



BURBANGANA

Take hold of my hand and help me up



BURBANGANA

Acknowledgement of Country

Sydney Region acknowledges the continual custodianship of the land and waterways by our Elders and Aboriginal communities.

We thank and pay respect to Elders and community members who are the keepers of our traditions, cultures and Lore.

We also acknowledge all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who will read this book.

E ditors' note

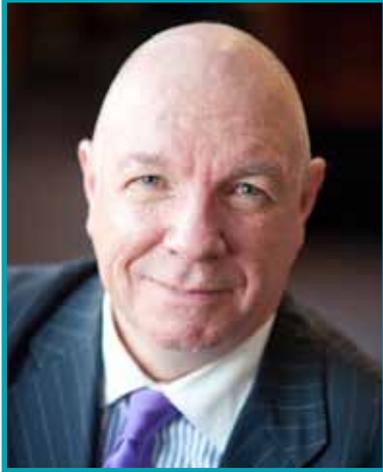
The Aboriginal students, staff, community members and partner organisations featured in this book have provided honesty, inspiration and generosity in allowing their stories to be told. Their participation has enabled a genuine and authentic representation of some of the many valuable and engaging programs initiated by Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education and Communities to enhance the learning experiences of Aboriginal students.

In allowing the students, staff, community members and partner organisations to share with us their stories and insights, every effort has been made to maintain their individual voices. As such, each piece may not conform to strict Department style conventions. Due to space restrictions, some of the stories have also been edited from their original length. The editors take all responsibility for any errors or omissions.

The programs and stories in this book highlight the importance and value Aboriginal Education has in the Sydney Region.

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This fabulous publication documents the impressive and extensive achievements of Aboriginal students and staff in Sydney Region. It also acknowledges the work taking place in our public schools as well as the valuable contribution from our partner organisations to improve the learning outcomes of our Aboriginal students and strengthen understandings about Aboriginal cultures.

We have taken a strategic bifocal approach to Aboriginal Education – putting in place specific programs to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students while also acting to strengthen and increase the number of Aboriginal students achieving at the highest levels in schooling.

This publication is a celebration of what has been achieved to date. Our data illustrate that we are heading in the right direction. However, we also recognise that there is still a great deal to achieve and we must continue to improve our results. I expect that you will be as impressed as I am by the stories, insight, comments and artworks featured throughout the publication.

Our schools and the lives of our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are enriched by the Aboriginal Elders who provide us with such wisdom and knowledge. We are also enriched by the alumni of former Aboriginal students who are role models for our current students and who continue to contribute to our programs and initiatives.

I congratulate the large number of external organisations to our Department that are featured in this publication. It is through their generous and genuine support that we have been able to provide new and engaging experiences and opportunities for our students. What is also of great benefit from these partnerships is the opportunity those from outside our public education system have to meet first-hand the bright and engaging young people we have in our schools.

Congratulations to all the schools involved in the development of this publication. A special thank you to the wonderful staff and management of Teachers Mutual Bank for making this publication possible. I also acknowledge and thank our Aboriginal Education team members for their tireless efforts to support our schools, students and local Aboriginal communities.

We can be very proud of what our students and our schools are achieving – they inspire us to maintain our efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Phil Lambert', written in a cursive style.

Dr Phil Lambert PSM
Regional Director, Sydney



Aboriginal culture is vibrant, relevant and flourishing in Sydney Region schools, as evidenced by this wonderful book. Celebrating the work and achievements of the Region's Aboriginal students and teachers, it is both inspiring to read and beautiful to look at.

These students' stories and accomplishments prove that there is so much to be proud of in urban Aboriginal communities. Behind every child are their families, their Elders, and their people, as well as the resources of Sydney Region's public schools. All of those have contributed to the excellence we see in this book.

Teachers Mutual Bank is proud and delighted to support this publication. As one of the largest mutual banks in Australia, we believe we have a responsibility to support the communities in which we conduct our business. We are passionate about education, so we invest in a diverse range of activities for teachers and their communities, to help them flourish. By giving back to the education community, we are also supporting our existing and future members and their families. This is good for the community and good for business.

Teachers Mutual Bank is also committed to building our support for Aboriginal Education initiatives and collaborating with our partners to source and identify suitable projects.

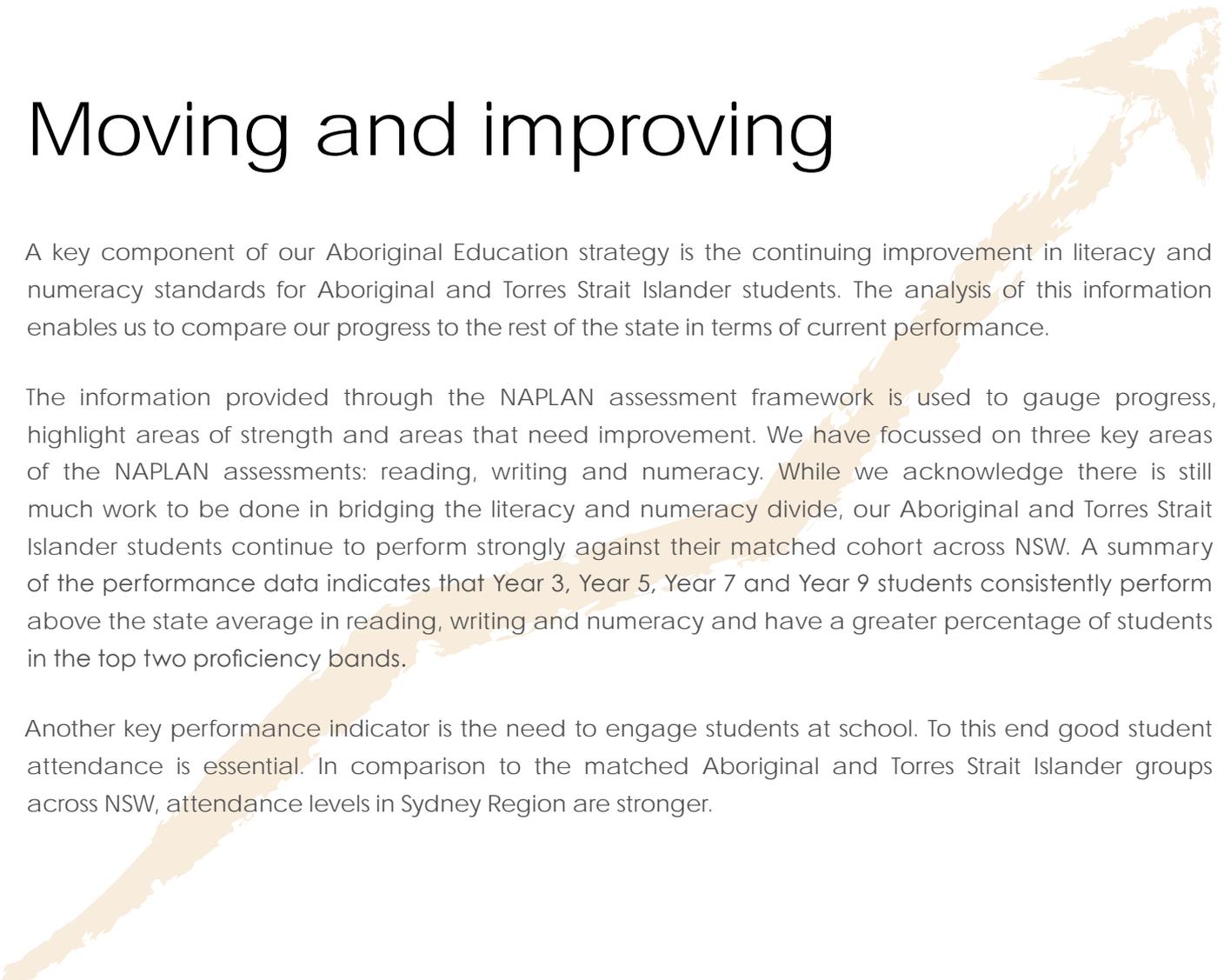
I would like to acknowledge the work of Teachers Mutual Bank's in-house design and communications team who helped to create and produce this book.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Sydney Region for its drive, commitment and dedication to Aboriginal Education, and for bringing the positive side of Aboriginal Education experience to the fore.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve James
Chief Executive

Moving and improving



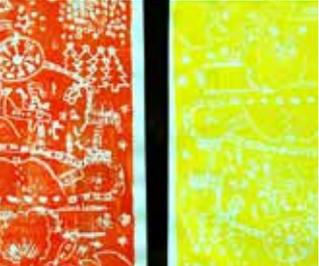
A key component of our Aboriginal Education strategy is the continuing improvement in literacy and numeracy standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The analysis of this information enables us to compare our progress to the rest of the state in terms of current performance.

The information provided through the NAPLAN assessment framework is used to gauge progress, highlight areas of strength and areas that need improvement. We have focussed on three key areas of the NAPLAN assessments: reading, writing and numeracy. While we acknowledge there is still much work to be done in bridging the literacy and numeracy divide, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to perform strongly against their matched cohort across NSW. A summary of the performance data indicates that Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9 students consistently perform above the state average in reading, writing and numeracy and have a greater percentage of students in the top two proficiency bands.

