

AUGUST 2018

# FrontierNews

**Walking on Country:  
A journey of  
reconciliation**



**Frontier  
Services**

Standing with  
people in the bush



# From the Director

## A message from Jannine

### A journey of reconciliation and what that means for us.

Recently, a number of the national office team including myself travelled to the Riverina to participate in Walking on Country, a week-long cultural and spiritual program which aims to foster reconciliation with First Peoples.

We travelled across *Wiradjuri* and *Yorta Yorta* country, welcomed by local elders who shared their stories with us. For me, Walking on Country was about having conversations with and for First Peoples so I could understand how Frontier Services can better serve them.

During this year's National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June), Reconciliation Australia invited all Australians to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, to share that knowledge and help us grow as a nation. They challenged each of us to ask the question, 'What are some of the things I don't know about our shared history?'

Well, Walking on Country certainly hit this message home for me. I thought I already had an understanding about our shared history – but I was wrong.

From our very first day at Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home, we learnt how much Aboriginal families suffered under the government, all under the guise of protecting their children. Uncle Bob and his grandson, Peter shared detailed stories of families being torn apart, as children were forcibly removed and put into missions. They were discouraged from speaking their language or practising their culture in order to learn 'the white ways'.

As confronting as these stories were for many in attendance, they were told matter-of-factly with no anger, bitterness or resentment. Peter explained that all they want from sharing their stories was to create understanding so all Australians could acknowledge the past, and in doing so we could walk alongside each other into the future.

Reflecting on National Reconciliation Week, what disturbed me most was how I'd gotten this far in life and not seen nor heard a big chunk of what is our shared history... and what has actually happened to our Aboriginal people.

I asked myself, "How can we not allow people to have their own culture? How can we keep our language alive if we're not allowed to speak it? How did we allow this to happen to our First Peoples?"

My hopes and prayers are that more of Australia gets to see and hear these stories, so we can all get a little bit of an education and go on a journey which gets us closer to what may be reconciliation between First and Second Peoples.

To this end, we have dedicated this issue of Frontier News to sharing the stories we learned during Walking on Country. In order for us to truly achieve reconciliation we need to know these stories, acknowledge what happened in the past and advocate for First Peoples so their voices can be heard. I hope you will support us on our journey of reconciliation so we can learn, share and grow together.

## Our next Outback Links project

As you read this, we'll be finalising arrangements for our Outback Links group trip to Alice Springs this September, to restore the John Flynn Memorial Church and Adelaide House.

I thank all congregations and individuals who have supported this project with a gift. We estimate the cost of restoring these iconic buildings will be \$80,000 and would appreciate any support you are able to give.

Visit [frontierservices.org/donate](http://frontierservices.org/donate) or call us on 1300 787 247 to donate today. Thank you.

**Jannine Jackson**  
National Director



Auntie Di and Uncle Tim sing together at a Sunday service at Murrumbidgee during Walking on Country

## Let's learn, share and grow

- Share this issue of Frontier News with a relative, friend or neighbour so they too can read these stories
- Visit the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress website to learn more about how you and your congregation can start your journey of reconciliation <https://uaicc.org.au/>



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**About Frontier Services** Frontier Services is a national agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, established to continue the unified work of the Australian Inland Mission, the Methodist Inland Mission, and the inland mission of the Congregational Union, and works with people across 85% of the continent, including Aboriginal communities and isolated properties.

# Generations stolen:

## Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home



Before taking part in Walking on Country, I had already heard of the Stolen Generations; of Aboriginal children being taken away from their families. But I had never personally known anyone for whom this was part of their family history.

I certainly never expected to find myself listening to Peter, a young Wiradjuri man, along with his grandfather, Uncle Bob telling the stories of the girls who once walked the halls of this home. Theirs was a hard story, with ongoing ramifications, but there is no soft way to tell it.

More commonly known as Cootamundra Girls Home, this home was operated by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board from 1911 to 1968. Under the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909, approximately 1,200 Aboriginal girls, under the age of 14, were removed from their families and placed in Cootamundra, between 1912 and 1975.

Girls were taken from the Mission Stations because they were considered too expensive to keep. The supposed aim of government policy was to segregate part-Aboriginal children from their families in order to assimilate them into the mainstream community.

### No contact with their families

The girls were not allowed to maintain any contact with their families. Many would go and sit quietly on the cap of the well, gazing longingly down the driveway, in hope of seeing a visitor who would take them home.


Many would go and sit quietly on the cap of the well... in hope of seeing a visitor who would take them home.

They didn't know why they were there, nor where they were from. This was a legacy from which some would never recover.

The girls faced segregation at school - they could only go to the bathroom or go swimming after the white mainstream kids had been. It was hammered into them to fear Aboriginal men, as relationships or pregnancy were the last things the Welfare Board wanted.

The motto of the home was 'Think white, Act white, Be white.'





**"Girls on the Well 1950s –  
Standing on our wishing well...wishing  
for family to come and take us home"**

## **Disconnected from their culture**

The girls were banned from speaking any language other than English and sharing any knowledge of their culture. We heard that this ban was enforced in the boys' homes as well.

