

# ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS IN NSW : JAN-JUN 2016

There have been a **number of initiatives** set up by **local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups** over the **past six months**. Yet, **New South Wales** appears to be **falling behind** its state counterparts in **policy and legislation initiatives** at a time when **incarceration rates are rising**, there are **significant health disparities** between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and a **rising rate of Indigenous suicide**, which is now the **most common cause of death for 15-35 year olds**. This factsheet unpacks developments in New South Wales across key areas of: justice, education, health, reparations, politics, land & housing, gender & children, and art & culture.

## JUSTICE

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up **28% of the prison population** and over **30% of the population in juvenile detention centres** (ABS).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths are **17.5 times more likely to be in juvenile custody** than their non-Indigenous counterparts (AIHW).
- It is estimated that around **one quarter** of those incarcerated with a **mental illness and/or cognitive disability identify as Indigenous** (IAMHDCD).
- Almost **33% of incarcerated females identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**. This has been steadily increasing since 2006 (Women in Prison Factsheet, UNSW and USYD).
- April was the **25th anniversary of the Royal Commission Inquest into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report**. **Few of the recommendations** have been implemented.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services** face an **annual cut of more than \$ 6 million**. In New South Wales alone it is estimated approximately 4,800 Aboriginal men, women and children will miss out on legal assistance this year (ALS NSW/ACT).
- This year marked the **200th anniversary of the Appin Massacre**. Wunga Myamly and other reconciliation groups organised a memorial event attended by the NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Governor of NSW.

## EDUCATION

- The ABS has released the findings of the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014 - 2015**. The data shows there is a **strong upward trend in education achievements** — both in **Year 12 completion rates and non-school qualifications**.
- **University of New South Wales** released a **terminology guide** for university-wide use, which stipulates that educators and resources should say that Australia was **"invaded" rather than "settled"**. This move is a step towards widespread recognition of Australia's colonial past.
- The **Baird government** has **pledged \$10 million** for the establishment of an **Aboriginal Centre for Excellence in Western Sydney** and is currently in their second round of consulting and feedback sessions.
- According to the **Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report 2016**, 27% of Indigenous year 5 students are not meeting the national standards for reading and numeracy, in comparison to 5% of their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- **Stan Grant** has been appointed the **Chair of Indigenous Affairs** at **Charles Sturt University**.
- Over the last 9 months, **Deadly Dreaming**, a cultural program for Indigenous high school students run by The Street University, has brought a renewed sense of pride to Indigenous youth in western Sydney.



Appin Massacre Memorial



Stan Grant  
Source: SMH

## HEALTH

- There is **concern that with the move to consumer-driven care** in the **aged care and disability sectors**, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** will be **disadvantaged** due to the **lack of Indigenous support providers** within the new National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- **Aboriginal health services in Western Sydney are facing serious funding crisis** with the medical service being **forced into liquidation late last year**. Given Western Sydney has one of the highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in the state, it is important these services remain in Aboriginal hands. This now seems unlikely as control has been passed to the local primary health network, WentWest, with the buildings being purchased by Indigenous Business Australia.
- **Life expectancy rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men is estimated to be approximately 9 years less** than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **women** are estimated to live approximately **8 years less** than non-Indigenous women (AHRC).
- The **Central West branch of Lifeline**, in conjunction with an **Aboriginal suicide prevention team in Western New South Wales** is leading a **campaign** to have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific **crisis line** based in Dubbo.
- **Headspace centre has been running a mental health program aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students** called the **Yarn Safe** project. The project aims to empower participants to express their emotions constructively through music.
- The ***Indigenous and tribal peoples' health* (The Lancet-Lowitja Institute Global Collaboration): a population study** has shown that the **vast majority of Indigenous peoples** around the world **live in poverty** and have **poorer health outcomes** than the rest of the population.
- A new **University of Sydney study revealed the scale of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lung cancer disparity**. The study revealed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost **eight times more likely to die from lung cancer** than non-Indigenous Australians living in remote areas.

## REPARATIONS

- On **June 23**, the **New South Wales Legislative Council inquiry into reparations** for the **Stolen Generations** **handed down its final report**. Recommendations include action to provide a voice for survivors; payment of financial reparations; restoration of culture, language and identity; continued efforts to overcome disadvantage; and, to avoid the repetition of past wrongs. Visit our website to read NSWRC's submission, and our summary of the report.

## POLITICS

- Our **former Chair, Linda Burney** left the NSW State Parliament earlier this year and has since been elected to represent the federal seat of Barton. She is the **first Indigenous woman** to be **elected to the House of Representatives**.
- A **64 year-old NSW man has been charged** with using a carriage service to cause offence for **allegedly posting racist and degrading remarks to Nova Peris'** Facebook page. He is currently on bail and has been expelled from the Liberal Party,
- Bundjalung (NSW) man **Warren Mundine has been award the Order of Australia** for his services to Indigenous Australians.