Another key performance indicator is the need to engage students at school. To this end good student attendance is essential. In comparison to the matched Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups across NSW, attendance levels in Sydney Region are stronger.

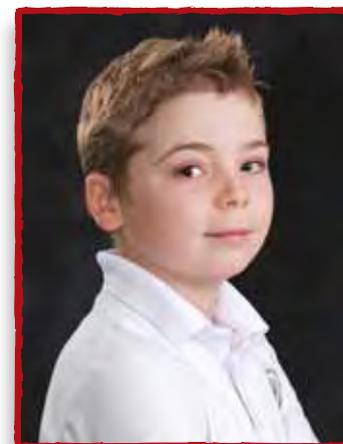


Students' stories



Corey Blyth

GyMEA Bay Public School



At the age of five, I, Corey Blyth, future spelling champion and tennis star started at GyMEA Bay Public School.

Now that I'm in Year 5, I really enjoy art but am not so keen on maths.

My Aboriginal heritage comes through my Dad who is a member of the Wiradjuri people from the Narromine area. At GyMEA Bay Public School I'm one of a small group of Aboriginal students.

In Years 3 and 4 I was nominated to take part in the Regional Spelling Bee. In Year 4 I won and proceeded to the State Spelling Bee where I came second. I got out on the word "assessor" due to missing out one "s". But as you see, I can certainly spell it now!

In Year 4 I also received a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award which I got to show to the rest of the school.

Last year I spent a wonderful two weeks in an exciting hotel in Hawaii with my parents and my sister. We went swimming and also walked up Diamond Head crater, an extinct volcano, where we could see the whole island. In the future I want to be a pilot so I can visit different places around the world.

Kirralee Smith

Loftus Public School



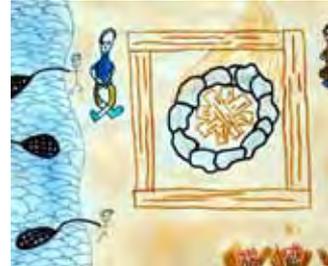
I remember as a kid my Mum talking to me about Aboriginal people and how important they are to our country. I asked if we knew any Aboriginal people and she told me that I was Aboriginal and I felt so privileged.

Hi, I'm Kirralee Smith and I belong to Wonnarua - the Lester clan, which originates up near Singleton, NSW.

I started at Bangor Public School from Kindergarten to Year 2, and then moved to Loftus Public School. The hardest part of the move was leaving all the friends I had made. In Year 4 I was nominated for a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award which made my Mum very proud. I am now in Year 5 and have lots of friends. I am an environment team leader and hoping to be School Captain.

I have strong values which are important to me, such as kindness, caring, honesty, responsibility, and I always do my best. I enjoy sports such as netball, hockey and tee-ball. I play netball for Gynea Netball Club and I am the captain of my team.

My dream is to be a primary school teacher because education is very important. I would also like to play netball for Australia. That's a little bit about me.





Shyla Miller-Mundine

Plunkett Street Public School



My name is Shyla Miller-Mundine. My Mum's name is Kelly Miller and my Dad's name is Cyril Mundine.

With one sister and three brothers, I am the middle child. I'm in Year 3 at Plunkett Street Public School and I like to help the younger children on the playground and in class.

During NAIDOC week I gave a speech with the School Captain at assembly. We talked about Mr Frank Pearce, an Aboriginal man who went to Plunkett Street Public School. All of the Aboriginal students made a video about funny stuff. I was filmed with my friend Tye.

Drawing is my favourite thing to do at school. My Mum taught me how to draw; she's the best drawer I know. One of my paintings hangs in the school office.

This year I started playing basketball and I love it. I play for the Redfern All-Blacks Under 10s. All of my cousins are on the team. After basketball, I do hip hop dancing with my Aunty.

I have been to Perth and the Gold Coast. I really want to go to New Zealand to visit my Pop. I've also been to Grafton and Griffith. I was born in Griffith and we moved to Sydney when I was two. My Nan lives in Griffith with her three daughters.

When I leave school I want to go to university and do art. I would also like to work as a police officer.

Alana Brennan

Chifley Public School



I was only three and a half years old when I started playing piano. My name is Alana Maree Brennan and I belong to the Gadigal people.

My Grandmother had eleven brothers and sisters and grew up in La Perouse. In my family there are four people including myself, my Mum Kylie who cares about me and is a great cook, my Dad Clinton who is great at playing guitar and also helping me with piano, and my sister Monica who is very good at netball.

I'll give you three good reasons why I don't like chilli. 1. It is very very hot. 2. It makes your eyes water. 3. It makes your tongue burn. I found this out when I went to Queensland on holiday. We were at a restaurant having dinner and I decided to taste all of the dips at the counter. I didn't know one of them had chilli, when I put a spoonful in my mouth my eyes nearly popped out of my head. My family still laugh about it today.

School is very important to me because I get to learn all the different things I need to know about the world. My dream is to take care of dolphins at Sea World. I work very hard at school and enjoy public speaking and playing the piano in front of my whole school.

My special folder in my bookcase is full of awards that I received for doing great work. In 2001 I won a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award.

Thank goodness my cousin Sophie was born just three weeks after me because if I didn't know her I would be very sad. She is my best friend and we do everything together. She is even in the same class as me.





Bailey Collins

Mascot Public School



I play sport with friends and family and I am Vice Captain of Mascot Public School. I have been on television, have won multiple awards for sport and academic excellence, and I am 11 years old.

My name is Bailey Collins and I have had a passion for sport from a young age. My parents told me when I got on the field to play I would get over-excited and jump around like a kangaroo. I still feel the same about the way I train and play the game.

I am the youngest of three children of my Mother Leona. I have two sisters, Tenisha and Shanise. My Father is Paul. My Mother's family originated from Queensland and my Great-Grandmother's family came from Great Keppel Island from the Woppaburra country. My Great-Grandfather's family are from far north Queensland from the KuKu Yalanji country. This makes me a proud Aboriginal boy.

I have won numerous awards including the 2012 Plate division for the Rugby 7s tournament playing with Mascot Public Rugby Union team. I have also received a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award and was nominated Vice Captain at Mascot Public School after only being there since 2010.

Through this journey my peers, Principal, teachers and family have been with me every step of the way. I've learnt you should never doubt the people you know well.

My television appearances were for school and playing sport at the football stadiums. Even with all of these opportunities my true inspiration is through my Nan's death. Her death was a complete tragedy for our family. What I have accomplished is in honour of my Nan and my family.

Che Munro

Orange Grove Public School



My name is Che and I am from Kamilaroi country. My Nan grew up in a tin shack made of kerosene cans and a dirt floor, with her brothers and sisters. I can't imagine how hard it was living there. They still wore the same shoes they had to wear at school. My other Nan grew up in a two room house with her 13 brothers and sisters.

My Aboriginality has brought me many things at school such as Yarn-Up, Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards and delivering the Acknowledgement of Country at the school assembly. The Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards are for Aboriginal kids who are doing well at school. Yarn-Up helps Aboriginal kids practise impromptu speaking and debating.

I have played representative football (AFL). My hero is my Mum. She has helped me in many situations and problems in my life. She used to play netball for the Sydney Sand Pipers, the Sydney Swifts, the Adelaide Ravens and the Hunter Jaguars. My Dad is a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art. I have two little brothers named Taj and Kaden. They're fun to play with.

Next year I am starting high school. I like learning about astronomy and physics. When I grow up I'd like to be an astronomer or a football player.





Dakota Bonner

Leichhardt Public School



My Mum has always told me about my Aboriginal identity. My name is Dakota, I am 11 years old and a proud Murri girl.

My family come from Goodooga, the language my family speaks is Enahlyhi and my nation is Goomeri. My Mum Melinda is a great role model, Dad Mathew helps me to achieve my sporting dreams, and I have a little sister who I love to bits.

The best thing in my life was when I won an impromptu speaking competition in the Sydney Region Yarn-Up. I have done public speaking and debating for over four years now at school. I really enjoy it and it really helps me with confidence. My teacher is great, she helps me a lot. I've been in her class for two Terms now and I wish I had her for all of my school life. I have had lots of great teachers but my Year 6 teacher is my favourite teacher of all. I've gone to Leichhardt Public for seven years. It's going to be sad to leave but it's a change all Year 6 students go through.

When I was younger I loved all sports. I tried everything from track, nippers and surf lifesaving, but now I have found my favourite sport, netball. I have played netball for over two years and I love it. In the future I hope to be a stylist or have a job in the fashion world because I have a passion for fashion.

Isaiah Ahmat

Lewisham Public School



Hello to all Aboriginal and other Australians. My name is Isaiah Ahmat and you are about to explore my world.

To start off I would like to pay respect to Aboriginal people past and present.