Generations of Wiradjuri people were isolated from their culture through the Welfare Board's actions. Their language would have been lost completely had it not been for passionate linguists who continued to work with elders to document their language.

## **Life after Cootamundra Girls' Home**

The girls were later sent to work as domestic servants in the homes and farms of middle class white people. The irony is not lost that once in domestic service a number of the young girls become pregnant, only to have their children in turn removed and institutionalised.

Some girls from the home, upon reaching the age of 16 and 17, were given a one-way ticket to Sydney Central Train Station, with no physical or monetary resources. There would be no-one to meet them at the other end; no idea of where they were,

where to go, how to live or survive, let alone who to trust or ask for help.

In 2004, some of the girls, now women, joined in a reunion titled 'Journey to Reclaim our Childhood.' Some couldn't bear the pain of returning to Cootamundra and the home. Some had pieced together more of their history. Others bore the obvious scars of ongoing grief and trauma.

While the word was that the youngest girls were 11, it was discovered that there was a nursery - that babies and toddlers had been taken from their parents. I stood in that nursery with a heavy heart, knowing that pity and helplessness were of no use. These stories were confronting, but they need to be told.

## **Bimbadeen College**

Since the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home closed, the 35-acre property has been passed on to the Young Local Aboriginal Land Council. They, in turn, have leased the property, on a long term lease, to the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship as a Christian vocational, cultural and agricultural training centre called Bimbadeen College. It is listed as a Historic Heritage site by the NSW State Government.

*By Clare Brockett*

# A ride for freedom

Inspired by Martin Luther King's campaign against segregation in the United States in the 1960s, a coalition of students from the University of Sydney decided to take action against discrimination towards Aboriginal people. In 1965, they formed the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) and went on a fact-finding trip to country New South Wales to highlight the reality of racism and conditions of life faced by First Peoples. Colin Bradford, one of the participating students, shared his experience with us during Walking on Country. This is his story.

Colin was only 18 years old when he joined SAFA. Charlie Perkins, the first Aboriginal student to graduate from the University of Sydney, was both their inspiration and their leader.

Charlie was the only Aboriginal Colin knew at the time, having grown up in Eastwood which he described as "very mono-culture in the mid-twentieth century".

"Nothing of Aboriginal culture was taught in schools, and I knew nothing of the early conflict between Indigenous people and European settlers," Colin said.

## Poor living conditions

Departing Sydney on Friday, 12 February, the students arrived in Wellington on Saturday, 13 February and witnessed first-hand the poor living conditions of local Aborigines.

They visited an Aboriginal encampment near the council rubbish tip on the outskirts of Wellington. Dwellings were constructed of corrugated iron, with earthen walls and old sacks instead of doors and windows. The image, Colin said, remains burned into his mind and disturbs him still.

## "Bullets did not discriminate"

On 15 February, Colin and the other students arrived in Walgett, where they discovered that Aboriginal returned servicemen were not permitted to join the local RSL, so they held a demonstration on the town's main street.

They stood in front of the RSL in extreme heat, holding signs criticising their discriminatory policy. Some read "Acceptance, Not Segregation", "End Colour Bar", "Walgett

*The site where the original Freedom Ride bus was rammed off the road – between Walgett and Moree.*

© The University of Sydney / Victoria Baldwin



- Australia's Disgrace", "Why Whites Only" and "Bullets did not Discriminate".

Before long, a crowd of townspeople gathered to challenge them. Colin said he felt inadequate trying to counter their arguments, but Charlie spoke well and many people listened. As time went on more Aborigines joined in the discussions, with Charlie encouraging them to stand up for themselves.

At one point, as a few men from the big group of townspeople started to become hostile, one Aboriginal woman stepped out of the crowd followed by a few more. Colin remembered how she called back to the most vocal of the men.

"She said, 'Listen, you whites come down to our camp and chase our young girls around at night! It's no good tellin' me how good you treat us Aborigines. All you do is chase Aboriginal women in the dark.' It was very confronting," Colin recalled. "She told them off in front of everybody, 'Why don't you go back and tell your wives where you've been?' You should've seen how quickly the crowd broke up!"

On leaving Walgett late that night, a ute pulled alongside their bus, bumping into the side, causing it to leave the road, down a steep embankment. Thankfully, their driver managed to control the bus.

They hit the headlines of The Daily Mirror (an afternoon tabloid) in large letters "Attempted Murder", with a photo of their bus.

"She kept yelling, 'Yes, and you! And you! You were there a week ago! You have been going with my sister for two years in the dark! What about tellin' your wife about her? Tell her about the little baby boy you've given her!' The crowd dispersed in minutes as a result of this Aboriginal woman's revelations, and Walgett would never be the same again."

- quoted from Charles Perkins' book, 'A bastard like me'





*Recreating the famous photo of Charles Perkins swimming with Aboriginal children in Moree pool.*

© The University of Sydney / Victoria Baldwin

## Segregated swimming

At the time, Moree Council had regulations prohibiting Aborigines from council premises, including the swimming pool.

On Tuesday, 16 February and with their parents' permission, the students took children from the Aboriginal settlement to the swimming pool, forming a queue with Charlie at the head of the queue. He was denied entry because he was Aboriginal.