Linda Burney  
Source: The Australian



## LAND & HOUSING

- **Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt rejected** Elders' request for a **stop work order** on the **Sydney Light Rail** project when over **24,000 Aboriginal artefacts** were found on their **Randwick yard site**. This **decision** was **based** on the Minister's **belief** that the **area is not significant under Section 9** of the **Aboriginal Heritage Protection Act 1984**.
- The **NSW Aboriginal Land Council** has been **investigating claims** of **poor workmanship** in the house refurbishments in **Western Sydney housing** areas.
- The **NSW Aboriginal Land Council** estimates that in the past year, the **number of land claims** under the **New South Wales Land Rights Acts** has **exceeded 29,000** and may **take over 90 years to clear**. There has been **no proposed mechanism to deal** with this backlog.
- The **Nambucca Heads Aboriginal Land Council** has spearheaded an **initiative employing local Aboriginal people with disabilities** in an **organic café**, **Traditionally Grounded**, where they are trained in coffee making, food preparation and customer service.
- The **Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy** will be set up on the **Waterloo Towers Green** to **protest** the New South Wales **Government's plan** to turn the **area into a mix of private and social housing**, making it **even more difficult** for **Indigenous peoples to access affordable housing**. The number of Indigenous residents in Redfern has dropped from over 35,000 people to approximately 300 people in less than 45 years due to house prices. (AHRC)



Heritage consultants have estimated there may be around 50,000 artefacts at the site Photo: Tocomwall  
Source: SMH



Traditionally Grounded Cafe Team  
Source: The Nambucca Guardian

## GENDER & CHILDREN

- Indigenous women are **34 times more likely** to be **hospitalised** as a result of domestic violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts. (unreleased Australian Crime Commission Report)
- There is **no data on the suicide rates of Indigenous LGBTIQ people**, but it is **accepted as being higher** than the **average suicide rate** of Indigenous peoples, who are **over three times more likely to commit suicide**. (ATSISPEP)
- Suicide is the **number one cause of death** in **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15-35**. (ATSISPEP)
- The **Women's Reconciliation Network celebrated their 20th anniversary** this year.



Women's Reconciliation Network 20th Anniversary  
Source: WRN

## ARTS & CULTURE

- Walgett's **Dharriwaa Elders Group** and Broken Hill's **West Darling Arts groups** have secured **\$29,000** from the **NSW government's Arts and Cultural Development program** to promote culture in their regions.
- **Bruce Pascoe**, a Bunurong man of the Kulin nation, **won the NSW Premier's Literary Award** for ***Dark Emu***, which brings a new perspective to Indigenous history.
- **Bangarra Dance Theatre** is in **mourning** following the sudden **death** of its acclaimed music director, **David Page**.



## REDFERN STATEMENT

The **Redfern Statement** is a **call by Indigenous Australia** for **better funding, strategies and communication** between Indigenous organisations and the federal government.

Leaders such as **Jackie Huggins, Pat Turner, Antoinette Braybrook** and **Mick Gooda** delivered the address, calling for the **re-establishment** of the **Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**, run by **Indigenous public servants** as well as **separate Indigenous bodies** overseeing **housing, employment and education**.

This address demonstrates the **need for the Australian public** to **reflect upon the current status of Indigenous Affairs**. **Self-determination, empowerment and reconciliation mean nothing without strong political commitment** to meeting the current needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and creating tangible frameworks for a better, more equitable future.

### Led by:

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, First Peoples Disability Network, Natsils - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, NACCHO Aboriginal Health Australia, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, SNAICC - Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association, CATSiNaM International Indigenous Health Workforce Meeting, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, Jaanimili Aboriginal Services & Development Unit - Communities, NSW & ACT, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association, National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists, NGAOARA – Child and Adolescent Wellbeing, The Healing Foundation, Lowitja Institute, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service - AHS.

### Support from:

Close the Gap Steering Committee, Family Matters Campaign, National Health Leadership Forum, The Change the Record Coalition, Amnesty International Australia, ANTaR, Australian College of Midwives, Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association, Australian Medical Association, Australian Physiotherapy Association, Berry Street, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Care, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (VIC), Domestic Violence NSW, Families Australia, Federation of Community Legal Centres (VIC), Human Rights Law Centre, Indigenous Eye Health at University of Melbourne, Law Council of Australia, Menzies School of Health Research, National Association of Community Legal Centres, Oxfam Australia, PeakCare Queensland, Public Health Association of Australia, Queensland Family and Child Commission, Reconciliation Australia, Save the Children, Sisters Inside Inc, The Fred Hollows Foundation, The Heart Foundation, Uniting Communities and UnitingCare NSW ACT.

## WE EXTEND OUR THANKS...

We would like to **extend our support and appreciation to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations** working across political, social and cultural areas, such as the Aboriginal Legal Service, Redfern Community Centre and the Aboriginal Medical Service.

We **recognise the work of corporate leaders and their commitment to reconciliation** through the **creation and implementation of organisation-specific Reconciliation Action Plans**. We extend our thanks to our partners **UGL and Lendlease** for their ongoing support. Over the next year, **we encourage all organisations and businesses to increase commitment** to diversity goals through measures such as implementing Reconciliation Action Plans, fundraising and recognition of important historical days for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.