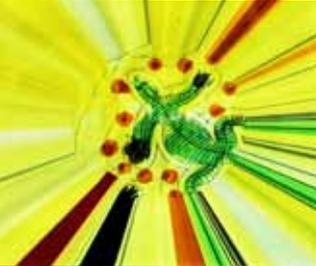
Now my dreams - my first dream is that I will be a police officer or an air force pilot. Secondly, I wish I will grow up to be a bachelor because I don't want a girlfriend what so ever. Thirdly, I hope no terrible incidents happen to my family now or in the future.

The best thing about school was in Year 1 when I was nominated for a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award. My family and I were very proud, especially my little sister. The second best thing about school was when I was stage crew for the arts festival. I also like my school because if you ever have problems or feel left out you can knock on the Principal's door and go straight into her office and have a talk to her. I got some good advice from her when I had a playground problem.

I'd like to tell you about my friends. Their names are Aidan, Iris, Max and Ethan. Aidan and Ethan both do martial arts, Max does piano lessons and Iris is just plain smart. We have been friends for years and they are totally awesome.

In conclusion I was born in Sydney. My family originated from Sydney and Darwin. I'm ten years old and I go to Lewisham Public School. Oh, I forgot to say something to all you Aboriginal people, 'Rock On', and to Australians too! I'm very proud to be an Aboriginal Australian.





Kaylib Savage

Carlton South Public School



Hi, my name is Kaylib Savage, I am 11 and from Sydney. I grew up in Coonabarabran as a member of the Gamilaraay nation.

When I was two I went with my Pop to lawn bowls but while he was playing I tripped and fell in front of the ball, banging my chin. It cracked my chin open and split my mouth and I needed to get four stitches. In 2006 my Mum had my sister Nyree. In 2010 my Step-Mum had my baby brother. My younger brother is my ally, but my sister, well, that's another story!

The highlight of my life was watching my Pop win the lawn bowling championship and I watched him hold his cup up for the last time. A year later my Pop had cancer and died. A lot of people have died in my life time but I was the closest to him. I miss my Pop because he was a great help to me.

At the beginning of 2012 I fractured my leg playing football. I spent eight weeks on crutches but couldn't wait to get back to football. At Carlton South Public School I do a lot for NAIDOC Week and also on Aboriginal culture. I've had to say why I like being Aboriginal in front of the whole school. At the beginning of the year I got a girlfriend. When I grow up I want to be a pro football player or an engineer.

Ky Willoughby

Tharawal Primary School



I'm a deadly Rugby League footy player, I train three times a week and play two times on the weekend.

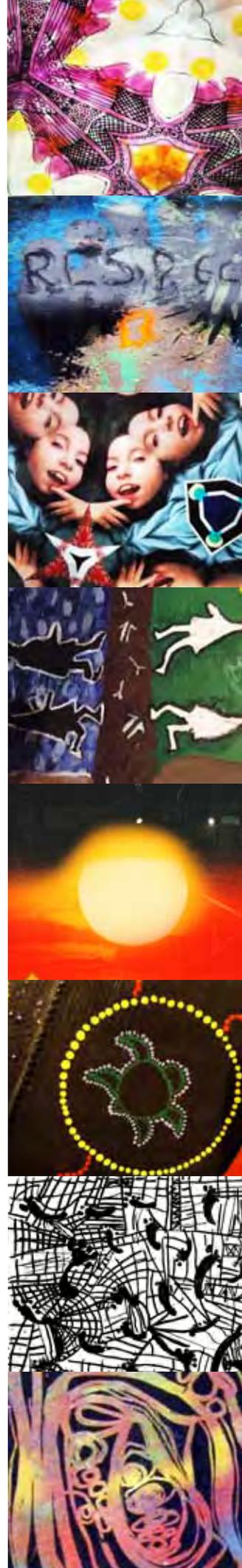
My mob is Nimbi which is in Brewarrina, that's where my Mum was born. I was born in Dubbo. I'm ten years old, my name is Ky Willoughby. I have four members in my family - my Mum Carissa who helps me with my homework, Dad Guy who runs me around to footy, Sister Mali who likes to do acrobatics, a British bulldog Shaq that loves to play footy in my backyard, and a little baby boy coming along. I've got heaps of cousins - Kiarah, Eboni, Kobe, Noah and Trinity. I could keep going all day, aunties, uncles, pops and nans.

My school nominated me for a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award. When I got there I saw all these other Aboriginal people I didn't know. I got to shake Ian Thorpe's hand and stand up on stage - scary! I've been chosen in the Engadine Zone Rugby League team, my school's Public Schools Sports Association netball team, public speaking finals in 2010 and art team for school. Playing in the Engadine Zone was an excellent experience, just as good as watching the Knights play and I want to do it again.

I love school because I learn new and different things. I have really nice teachers and heaps of friends. My favourite subjects are maths and art. I've received really good reports. I am happy with my high standards, my family is happy too.

My dream is to be a really good Rugby League player and to make heaps of money. I would be very popular. I want to play fullback (number 1) or five-eighth (number 6).

So that is me in a nut shell!





James McEwen

Glebe Public School



I am James and I come from a large family. I have four brothers and five sisters: Kellie, Brendon, Sharney, Eric, Kieren, Brooke, Emma, Shandi and Samuel. My parents are both from Gulargambone in central west New South Wales.

When we go up to Gulargambone, I like playing games, riding bikes and going fishing. Down at home, I like sport, singing, dancing, fishing and drawing Manga cartoon characters in my spare time. I fish for Yellowbellies in the harbour off Jubilee Park in Glebe.

I live with my Mum Annette and she is someone I look up to. She gives me good advice and good values. My brother Eric, who's 21, is a good singer and rapper, and dances modern and traditional Aboriginal dances. He is someone who can teach me about Aboriginal culture.

I am in Year 6 at Glebe Public School and I like maths and art, especially painting. Tyson is my best mate at school, we have a lot in common and sometimes we organise to dress the same because we even look alike.

In the future I'd like to be a professional NRL player. I'm pretty sure I can do it if I stick with it. I follow the Sharks, Tigers and Roosters.

Nakita Edwards

Glebe Public School



As a member of the Art Club at Glebe Public School, art is one of my favourite subjects.

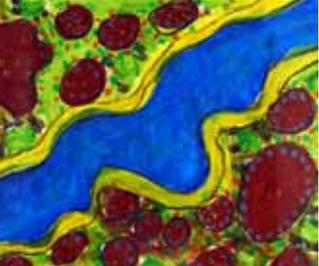
I love learning new and interesting techniques and ideas from my art teacher, Miss Seymour, and I also enjoy working on art projects at home with my sister. Maths is another favourite subject of mine. My name is Nakita Edwards and I am in Year 6.

I've got two Mums and both of them are my role models. I live with my foster carer Allison Slade, and my foster family brother and sister, Lawrence and Tjanara. My mother, Wilma, lives with my brother Wesley, and my sisters Davina and Paige. Allison's mother and brother are also a big part of my family. In the holidays, I visit the farm at Wallarobba near Dungog.

My older brother and sisters, along with my friend Sharon, all have a big impact on my life. My teacher, Mr Walker, is also someone I look up to. He helps me by explaining things in a way I understand, and he talks nicely and loudly because sometimes I have trouble with hearing.

Sport is a big interest for me. I like basketball and I play competition sport on Sundays. I also like running and soccer.





Luke Streeting

Glebe Public School



I was born on the second of March 2003, in Dubbo. My name is Luke Streeting and I am in Year 4 at Glebe Public School.

I live with my Mum Diane, my brother Ricky, and sisters Alana and Summer. Mum and Dad are both proud Gamilaroi people. My Grandmother on Mum's side lives in Coonamble and we visit her in the holidays. In Coonamble I like meeting up with friends and family, playing games, going fishing and riding bikes. My other Nan, Dad's Mum, lives in Dubbo and when I go up there I like riding quad bikes in the paddocks, and meeting up with lots of cousins I haven't met before. Sometimes I talk to my cousins on Facebook.

At school my favourite subject is maths, and I would like to go to Uni one day, like my Mum did. Aunty Wendy is someone I look up to at school. She teaches us to respect Aboriginal knowledge and culture, and she also tells me not to muck up at school. My teacher Miss Wortley is always helpful. She is a good listener and tells funny jokes and stories.

Michael at Glebe Youth Centre is also someone I look up to. I like Youthies organised entertainment at Broadway on Friday evenings. I play soccer and like the NRL. I follow the Rabbitohs.

Elise, Madelyn and Tahlia Wise

Peakhurst West Public School



Elise, Madelyn and Tahlia Wise attend Peakhurst West Public School and are in Years 4, 6 and 3. Madelyn is a School Prefect and is often called on to deliver the Acknowledgement of Country at special assemblies, a job she does with remarkable composure and pride.