Charlie refused to move and so the queue was at a standstill. After some time, the mayor of Moree and the manager of the swimming pool relented and allowed them into the pool.

"They let the kids in for a swim and we went in with them. We had broken the ban! Everybody came in! We saw the kids into the pool first and we had a swim with them. The Aboriginal kids had broken the ban for the first time in the history of Moree."

*quoted from Charles Perkins' book, 'A bastard like me'*

"This was the first time that Aboriginal children were permitted to enter the pool, except as part of a school group," Colin explained. "This was the ridiculous part of the council's regulation, justified on health grounds; the children could swim in the pool with a school group but not other times."

The students left Moree assuming that the Mayor had agreed to rescind the discriminatory regulation, but in Grafton they learned that the colour ban was reimposed, so they changed their itinerary and returned to Moree.

On 20 February, during a very hot Saturday afternoon, the students and some Aboriginal children attempted to purchase

"Then – breakthrough! The mayor came up to us and stated categorically that he would be prepared to sign a motion to rescind the 1955 statute we were protesting against, and would get two other alderman to co-sign it."

*- quoted from Ann Curthoys' diary from the Freedom Ride*





*Back to Moree: Bob Gallagher (left, in blue) with Jim Spielgman (middle) and Colin Bradford (right) in front of the press during the 2015 commemorative revival tour of the Freedom Ride.*

© The University of Sydney / Victoria Baldwin

tickets for entry at the Moree pools. Police were called and Charlie was escorted off the premises.

Being so hot, a crowd quickly gathered and became angry. They yelled abuse and threw eggs, with police trying to calm the situation.

"The police warned us that the violence would get much worse, but we stayed," Colin said. "We insisted on entering the pool with the Aboriginal children."

"Only more recently, during a 2015 re-enactment organised by University of

Sydney, did I realise the impact that our actions had on Indigenous people in the towns where we demonstrated," Colin said. "For some, it was seeing an Aboriginal person as the leader of a group of white people that inspired them to take a lead in the fight for justice."

For more information about the Freedom Ride, please visit <https://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/1965-freedom-ride>.

*Written with additional reporting by Colin Bradford*

# An ancient culture:

## A trip to Lake Mungo



An ancient dry lake, Lake Mungo is the central feature of Mungo National Park, located in south-west New South Wales. We travelled there by bus to learn about ancient Aboriginal culture and walk in the footsteps of their ancestors.

En route, the ancient lake's shoreline was visible along the horizon, demonstrating just how vast Lake Mungo once was. Had it still been full, the road we were travelling on would be completely submerged in water.

After a quick stopover at the visitor centre, once the site of the historic Mungo Woolshed, we headed straight for the Walls of China to start the tour. The Walls were so named, according to our guide, after the old farmhands who worked on the station and took their breaks by the crescent-shaped lunettes along Lake Mungo's shoreline.

The layers of sediment forming these very lunettes held onto a well-kept secret until 1969, when geologist Jim Bowler discovered the cremated remains of human bones<sup>1</sup>. This discovery shook the scientific world and placed Mungo as one of the oldest places outside of Africa to have been occupied by modern humans.

In 1969, the discovery of cremated human bones, now known as Mungo Lady, the earliest example of cremation burial anywhere in the world, changed the way we thought of ancient occupation. In 1974, a complex burial emerged nearby, containing Mungo Man. Its special nature indicated that he was an important community leader.

*- Extract from Jim Bowler's 'Mungo Man returns home', 2017*

Our guide, a *Mutthi Mutthi* man, took us on a tour through the lunettes, which are under constant erosion by wind and water. This regularly reveals hidden archaeological gems such as stone tools, campsites, middens (a refuse heap of bones, shells etc.) and ground ovens.



*LEFT PAGE: Frontier Services Board Member, Aunty Di Torrens (left) and Michelle McLeod, National Volunteer Program Coordinator with Lake Mungo's shoreline on the horizon.*

*Walking in their footsteps: Climbing one of the large sand dunes to take in a fuller view of the dry lake.*



These remnants are scientific evidence that Aboriginal people have lived at Mungo for at least 45,000 years<sup>2</sup> and makes it one of the oldest places outside of Africa to have been occupied by modern humans since ancient times.

We learned that Mungo is a meeting place, where three territories come together. The Mutthi Mutthi people share the traditional country with two other tribes – the *Paakantji* and *Ngylampaa*. We learnt that even though Aboriginal people have not been able to live permanently around the Willandra Lakes since they dried up, there is evidence that people maintained a seasonal presence, most likely when water was available<sup>2</sup>.

*Walls of China: Carved by wind and rain over thousands of years, this unique feature runs along the south-eastern edge of the Lake Mungo lunette.*



## **A spiritual connection with the land**

Our guide taught us how important Aboriginal people's connection to the land is. He emphasised the need to respect the sacred land of his ancestors and highlighted the importance of not removing items of significance, such as the stone tools, bones and other artefacts from where they are found.

He explained that his people believe the 'spirit' of the object, which belongs in that country, will disturb or conflict with spirits in whatever country that object is brought to. He said Aboriginal people believe they need to bring their ancestors home and that they should be the custodians.

