Western Australians, which was reflected in the signing of the *Statement of Commitment for a New and Just Relationship between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians*.

The Charter and its principles will form the blueprint for the development of an Anti-Racism Strategy for Western Australia.

Not-for-profit Indigenous community groups can also be part of the Online WA Multicultural Communities (OWAMC) Project, an initiative of the Office of Multicultural Interests and the Ethnic Communities Council of WA. The initiative, which is particularly beneficial for community groups in regional and remote areas, provides web sites and a range of communications facilities at minimal cost.

OMI has a Community Grants Program to assist and encourage the involvement of all Western Australians

in projects and events that increase understanding between people of different cultures and promote respect for difference.

OMI organises Harmony Week, which is held in March each year to promote community awareness of WA's rich cultural heritage and enable Western Australians to take a stand against racism and discrimination in all its forms. Harmony Week culminates on the United Nations (UN) Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The UN day is a solemn occasion marking the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre where 69 South Africans were killed by government troops as they took part in a peaceful protest against the apartheid regime's pass laws in 1960.

OMI provides small grants to community groups across the State to hold events during Harmony Week. These include events involving local Indigenous people and groups which aim to showcase and share indigenous artistic, storytelling and corroboree dancing skills with Western Australians from different cultural backgrounds.

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Conservation and Land Management: Overview

Indigenous people help in conservation and land management

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) recognises the unique role and expertise that Indigenous people can have as both traditional owners with a cultural responsibility to care for country and as managers of conservation lands and waters for the State.

'Dan-joo Dabacaan' – meaning 'together, steady, steady' – describes the CALM's approach to ensuring that Indigenous people are strongly represented – and involved – in conservation and land management employment.

To achieve a just and equitable Indigenous employment outcome on conservation lands and waters, CALM has initiated the Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES). This is a multi-faceted employment and training program in conjunction with non-government training providers and land management organisations.

This bold approach has seen CALM embark on a 10-year plan to ensure Indigenous people make up 10 to 15 per cent of its full time workforce.

The MATES program was the overall winner of the Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management for 2003 as well as the Leadership in Equity and Diversity category.

Premier Geoff Gallop said that MATES was a world-class example of true leadership in cultural change.

"MATES is a role model to the rest of the public sector and makes a significant contribution to social, environmental and economic outcomes," he said.

In August 2000, CALM released a draft policy about involving Indigenous people in conservation and land management.

CALM continues to develop an approach to achieve:

- Recognition of the importance of land to Aboriginal cultural heritage and the need to consider matters of cultural importance in relation to land and wildlife management.
- Joint management arrangements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to achieve sustainable conservation outcomes, both on and off CALM managed estate, throughout Western Australia.
- Promotion of economic, social and environmentally sustainable outcomes that achieve improved quality of life for Aboriginal people.

The revised draft is consistent with higher-level government policy. It is written to enable CALM and Indigenous people to proceed to develop meaningful partnerships, within and alongside native title proceedings, to protect biodiversity and cultural values associated with the land.

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