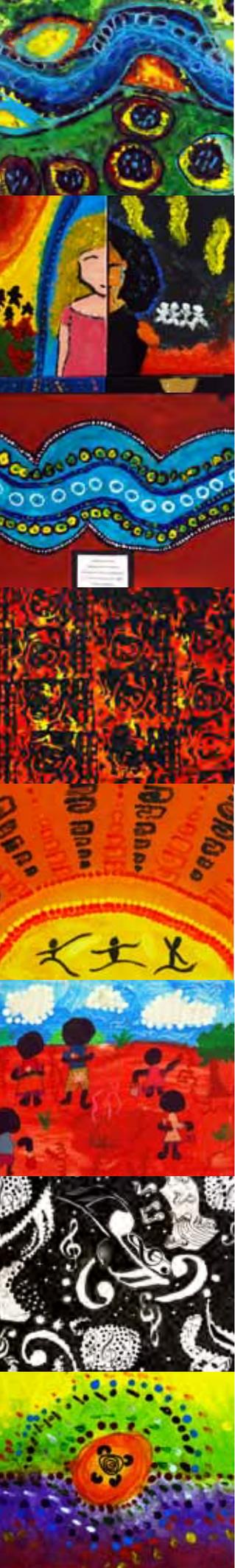
At Peakhurst West Public School, the girls love playing with their friends, participating in school events and excursions, and learning new things. They are impressive with their academic studies with Madelyn and Tahlia loving maths and Elise preferring English. The three girls are also keen on sport, enjoy Physical Education, being active, and especially enjoy soccer, basketball and cricket.

The girls love to dance both in the school's dance group and outside of school with AllStarz. Tahlia and Elise say that their role models are their dance teachers, while Madelyn nominates Michelle Bridges, from Biggest Loser, and her cousin Natasha, who sings and writes songs. Not surprisingly, Madelyn wants to be a personal trainer when she grows up. Elise would like to be a dancer or party planner, and Tahlia would like to be a teacher, hairdresser or model.

"It's great having the Wise girls at Peakhurst West. They set a wonderful example to all the students in the school and are proud of their heritage."

Staff member





Emily Heather Lienert

Bexley Public School



Being Aboriginal is a privilege. You get to do a lot more things. I got to go to Parliament House with a whole lot of other Aboriginal kids from around the state and it was awesome. I've been awarded two Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards, one in Year 2 and the other in Year 4. A Deadly Kids Doing Well Award is something that only Aboriginal kids can win. You get one when you are doing well in school. My name is Emily Heather Lienert, I was born on 29 November 2001, and this is my life so far.

I am many different nationalities. I am Australian, German, Polish, Swiss and Aboriginal. I am proud to be Aboriginal and everyone else who is Aboriginal should be proud too.

My sister Kate is a dancer and a Junior Flame. A Junior Flame is a cheerleader for the St George Dragons. She also dances for Bangarra. My Mum, Robyn, lived in Kiama when she was young. Mum was adopted, along with her sisters Melinda and Kerry, by my Nanny. My Dad Roger also grew up in Kiama. I have nine cousins, three second cousins, five uncles and six aunties.

I am an excellent reader - I'm not trying to brag - and have been since Kindergarten. I am always at the top of the class. In Year 3 and Year 4, I was sometimes sent up to the Stage 3 classes because the work was too easy. My teacher told me my reading age is several years above my real age.

My hobbies consist of reading, playing piano, cooking and playing tennis. I like a lot of things such as One Direction, flying pigs (yes, I know they don't exist), Harry Potter, Rupert Grint, netball, books, my school and much, much more. My dislikes are spiders, snakes, blood, creepy crawlies and other weird and freaky stuff. I have three best friends and they all go to the same school as me, Victoria, Karolina and Katerina. I love cooking and would like to be on Master Chef when I'm older. I especially like desserts and would like to be a pastry chef.

Aiesha May Saunders

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design



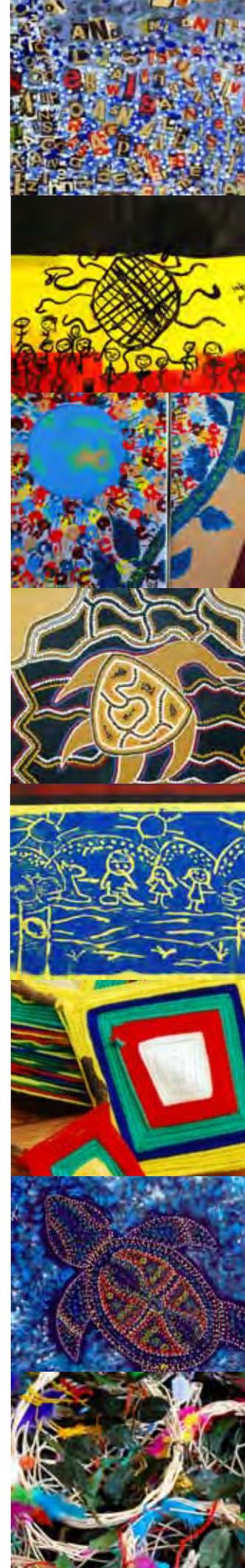
My whole life all I've ever known is my Mum, she was my entire family all wrapped up in one.

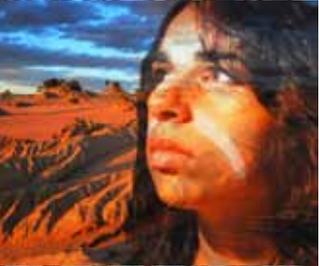
As my Dad was out of the picture and my Aboriginal family lived in Taree, she was all I had. My Mother's Father was Aboriginal and her Mother was French and Irish.

My Mum wasn't in contact with her Aboriginal side as much as she would have liked to. She always found a way to link me with my Aboriginality and culture no matter what. We did many things to help express this such as art, Dreamtime stories and camps.

When I started high school I was excited as Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design was in touch with Aboriginal culture and creative arts, and those were two things close to my heart. I was involved in a lot of acting and singing based activities and participated in a few Aboriginal programs. Towards the end of Year 7 my Mum was diagnosed with liver cancer and admitted to hospital. I spent my holidays by my Mum's side with her second youngest sister. Just days before starting Year 8, my Mother passed away. I was 12 at the time and still discovering who I was, so losing her was like losing my sense of identity.

I moved in with my Aunty, her Father and her Aunty. Their house was already a second home to me as I'd visited them with my Mum often. Losing my Mum made me realise that I had to work a lot harder at school as I had to make my Mum proud. A way of helping me do this is by staying in touch with my Aboriginal heritage as it's a way for me to connect with my Mum. My family supports me and my decisions and my school helps me make them happen. I've been involved with NAIDOC Week celebrations and the Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards thanks to the school's support. Keeping in touch with my culture helps me discover who I am as a person and I'm grateful for every experience that helps me become a strong young Aboriginal woman.





Danny Allende

Matrville Sports High School



My name is Danny Allende and I'm a proud member of the La Perouse community. I've lived here all my life. My Mother and Father are descendants from the Wonnarua and Wiradjuri nations and this is my story.

Preschool is where I started to learn about my Aboriginal identity. I remember learning songs, dances and stories about my people, then performing them in front of small audiences. I danced throughout primary school.

Ever since I was young I have been interested in sport. As a young boy I didn't have many toys other than footballs, basketballs, tennis balls and golf clubs. I've been playing rugby league for La Perouse Panthers since the age of two, although videos and stories from my family reveal I was more interested in building sandcastles on the field than actually playing football. The reason I love football is because of my hero, my Uncle Gavin Lester. When he was playing first grade for the Bulldogs he'd take me to as many training sessions as he could. The best thing about him taking me training was playing cricket in the dressing rooms with some of the biggest stars in the game.

When I was 16 I was selected in the NSW Indigenous team to take on the Queensland Indigenous team before the All Stars game on the Gold Coast. I felt so proud to be chosen to represent my culture, my family and my state. I cannot describe the feeling of running out onto Skilled Park in front of thousands of people. On this trip I also trained against the Indigenous All Stars team. This was amazing but the most memorable thing was being guard of honour for the main game and listening to the crowd roar as Preston Campbell ran onto the field. Being on the field and hearing the crowd scream is something I'll never forget.

It was a massive privilege being named School Captain at Matrville Sports High School and following the footsteps of previous Aboriginal school captains. I love being a positive role model to young kids in my community and I'm honoured to think that anyone would look up to me.

James William Bridges

Ashfield Boys High School



The earliest memory I have is swimming and playing in the sand as a baby; not even the age of two and I had no idea that I had Kamilaroi blood in me. I'm James and I was born in 1996 up at Port Macquarie. The first five years of my life I lived in a town called Crescent Head on the coast, in a house full of life and five minutes from the beach. My brothers, Mum and I left my Father there when I was four and started a life in Sydney.

Primary school was pretty normal. In Year 5 I found out I was Aboriginal and took it with immense pride. Racism was an everyday occurrence that I'd gotten used to. As I hit high school I became more involved in Aboriginal cultural events. During Year 8 I started letting go and failing most subjects, but I pulled through with the help of my Mum and friends. I succeeded in Year 9 and ended up hosting the 2011 Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards. I'm now in Year 10 and working hard to get a good mark in my final exams so I can easily get into university after Year 12.