This was why the removal of Mungo Lady and Mungo Man from their burial sites caused great pain to the local Aborigines, and why their return was so significant.

We learned that everything about the land was sacred to First Peoples. It was a very beautiful kind of spirituality.

**Have you been on an Aboriginal cultural experience? We'd love to share in your story. Post a photo of your experience on Facebook or Instagram and tag us. Let us know what it meant to you or what you learnt.**

<sup>1</sup> National Museum Australia, 'Mungo Lady' [Accessed online]  
[http://www.nma.gov.au/online\\_features/defining\\_moments/featured/mungo-lady](http://www.nma.gov.au/online_features/defining_moments/featured/mungo-lady)

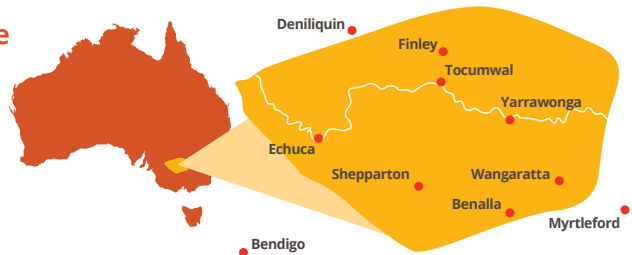
<sup>2</sup> Office of Environment & Heritage, 'A Mungo timeline' [Accessed online]  
<http://www.visitmungo.com.au>

# Mooroopna Aboriginal Cultural Walk

**In 1939, the Cummeragunja Walk Off became the first ever mass protest of Aboriginal people in Australia. It is remembered by many as a watershed moment in Australian history, igniting an Indigenous movement which has since fought for the basic rights of First Peoples, including citizenship, the right to land and to retain their own unique cultural identity.**

During a visit to Shepparton, we went on a cultural walking tour of The Flats, which became home to many Yorta Yorta people following the 1939 Walk Off. We learned about their strength and determination to raise the consciousness of the wider community about the plight of Aboriginal people.

## An historical snapshot: The Yorta Yorta



The arrival of Europeans dispossessed the Yorta Yorta, whose traditional lands were the area surrounding the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in north-eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales. This devastated their population, reducing it by 85 percent by the next generation, and forced the Yorta Yorta to live on the edges of European settlements as remnant tribal groups.

## Rebuilding at Cummeragunja

In 1874, the remaining Yorta Yorta and other tribal groups from neighbouring areas were relocated to Malaga Mission on the New South Wales side of the Murray River. When the Mission closed in the late 1880s, the residents were relocated approximately 5km away to Cummeragunja, an Aboriginal reserve established after the Yorta Yorta successfully petitioned the British Crown for their own land<sup>1</sup>.

Far right:

Recognising Indigenous Leaders: Margaret Tucker MBE (left) and Nora "Nanny" Charles honoured as part of Shepparton's Aboriginal Street Art Project. Visit <http://greater-shepparton.com.au/council/major-projects/aboriginal-street-art-project> for more info.



With the aim of becoming a self-sufficient community, the Yorta Yorta shaped most of the reserve into a productive, communal farming operation with wheat, wool and dairy. By 1908, Cummeragunja was a village with 300 residents and supported by a management committee made up of prominent local farmers who advocated for the Aborigines Protection Board to commit funds to expanding farm production on the settlement.

Unfortunately, the committee was disbanded in 1915 and with the amendment of the Aborigines Protection Act that same year, the Board was given the right to assume full control and custody of any Aboriginal child. What little freedoms remained on the reserve were obliterated as many of the children were removed from their families and placed into training institutions.

## The Walk Off

Living conditions on Cummeragunja deteriorated as profits from the station

were circumvented by the Board. Lack of investment in sanitation, quality housing and clean water resulted in major health issues for the community.

This combined with poor rations, cruel treatment and increasingly restrictive controls placed on the movement and activities of the Yorta Yorta, lead to the majority of residents packing up and staging the Walk Off in protest. They settled on the river flats of the Goulburn River, on the outskirts of Mooroopna.

A 1946 police report listed 130 people aged from newborn babies to 80 years old living on The Flats, with a third of them less than 15 years of age<sup>2</sup>.

During the Queen's visit in 1954, the local government installed large hessian curtains along the causeway in an attempt to block the community from the royals' view. We learned during the tour that the people were hopeful Her Majesty would see the huts and tents, and that they might get some help out of it but sadly this wasn't the case.







Recognising Indigenous Leaders: Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls KCVO OBE MBE (left) and William Cooper honoured as part of Shepparton's Aboriginal Street Art Project. Visit <http://greater-shepparton.com.au/council/major-projects/aboriginal-street-art-project> for more info.

## Closing a childhood loop

Ivan Roberts is a resource worker with the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) NSW/ACT. He recalls a moment in his childhood related to The Flats, which remained unresolved until this cultural walk:

*It was Easter Tuesday and I was five or six years old. Shepparton is a major town in the region I grew up in as a child and it was where we went to buy clothes and so forth. As we drove in our Holden sedan, the car filled with excitement to be going to this big shopping town, but the conversation*

*died down as we drove on the causeway between Maroopna and Shepparton...*

*We looked out and down onto The Flats where the Aboriginal community had established itself. I looked up at my parents and saw a look on their faces that said 'Don't ask the question.'*

*I always wondered why it was that some people were down there on The Flats, which frequently floods, while we were up here in our middle-class car. Why were there two communities that occupied the same space but never connected? It was an unresolved thing.*



## Why these stories need to be told

The Walk Off holds a significant place in the Yorta Yorta people's history. During a recent visit to The Flats with a group of residents, Yorta Yorta elder Uncle Ruben told ABC News they don't want the struggles of their ancestors to be forgotten.

"Our elders, what they did, what they put up with, it was a pretty hard life," Uncle Ruben said. "It's important to let the wider community know about the way Aboriginal people were treated<sup>3</sup>."

A group of educators in regional Victoria have also launched a program that covers the local history and culture of Aboriginal people, including The Flats<sup>4</sup>. Developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal community, the Kaiela-Dhungala First People's Curriculum is an interactive program for students in Prep to Year 10. Almost half the schools in the region have rolled out the content.

We hope and pray for more initiatives like this, so many more stories can be told.



<sup>1</sup>Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation 1900, "Maloga Mission: resistance continues", [Shepparton, Vic.] Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, J. 2013 "Pioneers' story told", Shepparton News [Accessed online - 13 June 2018] <https://www.pressreader.com/australia/shepparton-news/20130503/281560878296757>

<sup>3</sup>Dobson, M. 2018 "Cummeragunja walk-off relived as residents unite to share history", ABC News [Accessed online - 13 June 2018] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-05/cummeragunja-walk-of-shepparton-mooroopna-flats-walk/9820834>

<sup>4</sup>Tuffield, R. 2018 "Local stories and people put school students in touch with Indigenous history in new curriculum", ABC News [Accessed online - 07 July 2018] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-03/curriculum-brings-indigenous-history-to-life-shepparton/9931926>



# Sharing in Wiradjuri culture

On the second last afternoon of Walking on Country, we attended a cultural walking tour led by Mark Saddler, a Wiradjuri man. By sharing stories, he taught us about his culture and the challenges Aboriginal people face today. We also gained insight into how First and Second People can work together to jointly walk the path of reconciliation.

## An ancient door knock

A Welcome to Country is an ancient custom practised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years.

It is usually conducted by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission by Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country<sup>1</sup>.

After our welcome, Mark (pictured inset) gave further insight into their significance. He explained that special 'ring trees' acted like fences, marking boundaries between tribal lands. We also learned that fire and smoke play a special role in the ceremony.



"When you see a ring tree, it means you're approaching another nation," he said. "You would start a fire then wait for the other mob to arrive to welcome you to their country."

"The smoke from the fire isn't just to signal you're arrival," Mark explained. "It also has a spiritual meaning, as you let it wash over you to clear the 'bad spirits' before you enter new country."

"A Welcome to Country is like knocking on someone's door and these ring trees tell us where to stop and 'knock'."

Non-Indigenous people can show respect to Traditional Owners by offering an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of a meeting, speech or a formal occasion.

## Wiradjuri totems

We learnt about totems and their significance to Wiradjuri people. Mark explained that each person is responsible for the stewardship of their totem.

For example, if a person's totem was the emu – or *dinnawan* in Wiradjuri – they cannot consume any emu meat nor harm emus and their nests. This would help ensure there are enough emus for other people. It gave our group food for thought regarding conservation of resources.

## Sharing culture to bring people together

Part of the reason why Mark hosts cultural talks and tours is to foster reconciliation. He believes education in Aboriginal culture is key to bringing people together.

He recalled the time when he first started giving cultural talks in local schools. Mark noticed Aboriginal students were very shy and reluctant to engage. He described it as if they were ashamed to identify with their heritage.

"I would go to schools to talk to the little fellas, and ask them to 'Put your hands up if you're koori,'" he said, gesturing with one hand up in the air. "A few years ago, none would put their hands up."

Over time, Mark has seen a positive change in confidence among Aboriginal students as more of their fellow classmates began to appreciate and show interest in Wiradjuri culture. Today, more of them proudly raise their hands when he asks the question.



Looking back on our first day, it was heartening to learn a culture that was once on the brink of extinction be embraced by the next generation, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

## Taking the next step

Something Mark said at the start of his talk struck a chord with our group, "What happened in the past I can't change, but what happens tomorrow – I can definitely make a difference."

During our walking tour he also shared stories that raised a number of issues facing Aboriginal people that made us think. *Should we be looking at an alternative date for Australia Day – one that unifies us all? How can we work with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to address the high proportion of Indigenous people in custody?*

We might not have all the answers yet, but we are taking the first step by sharing our learnings and starting the conversation.

## Join the conversation

You can join the conversation by finding out more about the history of First Peoples in your area and sharing what you learn with people you know.