Alex Johnston

Endeavour Sports High School



I was born and raised in Sydney, the eldest of four children. My Mother, a strong, proud Torres Strait Islander, and my Father a kind man, a country boy at heart, instilled in me a passion for sport.

One of my earliest memories is watching my father play soccer. It wasn't long until I put on the boots! My craving for sport intensified and with my Parents' guidance I played cricket, little athletics, basketball ... you name it, I did it! I excelled in them all. However, it was Rugby League that captured me.

At La Perouse Panthers I became a South Sydney Junior. I represented the Bunnies in Harold Matthews and SG Ball competitions. I was privileged to play for the Under 16s and Under 18s NSW State of Origin and honoured to play in the Under 18s Australian Schoolboys side. My greatest honour was the selection for the Under 16s Indigenous All Stars, as this meant the chance to play for my people.

My competitive nature in the sporting arena is mirrored in my school life. I challenge myself to be the best I can. This is reflected in an encouragement award for The Patrick White Young Indigenous Writers Competition, a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award, an Outstanding Achievement Award for Sydney Region and a Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement. I've also participated in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates at Parliament House in Sydney.

And the future? Who knows? For now I am determined to achieve an ATAR that will 'open doors'.

Jordan Ardler

Matrville Sports High School



My name is Jordan Ardler, I'm 17 years old, I'm a twin, and I'm from the Dharawal people at La Perouse. I love everything about my culture and I always try to help out whenever I can to support and get involved with my Aboriginal community.

In Year 7 my school held a NAIDOC Week art competition. All of the artworks from the students amazed me and I fell in love with dot paintings. I'd been thinking I wanted to do more than just help out in my community. I wanted to be known for doing something good and get recognised. I was always drawing what was in front of me, tracing colouring books and painting flowers, and thought I could start dot painting. That afternoon I bought paints and a canvas and my love grew from there. I started to sell my artworks to family, community members, schools and businesses.

When I was about 15 I received a call from my friend's uncle who was opening a business (Boomerang Constructions) and he asked me to design his logo. "Wow," I thought, "people are going to see that everywhere and know that's mine." I designed the logo that is now used on all of their work clothes, banners, cars, trailers and business cards. That same year I studied at TAFE and received a Certificate III in Design Fundamentals, which gave me opportunities to design Ella 7's jumpers, various company, Land Council and team logos and designs. The feeling of seeing my artworks and designs all over my community and different areas is indescribable.

It wasn't until Year 12 that I actually studied art and got involved in the art culture. I learnt artists looked to the past and brought ideas into their own style. I'd an idea from Facebook, someone had painted football boots for friends. I thought I could do the same because I love experiencing new things. Since then I've received opportunities to paint various NRL players' boots, canvas shoes, hats, stones, fruit bowls and didgeridoos.

My goal is to become a graphic designer. I'd love to attend University of Technology Sydney and complete a Bachelor of Visual Communications.





Keya McGeown

Menai High School



From birth I have been injected into two cultures. My name represents my cultural links and they are utterly opposite. Keya is a Gaelic name meaning fire which was given to me by my Mother, my middle name Alkira is an Aboriginal word meaning sky. My Parents from day one had me surrounded by my heritage.

Unique and singular was the way my life started. As an only child and a young girl with a culturally expansive heritage, I was trying to discover where I belonged from my early years. My Father, who is my Aboriginal link, isn't involved in my everyday life. Yet I still benefit from ascertaining new information about my Aboriginal Elders.

My family ties were immensely intriguing and discovering those connections and the bicultural heritage I had helped me find myself. As I entered high school, I became especially interested in history – owing to the fact that my family had such an interesting one.

School is where I express myself; I surround myself not only with my culture and expanding my knowledge of my Elders but also with subjects and studies that will lead me towards the career I want to pursue. I will break the stereotype of Aboriginal kids not being successful. I'm proud of my bicultural heritage and cannot wait to make a difference in the world as an Aboriginal Irish young girl.

Tahleigha Brandrick

Endeavour Sports High School



Since I was a little girl I have dreamed of becoming a primary school teacher. My Parents, who have inspired and supported me, attended Endeavour High School and as I was born in the Sutherland Shire, I followed their footsteps to Endeavour Sports High School.

I know that education is the key to providing opportunities. As a proud Aboriginal girl from the Gurang-Gurang nation in South-East Queensland, I have been inspired by my teachers to work with young children, particularly Aboriginal children, to give them a better understanding of their people and culture. A variety of programs at Endeavour Sports High School have provided many opportunities that have helped me build confidence to fulfil my dream.

I was surprised and honoured to have been selected to the School Representative Council in 2011. This position allowed me to meet other young students at zone and regional meetings where ideas were exchanged. My leadership role in the school was acknowledged when I was awarded a Regional Aboriginal Education Scholarship in Term 1, 2012.

Apart from mentoring students, delivering the Acknowledgement of Country in many assemblies, and participating in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates at Parliament House, which increased my confidence in public speaking, I have been involved in netball, soccer and, currently, the Girls Rugby 7s side at school.

I hope to be a positive force for change.





Georgette Rose

Sydney Secondary College Blackwattle Bay Campus



My culture is the most important part of who I am. For as long as I can remember I've known where I come from, which is Darwin and Walgett and who my people are.

I live with my Mum, Cheryl Rose; she's the strongest woman in my life. People who know my Mum know where I get my willpower and edge from.

I've grown up respecting my Elders, listening to them and following whatever they said, but the only man to capture my attention is my Poppy Rose - George 'Bandit' Rose. He always told my Mother and her siblings "girls can do anything - don't let anyone tell you that you can't", which I've lived by, never letting anyone tell me I can't do something. I love my Pop. He is and will always be my role model.

Kinship and family ties are a huge part of our culture. Being part of a family with two younger sisters, a younger and an older brother, I've had to set an example. Unfortunately by being stubborn, I regret to say I made a huge mistake. I never went to school and was always rude to teachers. I thought I knew better than everyone. It was a huge culture shock when I realised how lucky I was with education and the support and opportunity my Mum has given me. In 2011 I repeated Year 11 and I'm now finishing Year 12. If it wasn't for the support from my Mum, Aunty Fay, school and family, I wouldn't have come back to school. If the people who believed I couldn't do it hadn't had their ideas about my education, I wouldn't be so determined to prove the low education stereotype of Aboriginal people wrong.

When I finish school I want to be a nurse. I believe I can achieve the best for myself and set an example for other Aboriginal people. The complications in school life have given me the strength to do better. I'm a proud Aboriginal student.

Georgia-Lee Ockerby-Pickett

GyMEA Technology High School



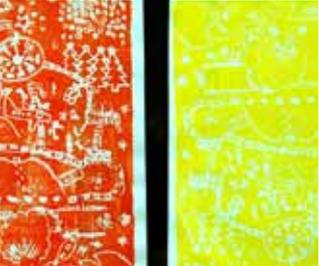
As a young Nyoongar woman from Perth, moving around my whole life, the biggest support I've had is my Mother, Donnella. By the time I was 16 we'd travelled around Australia, living in more than 14 houses but we've now settled in GyMEA.

My Mother and I were always there for each other. Additions to our lives came in the form of my new siblings, friends and teachers, bringing not only happiness but challenges, and together we took them on.

The biggest move was the one from Darwin to Sydney, when I had only a week to prepare for my whole life being turned upside down. Just starting in 'big school' I'd been so excited and had established friends and wasn't ready to leave...but we did. Devastation filled me, as a seven year old I couldn't comprehend the reasons for our move and wasn't expecting the opportunities and experiences that occurred when I got here. My Mother explained it was for our own good and as Aboriginal people we would get more amazing opportunities in this city. Turned out that she was right! I've participated in events such as the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates and the Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards, giving me the ability to stay in touch with my Aboriginality. Even though it has been great in Sydney, every day I miss my home town of Perth and being close to my family and people. Luckily I have Mum to support me as she knows exactly what I'm feeling.

Today, I owe my Mother for the person I am and everything I've been privileged enough to experience.





Grant Maling

JJ Cahill Memorial High School



Here I am, Grant Maling, Captain of JJ Cahill Memorial High School, trainee at Nine Network, and hosting my own show on Koori Radio, but it was a long road to get where I am.

From an early age, my family knew I'd be a talker. My Mother tells me that when I was a baby I'd sit in the car and blabber to myself speaking not one word of English.

I'd talk to my relatives about pointless things all the time. Considering Brenda Maling, my Grandmother, was the only person to listen to me I developed a close relationship with her. When I was 13, she passed away. Grieving, I thought how my Nan would tell me to never give up on my dreams.

In 2009 I won a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award for my application to my school work and the Pauline McLeod Youth Award for ongoing commitment to the reconciliation process.

I called Koori Radio and since 2009 have had a regular spot on the station. My co-broadcaster and I are called The Deadly Double and we have a Facebook page and fan base.

In 2011, along with being elected School Captain, I gained a two-year school based traineeship with the Nine Network. I have worked with the Today Show, Kerri-Anne and Nine News. This has been a tremendous experience and given me a lot of first-hand knowledge.