A good place to start would be to visit Reconciliation Australia's website for information about how to get involved:  
[www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

<sup>1</sup> Reconciliation Australia, (2017) 'Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country' [Accessed online – June 2018]  
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Welcome-to-and-Acknowledgement-of-Country.pdf>



## REFLECTION:

# How Walking on Country affected us

**One of the most important lessons we learnt during Walking on Country was on the very first day: In order to truly achieve Reconciliation, we needed to acknowledge the past.**

Peter, our speaker at Cootamundra, helped many of us to understand how forcibly separating children from their families affected subsequent generations of First Peoples. Disconnected from their family, these girls would never learn how to raise their own children in later life if they, in turn, were not taken away. Disconnected from culture and country, they would struggle to nourish their soul or find a greater meaning in life.

This trauma of being separated from family, culture and country impacted First Peoples from across Australia and created a void in their hearts which would affect

many generations to come. Much healing still needs to be done.

As confronting as some of these stories were, Peter and Uncle Bob hoped to create understanding by retelling them. By acknowledging the past, we as First and Second Peoples can walk alongside each other into the future.

If the stories you read here inspire you to act in support of Reconciliation, please share this copy of Frontier News with friends, family or colleagues. Thank you.

*"Visiting Condobolin and Murrin Bridge Churches, along with Robinvale Church, I was struck by how much our visit was not only of benefit to us, but deeply significant in terms of ongoing relationships to the people and communities of those churches. As much as we need to learn, they need us to be interested in them, their struggles, their passions, and to tell their stories." - Clare Brockett*

*"I feel a renewed sense of commitment to walking with Indigenous people, towards justice. The day (at Lake Mungo) gave me an even greater understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of Indigenous culture."  
- Gillian Hunt*

*"My experience with Walking on Country has empowered me to share with my colleagues what I think we can do to understand Australia's First Peoples and better serve them. By going down the path of understanding their history we can learn to serve in the right way."  
- Michelle McLeod*



# OUR BUSH CHAPLAINS: Working with First Peoples across Australia

Our Bush Chaplains deliver practical, pastoral and spiritual care to those living in remote Australia. They work with First Peoples in very different ways, but community capacity building is universal in their efforts. The following highlights some of their work over the past 12 months.

## West Arnhem Remote Area – Rev Lindsay Parkhill

Lindsay's ministry lies in the heart of Kakadu National Park and his work is almost wholly with the First Peoples of Arnhem Land. Based in Jabiru, he supports 17 pastors in an area from the Blythe River in the east to the Coburg Peninsula in the west, and works with the Northern Regional Council of the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) to develop local church leadership.

A Bush Chaplain of over 10 years, Lindsay has a passion for the languages of the land. He works closely with his wife Louise, who provides support to Coordinate, the Northern



Synod's scripture translation initiative, to oversee the translation of the Bible in 12 languages.

In one of our last conversations, Lindsay talked about the Gospel of Mark translated in *Maung*, one of the languages spoken on Waruwi Goulburn Island. Work continues in translating Mark's Gospel into *Kunwinjku*.

## Murchison Remote Area – Rev Mitch Fialkowski

In the last issue of Frontier News, we spoke about Mitch's work in fostering collaboration between local Aboriginal clans via the Meekatharra Aboriginal Reference Group (MARG). The ultimate aim is to help them find common ground so together they can address issues their community face, such as drugs, alcohol, domestic violence and unemployment.



## Centralian Remote Area – Benjamin Quilliam

Benjamin's work with First Peoples has focused around chaplaincy and advocacy.

Providing chaplaincy at Yirara College, a boarding school for Indigenous students aged 12 years and older, Benjamin helps keep students in touch with home during their boarding experience. These students come from remote communities in the Northern Territory and across the shared Territory border from South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, so Ben's support gives them another familiar face in town.

Over the past year, Benjamin has provided advocacy for Western Desert Dialysis, which offers dialysis in nine remote communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, as well as a mobile dialysis treatment centre, known as the Purple Truck, to those who need it in other remote communities. This advocacy work included promoting the Medicare Review Survey in 2017 to gain support for funding dialysis under nurse supervision in very remote areas.

"Lack of access to dialysis on or near remote Indigenous communities is a big area of concern, not only in Central Australia but also in the

Top End'," Ben said. "Many Indigenous people develop renal failure as they get older. When there is no dialysis available close by, people are forced to move to larger centres like Alice Springs, Darwin and Adelaide."

"This leaves a vacuum of elders on country which can significantly impact on the community."

In the 2018 Federal Budget, Medicare funding was extended for dialysis services in rural and remote regions including \$23 million over the next few years for Purple House - Western Desert Dialysis<sup>2</sup>.



## Tennant Barkly Remote Area – Rev Peter Wait

Covering 600,000km<sup>2</sup> of the Northern Territory, Peter's remote area extends 200km south of Tennant Creek and north to Daly Waters. The region is known for its large cattle stations and rich connection to local Aboriginal culture. Peter works with First Peoples through chaplaincy services to correctional and aged care facilities. The pastoral care he provides is to highly culturally diverse members of the community, and touches on aspects of cross-cultural communication issues.



## Kennedy Remote Area – Rev Karama Ioapo

We first introduced you to Karama in the November 2017 issue of Frontier News. Since starting his ministry in Kennedy, Karama has travelled up and down the Cape to connect with local churches and farmers, as well as Aboriginal communities in Laura, Coen, Lockhart River and Normanton.