This brings us to today, where I'm about to do my HSC, wrap up 13 years of schooling, start a new chapter of my life, and isn't that a relief!

Karina Harland

Sydney Distance Education High School

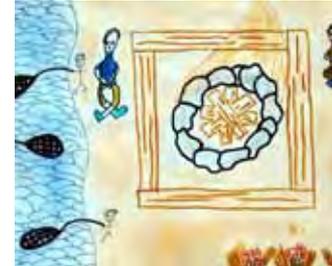


I think learning and education are vital to help prepare you for the future. I really enjoy school and I like learning.

I'm 16 years old, currently in Year 10 at Sydney Distance Education High School and my name is Karina Harland. I really think I've been lucky; I've had some wonderful teachers at Sydney Distance Education High School who have helped me grow and be more confident. I speak to my teachers over the phone and they also come out for visits.

When I finish high school, my goal is to continue my education at TAFE. I would like to study massage therapy. I hope to become a massage therapist and ultimately have my own practice that I can run from home.

I am thrilled that I have been nominated for a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award. I'm proud of my Aboriginal heritage. I like understanding the history of my people and where I come from.





Katelyn Farmer

Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus



As a child I was always with my cousins, they became like my brothers and sisters. We were always outside making mischief with each other. My name is Katelyn Farmer and I'm of Aboriginal heritage.

My Mum's side is from the Dughutti mob in Kempsey and my Dad's side are European. My maternal Uncle was part of the Stolen Generations; he was taken to Kinchela Boys Home. I'm also related to Preston Campbell who played for the Titans.

When I was younger I was inspired by cartoons and video games to draw. Anime became my main influence and I took a Japanese class in Year 7. I taught myself how to use computer drawing programs. Drawing using programs and video gaming has been my hobby and main source of entertainment. My wish is to become a graphic illustrator and a Manga artist in the future.

In primary school my cousins and I did a few artworks for Bankstown Council, which my maternal Nan used to organise for us. We were also part of a multi-cultural promotion and had our photos put up on a wall in Bankstown. In high school I participated in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates (2009 – 2012) and in Koori Art Expressions in 2011.



Orion Jennings

Sylvania High School



My name's Orion, from first look you wouldn't even guess that I'm Aboriginal, but I am, from Wiradjuri country.

I'm fairly normal. I love music and play an instrument; I play sport and have a lot of great friends. Of course life has ups and downs and is never perfect, so the only thing you have to do is try and build from that to make it better. That's what my story is about.

I'm not the best student, I space out, but I use that too. I use my imagination a lot which is good for school.

As for people I look up to, most of them are artists, and some are my friends and family. It would take ages to name them all but they are my inspirations.

My goal is to make a good life for my friends, family, and anyone else that I can. I have a few philosophies, the most important one, is to never give up no matter how bad it gets. It could be a physical battle or just going through a tough time. All that's important is that you never give up. Another important one is protection. You should always protect the people you love.

A proud moment was in Year 6 when I won an award for visual arts. I was the best in the school, at least that's how I felt, but hey who wouldn't give themselves self-pride after winning an award? My Parents got to see me get it so that was pretty awesome.

Sophie Bancroft

Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus



At the ripe young age of five, I, Sophie Bancroft, learnt about my Aboriginal heritage. This opened my and my brother's eyes to new experiences with the Bundjalung people.

In primary school I didn't have many opportunities to explore my Aboriginal heritage but outside of school I was introduced to my people by my Aunty, Bronwyn Bancroft. Aunty Bron helped me to explore my Aboriginality through paintings. Throughout my last years of primary school I learnt more and more from my Dad, Wally Bancroft about my family. My Dad grew up in Tenterfield but was taken to Linesville, near Grafton to explore his Aboriginality.

From Year 7 to Year 10 at Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus I was engaged in activities that surrounded my Aboriginal heritage. I've received a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award (2009) and a Sydney Region Award (2011). I was also able to be involved in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates from 2009-2011 and was involved in Koori Art Expressions. Penshurst Girls Campus gave me opportunities that helped explore more of my Aboriginality. They opened my eyes to NAIDOC Week, Welcome to Country and learning how to help my fellow Aboriginal students.

I currently attend Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus and am still exploring my heritage. I hope to help Aboriginal students at Penshurst Girls Campus as well as get a good ATAR and hopefully go to the University of Sydney and study law.





Jessie-James Caldwell

Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus



My name is Jessie-James Caldwell, I'm in Year 8 at Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus and I'm the youngest of five kids.

My Mum has raised us by herself and has done a great job. My people are from Narromine - Wiradjuri country. I don't know much about the Wiradjuri culture. Being an Aboriginal kid has ups and downs. When I was in Year 4 and my brother left the school I was the only Aboriginal kid out of 350 students. In Year 5 and Year 6 I won Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards. I think it was because I was the only Aboriginal kid at school.

Also when I was Years 5 and 6 I went on an Aboriginal kids' drama camp for five days. This camp was organised in collaboration with the Australian Theatre for Young People (atyp). It was the best camp I've ever been to. The first time I went, I was the youngest, and my older brother was there too. The second time I went it was even better because my brother wasn't there. Halfway through Year 7, I was told I'd be going to the atyp drama camp again which made me happy. At the same time it was terrible because I was also told that it would be my last camp.

High school is fun because we have special activities every Tuesday with most of the Aboriginal kids. We've gone to visit different workplaces. It's fun because we all get along and we are a funny lot. I'm doing well in most classes. Later in the year I'm going on an overseas excursion to China. We'll go to Beijing, Shanghai and Xian for 11 days. My friend and I are the youngest and only students going from Leichhardt Campus, I'm really excited!

Kyle White

Glebe Pathways Program



My name is Kyle White, I'm a Dunghutti and Kamilaroi boy. I'm the second eldest of five children; we were raised by my strong Mother in Glebe. It's been hard living in Glebe, but I've managed to stay out of trouble.

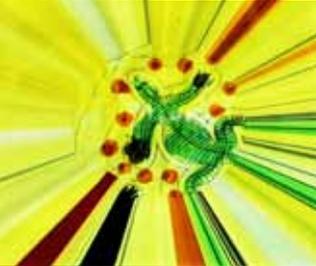
My experience at Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus was good because I was with my cousins and friends but school just wasn't for me and slowly, I stopped attending. I wanted my School Certificate so I enrolled into the Glebe Pathways Program. This suited me better as the class was small and the teachers were more flexible. We went on some great excursions to Royal National Park and I went on a couple of camps. My experience of the Horse Whispering camp made it onto 60 Minutes on Channel Nine.

Attending Glebe Pathways allowed me the opportunity to design my own learning plan. I was able to include time spent with Tribal Warrior (an association for Indigenous people) as part of my schooling, where I joined the boxing program and completed my deck hand certificate. This meant getting up at 5am to help get us job ready. Year 10 was a good year, I obtained my School Certificate and I won a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award.

After Year 10 I started a bush regeneration program at National Parks, and completed a 15 week panel beating and spray painting course at TAFE. I think it's important to try different things and to motivate yourself to find something that you're good at.

Having a mentor at Tribal Warrior has changed my life. We are really close, we train together and he has taught me a lot about what can be achieved in this world.





Nathan Lloyd Cox

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design



My name is Nathan Lloyd Cox. I was born on 3 January 1996 at King George V Hospital.

My Parents are Lorraine Gaye Cox and William Mervyn Francis Cox and I have an elder sister, Jessica Evalyn Cox. I am from the Wiradjuri nation whose land is located in central-southern NSW.

During my time at school I have participated in many events. At Dulwich Hill Primary School I was part of the chess club and debating team, I also delivered the Acknowledgment of Country after my sister left the school. In high school I have been a peer support leader, and as a Beacon ambassador I participated in mock interviews, undertook a resume course and addressed my Year 10 formal assembly. In 2011 I was the only Year 10 Aboriginal student in my school to participate in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates. I was invited to the launch of the new Google art site which features Aboriginal art from across Australia. Currently I'm completing Year 11 at Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design and wish to attend university to become a paramedic.

Members of school staff I have had a successful or strong relationship with are Kim Chan and Elizabeth Newel (Dulwich Hill Primary School), and Phoebe Ferguson (who used to work at Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design). Other people who have had a significant influence on my life are my parents, and Ben Bowen and Adam from AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience) who helped me become more confident.

Baden Hitchcock

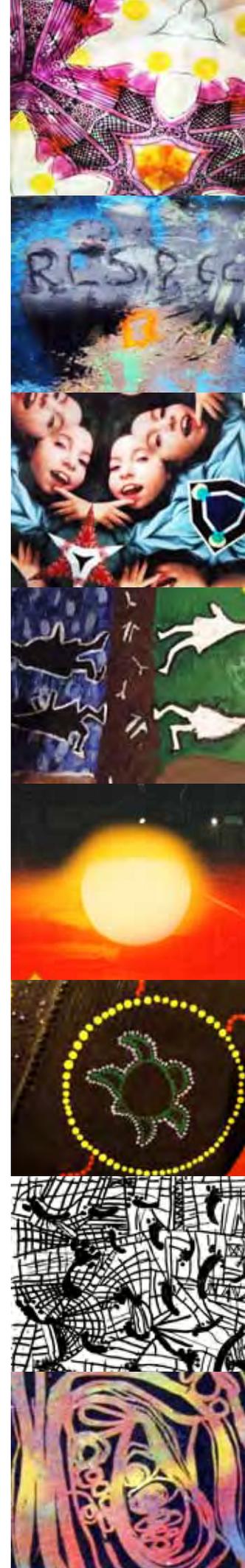
Newtown High School of the Performing Arts



My name is Baden Hitchcock. I am a Torres Strait Islander and attend Year 12 at Newtown High School of the Performing Arts. The idea that by performing an art form to an audience you communicate a story interpreted by your experiences and knowledge interests me significantly. Performing arts is my passion and love. I have completed my Performance Certificate in violin and am training to be a professional dancer. In Year 6 my passion for dance began as soon as I participated in my first ballet class. By attending Newtown High School of the Performing Arts a broad range of opportunities within the performing arts has been made available to me. Determined to be the best at what I do, I am now in Senior Dance Company, Ballet Company and also concert master of the Newtown High School of the Performing Arts orchestra, string quartet and string ensemble.

Recently I attended a dance school tour to America performing and auditioning for numerous colleges. Gaining acceptance and scholarships to these schools has widened my outlook at future pathways. I realise that with determination and passion, you'll always get somewhere. In 2010, my string quartet was invited to attend the Grand Gathering of Boys and Girls in Beijing, China, where we performed on national television. The trip allowed me to interact with foreign delegations, showed me how much talent is out there and how self-motivation is essential to achieve your personal ambitions. I have always practised music, however I did not start taking it seriously till my sister and I put on mini concerts for my Parents and sisters charging them 20 cents to enter our room. My Mum, a strong Torres Strait woman, encouraged all my siblings and I to audition and participate all available activities. This led to musicals including The Wizard of Oz and Oliver. I played Oliver in 2005. Although I aspire to go into a dance career, medical science and human welfare also interest me, which has influenced my high academic goals. I would like to study physiotherapy later in life and this would assist me in understanding the human body and how to prevent and mend injuries.

Though I recognise myself as a proud Indigenous Australian I am not defined or restricted by my culture or heritage but am defined by my personal actions, ambitions and beliefs which have been shaped and influenced by my family, friends and experiences.





Geoffrey Frost

Former student:

Woniora Road School

Current: Campbelltown TAFE



My name is Geoffrey Frost. I was born on 30 September 1992 in Penrith. My parents come from Dubbo, which is part of the Wiradjuri nation. I've been in out-of-home care since I was two. I stayed with my godparents until I was four, when I went into care.

I've had to change families and adapt to personalities so many times because of my early childhood. But I've always had the attitude to always try my hardest in spite of my circumstances. I've had many care placements, in places such as Penrith, Shellharbour, Hornsby, and others. I've had to change schools a lot, eight times since Year 4. I ended up at Woniora Road School in 2006, which is where I stayed and completed my HSC. This enabled me to pursue my education and form stable friendships.

I did Aboriginal dancing at Cranebrook Community Centre in primary school. I've visited the Northern Territory twice for the Garma Festival, as a participant and as a Youth Coordinator for Life without Barriers. I've received two Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards. The one in 2009 was for achieving eleven subjects in my HSC. I also received a Hero Award from Sydney Region for achieving my HSC under extreme circumstances and being the first Aboriginal out-of-home care student to complete a full HSC. This award sits proudly in my lounge room and is a constant reminder of how far I've come. I've been on several fishing trips in Jervis Bay to an Aboriginal mission where I was a Youth Coordinator for Koori Communications, which engages young children with innovative activities, such as making race cars and designing sail-boats.

I started cooking after I went on fishing trips. I'd been cooking meals for others during the trips. That started my interest in cooking. I started baking things at home that I took into school, which people at school appreciated. My interest grew, so I did a TVet course at Ultimo TAFE in baking. After completing the course and my HSC, I enrolled in a full time TAFE course in Commercial Cookery, which I'm doing now. I work three or four days a week at a bistro in Mortdale and my skills have greatly improved. I'm starting a Community Services Certificate which will allow me to become a youth worker. I'm planning on going to university next year and doing a course in mathematics, then getting my Bachelor of Education and becoming a teacher.

Jessica Evalyn Cox

Former student:

Canterbury Girls High School

Current: Ultimo TAFE



My name is Jessica Evalyn Cox. I was born on 13 April 1994 at King George V Hospital. My Parents are Lorraine Gaye Cox and William Mervyn Francis Cox and I have a younger brother, Nathan Lloyd Cox. I attended Dulwich Hill Primary School, Canterbury Girls High School, and now attend Ultimo TAFE.

My Mother is from Wiradjuri country in central-southern NSW and she is one of four children, who moved numerous times during their childhood to a number of different Housing Commission homes.

My Grandfather, Lawrence Murray, was part of the Wiradjuri nation; he was born in Cowra and grew up on Erambie mission near Griffith with his five older siblings. Being Aboriginal affected his life - he experienced needing a drinking licence to be allowed into his favourite pub. He became a national boxer achieving the second best in Australia during his boxing career. He passed away in 2008, and our family ensured his last wish to be buried in Griffith.

During my time at school, I participated in many activities that influenced who I am today. During primary school I was one of twelve school ambassadors and until I graduated was the student who delivered the Acknowledgement of Country. In high school, I was also able to do the Acknowledgement of Country. I participated in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates, and in my second year, was one of the MCs. I've participated in the Schools' Spectacular with my dance group, which was amazing. In my final year I was elected a school prefect. I had the honour of receiving a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award and was one of three students asked to speak at the ceremony. Kim Chan (Dulwich Hill Primary School), Jana Mawassi, Ana Matos, Marie Salakas and Sylvia Kovanis (Canterbury Girls High School) have all had an impact on my school experience and were all supportive of my endeavours.

My family have been very supportive of my dream to be a pastry chef and eventually make a name for myself creating beautifully decorated cakes, like celebration cakes. I'm currently completing a Hospitality (Patisserie) Certificate III course.



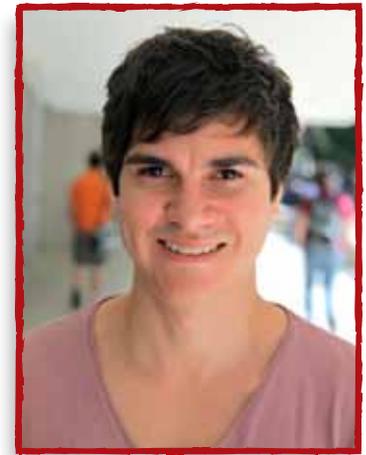


Corey Smith

Former student:

Rose Bay Secondary College

Current: University of New South Wales



I'm an Aboriginal person through my Mother and our people are from Brewarrina, where my Mother was born. We are Ngemba people. My name is Corey Smith and I'm currently a third year Arts/Law student at University of New South Wales.

I was born and raised in Sydney by my Parents, Jenelle and David. I also have two younger brothers, Ashley and Mitchell.

Indigenous issues are a strong passion of mine. I believe that in a democracy it's important that the majority also serve to protect minority groups. Whilst I study a Law degree, I also major in Politics and minor in Indigenous Studies in my Arts degree, and so I understand the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having a say on policy that directly affects us. I certainly hope to put that ideology into action one day and be a voice in Parliament.

Fortunately I had a number of teachers in high school who believed in me. In particular I would like to thank Dianne Featherston who not only pushed me to pursue my dreams of studying Law, but also encouraged me to stand up and to always be proud of my Aboriginality.

Alicia Johnson

Former student:

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design

Current: University of Sydney



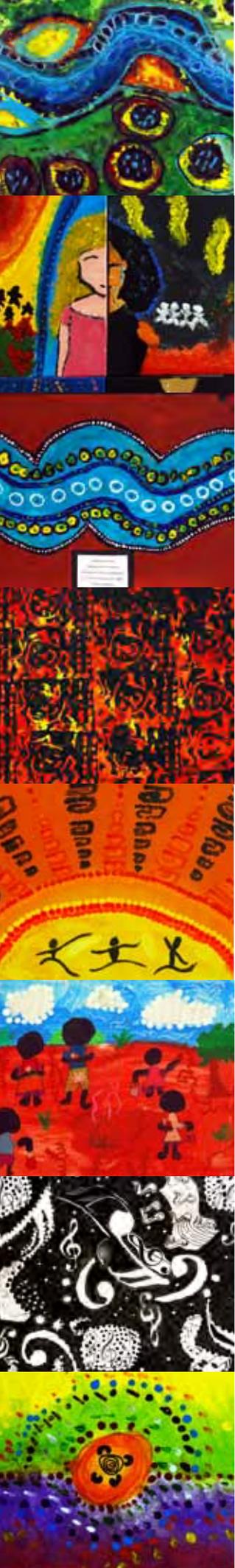
My name is Alicia Johnson, I'm 19 and currently in my second year of a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney.