While in Laura, Karama met the general manager of the Ang-Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation who welcomed his offer of pastoral care as there had been a number of issues in the community regarding deaths and suicides. Karama stayed in Laura for a number of days to meet the wider community over a barbecue at the Ang-Gnarra annual meeting.

Police at the Coen station presented a young man who had been stranded in the Cape for four months. After some pastoral care, Karama was able to find his parents in Townsville who had assumed the worst had happened. They were reunited after Karama arranged to drive their son to Cairns.

Karama is also fostering inter-faith relationships with Aboriginal and Islander Christian communities at Lockhart River and Normanton. He met with Father Brian from the Lockhart River Anglican Church and Pastor Cedric from the Normanton Christian Centre, bringing bibles for the congregation and clothing for the local Aboriginal and Islander community, respectively.



### Help our Bush Chaplains reach more remote communities

All of our Bush Chaplains are working in diverse areas of Australia supporting our Aboriginal communities and they need your help to continue their incredible work. Please call us on **1300 787 247**, complete the centre envelope of this magazine or visit our website to make a donation.

<sup>1</sup>Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, (2017) *'Life-giving care on country'* [Accessed online July 2018] <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/2663-life-giving-care-on-country>

<sup>2</sup>Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, (2018) *'Budget 2018: Important initiatives but short on heart'* [Accessed online May 2018]

# Reconciliation: Don't keep history a mystery

The Presidents of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) and the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) are urging congregations to find out more about the history of Indigenous people in their area<sup>1</sup>.

"Reaching out to local First Peoples and listening to their stories is the first step towards reconciliation," said UCA President Stuart McMillan.

"Acknowledgement of Country is a widely accepted practice in Australian public life, so I'm shocked at the number of people who are unaware or sometimes even deny basic facts about First Peoples."

Research by Reconciliation Australia suggests that almost one in three Australians refuse to accept historical truths about the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the fact that they were subject to mass killings, incarceration, forced removal from land, restricted movement and prevented from practising their languages and culture.

The theme for this year's National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June 2018) was **Don't keep history a mystery. Learn. Share. Grow.**

UAICC President Rev Garry Dronfield said Second Peoples had a crucial part to play in the healing process for First Peoples.

"The reconciliation that God expects of us all can only be possible when we confess our sins and commit to loving one another in word and deed," said Rev. Dronfield.

"In 1994, the Uniting Church committed to walking together with First Peoples in a covenanting relationship. Yet many congregations aren't actively engaged in Covenanting."

"The invitation of Pastor Bill Hollingsworth from the Covenant Agreement in 1994 still stands today - because it is pleasing to God to love one another, and it is our commitment to do so, we invite you on behalf of Congress members to develop a new relationship."

Editors Note: At the time of publishing this edition of Frontier News, the 15th Triennial Assembly was taking place in Melbourne. There, the Standing Committee raised Proposal 29 – Recognition of Sovereignty – that the Assembly resolve to *affirm that the First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Islander Peoples, are sovereign peoples in this land*. We pray for the affirmative outcome.

## What you can do today

You can find out about local activities and information by visiting **reconciliation.org.au/get-involved** for links to your state or territory Reconciliation body. You can also practise Acknowledgements of Country – research the land you are meeting on and the people, so you can acknowledge them accordingly.

Congregations which provide the name of their local Indigenous people can order a Covenanting pull-up banner from the Assembly office. Covenanting posters are also available on request free of charge. Please email **comms@nat.uca.org.au** for more details.

<sup>1</sup>UCA & UAICC, (2018) 'National Reconciliation Week 2018' [Accessed online] <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/2839-reconciliation-week-2018>

# Great Outback Barbeque

## Make a big difference with a simple small action

Every September, people from all over Australia gather 'round the grill and host a Great Outback BBQ to support Aussie Farmers doing it tough.

It's about mateship, which is what Aussies do best. By hosting a Great Outback BBQ in September, you can help fund critical services to those in the bush.

Did you know that people living in remote Australia are **10 times more likely to commit suicide?** Aussie Farmers - *the very people who provide food for our tables* - often live and work in isolation.

Our Bush Chaplains visit thousands of farmers every year to provide practical, pastoral and spiritual care. As more and more services withdraw from remote Australia, the need for Bush Chaplains and their care continues to grow.

This year, our goal is to **raise \$75,000** so we can send more **Bush Chaplains** to people living in remote areas, including our Aussie Farmers.

You can make a real difference by hosting your own Great Outback BBQ this September. It's easy!

Register online and you'll receive a Frontier Services Welcome Kit to help make your BBQ a success. Then, invite your mates, throw some snags on the barbie, and ask your friends to donate towards your BBQ.

Bank your funds by 31 October, and you could win some incredible prizes!

### Make it your own

Can't host a Great Outback BBQ but still want to help? Why not make it your own by hosting a morning/afternoon tea or lunch and asking your mates to make a donation to participate? Whatever you decide, be sure to share it with us so you can still be in the running for some amazing prizes!

Join in on the fun and fundraise this September by hosting a Great Outback BBQ as we continue **#StandingWithAus!**

## Register Today

Visit  
[greatoutbackbbq.com](http://greatoutbackbbq.com)  
or call us  
on **1300 787 247**  
for more information.





# the gift of hope

this Christmas

**The gift that gives twice!**

**Give the gift of hope this Christmas and help make someone's life a little easier:**

We live in a society where people are more isolated, and there's less contact, especially for people who live out bush. We dream of an Australia where everyone living in our regional and remote areas are cared for, supported and have a mantle of safety and well-being. We believe that regardless of where you live, you should have access to the basic services that others take for granted. We're the companion who turns up out of the blue to lend an ear, give a helping hand and be of service. It's called Mateship, the Australian way of giving everyone a fair go, helping other folk and together, we've been doing it for more than 106 years.

With your help, our Bush Chaplains and skilled Outback Links Volunteers provide practical, pastoral and spiritual care to individuals, families and communities in the bush.

You too can stand with people in the Bush this Christmas! Simply choose the way you would like to help, purchase a Frontier Services Gift of Hope tax deductible gift card, give it to your loved ones and know that you are making a real difference to the lives of people living in Outback Australia.

**\$25**



A cuppa and a chat



**\$50**



Mend a fence



**\$100**



Fill a tank



**\$ amount of your choice**



The gift of mateship



# YES, I/we would like to purchase Gift Cards and/or make a donation to Frontier Services

YOUR GIFT	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
<b>A cuppa and a chat (\$25):</b> Isolation is one of the hardest things. Your gift means our Bush Chaplains can lend a listening ear when needed.		\$25	\$
<b>Mend a fence (\$50):</b> Practical support is often what's needed most and your gift enables our skilled volunteers to be available at a time of crisis.		\$50	\$
<b>Fill a tank (\$100):</b> Our Bush Chaplains travel great distances to visit people in isolation. Your gift keeps them on the road.		\$100	\$
<b>The gift of mateship (Gift of your choosing):</b> Show people doing it tough in the bush this Christmas that they're not alone by giving the gift of mateship. Every amount helps.		\$ Minimum \$10	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to include a donation to help the people of remote Australia. (Note: donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.)			\$
TOTAL \$			\$

**NOTE:** All orders must be placed by Friday, 7 December 2018.  
Cards are blank on the inside so you can personalise them before gifting to family and friends.

**Please complete this order form and send via:**

Post

**Frontier Services  
GPO Box 2527,  
Sydney, NSW 2001**

Email

**fsfundraising@frontierservices.org**

Alternatively, please call us on  
1300 787 247 to place an order  
over the phone.



**Frontier  
Services**  
Standing with  
people in the bush

## PLEASE ENSURE YOU COMPLETE YOUR ADDRESS DETAILS

Supporter Number (if known)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/  
Dr/Rev PLEASE PRINT

Address

Postcode

Daytime Telephone

Date    |   |

## I/WE WISH TO PAY BY

☐ Cheque/Money Order (payable to Frontier Services)

☐ Credit card – please fill in details below

Credit card – please debit ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex

Name on Card

Signature

Card number

Expiry Date   |

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## YES, I/we would like to purchase 2018 Christmas Cards\* and/or make a donation to Frontier Services

Mixed pack of 10 Christmas cards (2 of each design)  
= \$12 including postage & handling

	NUMBER OF PACKS	PRICE PER PACK	TOTAL
MY ORDER (1-9 PACKS)		<b>\$12</b> (including P&H)	\$
BULK ORDER (10+ PACKS)	Contact us for bulk orders E fsfundraising@frontierservices.org OR T 1300 787 247		
I would like to include a donation to help the people of remote Australia. (Note: donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.)			\$
TOTAL			\$

### PLEASE ENSURE YOU COMPLETE YOUR ADDRESS DETAILS

Supporter Number (if known)

☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Dr ☐ Rev PLEASE TICK

Name

Address (please print)

State

Postcode

Telephone / Mobile No.:

Date   /   /

#### I/WE WISH TO PAY BY

- ☐ Cheque / Money Order (payable to **Frontier Services**)  
☐ Credit Card: Please debit my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex

Name on Card

Signature

Card number

Expiry Date   /

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Please complete this order form and send via:

Post Frontier Services, GPO Box 2527, Sydney, NSW 2001

Email fsfundraising@frontierservices.org

Alternatively, please call us on 1300 787 247 to place an order over the phone.



# Get in early to avoid disappointment

**Christmas Cards for 2018 are now on sale!** Last year we sold out, so we encourage you to order early. This is a strictly limited print run.

We hope you will love this year's cards as much as we do. Each pack contains 10 cards, two of each design.

Each design represents a facet of Outback life, that our Bush Chaplains and the communities they support face every day. Each card has a message on the reverse from one of our Bush Chaplains.

**\*NOTE: All orders must be placed by Friday, 7 December 2018. Order your cards today and they will be sent to you in early October, just in time for posting. Don't miss out!**





**Host a Great Outback BBQ  
this September in support of  
Aussie Farmers doing it tough**



\*Visit our website for T&Cs

**To register online, simply visit  
[greatoutbackbbq.com.au](http://greatoutbackbbq.com.au) or call us on 1300 787 247**