I'm an Aboriginal residential scholarship holder at the Women's College. I grew up in Broken Hill. My family decided to move to the city to benefit our education. My younger sister and I both attended Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design. In 2010 I graduated; that year I'd been elected female School Captain by my peers and the staff. Being elected School Captain is one of my proudest achievements. I was a role model for my peers, particularly for other Aboriginal students.

My Parents both come from old Aboriginal communities – my Mother comes from Cherbourg in Queensland and my father from Wilcannia in far Western NSW. Our strong connection to our country is what inspires me and keeps me strong, knowing that I can return home and escape from the city hustle and bustle.

I have been fortunate to have been taught by the exceptional teachers from my high school as they were caring and supportive and my family and I are very grateful. My involvement with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) has enabled me to grow in confidence and determination, first as a mentee and now a mentor. I would like to acknowledge and thank both of my Parents for their hard work and the love they have given to my younger sister and myself.





Emily Johnson

Former student:

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design

Current: University of Sydney



My Parents come from old Aboriginal communities;

my Mother is from Cherbourg in Queensland, home of the Birri-Gubba people, and my Father is from Wilcannia in far western NSW, which is Barkindji country. My sister Alicia and I feel a strong connection to our family history and Aboriginal identity as it inspires us and fosters our relationship with our culture.

Throughout my time at Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design a number of teachers believed in me no matter what I was up to or wanted to do. Mr Wooten, Visual Arts, helped me with my HSC major art project, as well as Mrs Herbert, Textiles & Design, who helped me to complete my textiles major work. Mr Spetere, Careers Advisor, was there throughout my whole high school and even my university journey, especially with the AIME program. Mr Forest, Cartooning & Animation, inspired me to keep drawing and making art.

Mentors and key community members who have had a significant influence and impact on my life include Jack Manning Bancroft and Paul Sinclair who were the project facilitators when my sister and I attended AIME. Paul Sinclair assisted me with my interests in drama and invited me to be in a short film which helped develop my confidence and my acting skills. Jack Bancroft has continued to support my sister and I, as well as our music careers, by inviting our music group to perform at their National Hoody Day launch in 2011. Our relationship with them both continues throughout our higher education.

Will Jarred (Wire MC) and Nadeena Dixon have supported and encouraged both my sister and I with our music as well as developing into young artists in the Redfern community.

Alicia and I have both been grateful for our Parents and their commitment to us and belief in our goals, supporting us with both study and whatever we chose to do in life.

Desiree Leha

Former student:

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design

Current: University of New South Wales



I was born and bred in the inner west of Sydney with a strong sense of family. My Mother is a Murri from Cherbourg, Queensland and my Father is Tongan. I truly believe that education is the key to success, so I try to make the most of the opportunities which life presents to me - the opportunities that weren't available to my Parents and five older brothers.

I attended Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design where I received a tremendous amount of support from Year 7 until completion of the HSC. This support enabled me to successfully complete my two year in-school traineeship with ANZ Bank (Year 10 - Year 12), whilst undertaking my HSC to receive an ATAR for tertiary education. I would particularly like to acknowledge Mr Spetere, the Careers Advisor for helping me through this process, as well as pushing me to apply for a cadetship with the Australian Public Sector, which I successfully acquired. I am now a cadet with the Department of Immigration and Australian Citizenship while undergoing my tertiary education.

Being a part of the first cohort to participate in the 'How Big are Your Dreams?' Indigenous youth leadership program has been a highlight, as it has assisted my growth as a determined, confident individual. I am a current student at the University of NSW, undergoing a double degree in Law and Social Work in conjunction with my cadetship. I have received great assistance from Nura Gili- the Indigenous student support staff, and my peers. A recent highlight was when I was sponsored by the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to attend the World Indigenous Lawyers Conference in Hamilton, New Zealand. I am truly grateful for the life mentors who have adopted me throughout the stages of my life and the enriching experiences I have been a part of.

I look forward to the future. People should make the most of every opportunity life presents to you. Surround yourself with positive people as they are the ones who will carry you through the times of weakness. Strong support networks are crucial to your future successes!





Shyarna Lomas

Burwood Girls High School



My name is Shyarna Lomas. I live in a little Italian suburb called Haberfield. I am in Year 7 at Burwood Girls High School. I am the middle child of three. My family is very supportive of me and they just want me to be happy even though sometimes I can be a pain.

My favourite subject is science. Right now we are doing engineering. This year I went to a special science and engineering program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We got to make ice-cream out of liquid nitrogen. It didn't taste very nice and it tasted more like porridge than ice-cream.

My favourite sports are NRL and touch footy. I follow the Rabbitohs. When I finish school I want to be a nurse. I might not look like the type of person that would help in medical issues, but I am really kind hearted and always worry about family and friends. Being a nurse would be great because I will know how to help my family and friends.

Throughout life times may be hard and sad but as long as you follow your dreams anything is achievable.



Staff and community members



Aunty Fay Carroll

Aboriginal Community Liaison
Officer Sydney Region

Fay Carroll is a Wiradjuri woman born on Eora country in Sydney and a respected community Elder with close associations to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the inner city.

Aunty Fay was raised in Redfern and spent most of her growing years in the Redfern community. She was also a long time resident of Woolloomooloo where she spent 14 years raising her family.

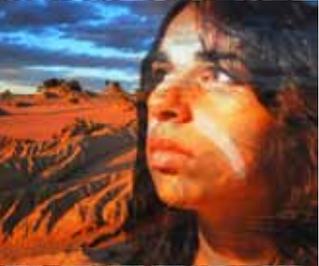
Aunty Fay Carroll is currently an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer in Sydney Region. Her commitment to education is evident in the 20 years she has spent with the NSW Department of Education and Communities. Her belief is that education is a life-long process and her message to young people is that a strong education is the key to their future.

Aunty Fay continues to dedicate herself to ensuring that Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Year 12 in Sydney Region gain quality schooling. One of the ways in which she strives to improve the life of Aboriginal youth is to speak with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in schools and classrooms across the Region.

In 2008 Aunty Fay was appointed to the City of Sydney's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel which is made up of community and industry professionals, youth and Elders. The purpose of the panel is to provide advice to the City of Sydney about matters important to Aboriginal communities. She brings a wealth of community knowledge and grassroots education to her role on the advisory panel.

Aunty Fay also does valuable philanthropic work for many other organisations in the Aboriginal community including serving as Chairperson of the board of the Walla Mulla Family & Community Support organisation and being a support person for the Walking Together program. She is also a member of the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council.





Amanda Dass-Rose

School Learning Support Officer
Tempe High School

Amanda Dass-Rose grew up in La Perouse, the daughter of a Scottish and Irish Mother and a Gamilaroi Father from Moree. As the School Learning Support Officer - learning support, Amanda works with students with special education needs making sure they are comfortable within the school environment and confident in their abilities. Amanda has a willingness to provide assistance wherever and whenever it is needed.

As the staff member within the Koori Room Amanda is a key person in providing a place where the Aboriginal students can feel at home. With her big heart and inclusive attitude, it's not only the Aboriginal students who feel welcomed. She encourages all students to do their best and is always on hand to help them.

Amanda is a talented artist and has encouraged the students to develop their own artistic skills. She has promoted the students' art in exhibitions and workshops.

"Mandie has been a great inspiration to me. She has helped me discover myself and has given me hope for life. She's always there for me and she has a heart of gold. Because of Mandie there is no racism in the Koori Room. For her everyone is the same."

Yarrie

Year 12 student and refugee from Sierra Leone

"Mandie is consistent, generous and inclusive. She is like a mother to the students and does all she can to give them the best chance to do well."

Kim Salisbury

Teacher Librarian and Aboriginal Education Committee Coordinator

Rachel McAusland

Paraprofessional – Aboriginal
Community Engagement Officer
and Norta Norta tutor
Sydney Secondary College

I am a descendant of the Gadigal
people of Sydney.

Growing up I went to many primary
schools, including Alexandria Public
School, Redfern Public School and
South Coogee Public School. I grew up
with my Parents and my Nan. I am an
only child and had lots of cousins, aunts
and uncles close to my age. We all got
along very well.

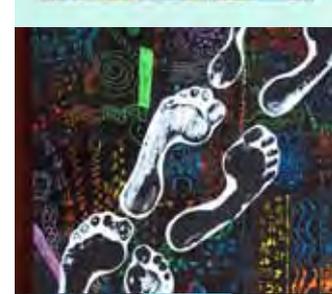
I attended Randwick Girls High School
and although I faced many challenges
in my senior years, I graduated with the
HSC in 2004. These challenges included
moving from South Coogee and
travelling from Belfield to Randwick every
day - I was on time most days! - and the
death of my Nan during my HSC year.
I was so determined to get my HSC as
I knew it would make my Nan proud and
life easier to gain employment.

I started a Bachelor of Nursing but
after a while I realised it was not for me.
I changed to Business Administration

Traineeship and found it boring.
I looked into Aboriginal Programs at
University and found the right course
for me – Bachelor in Education in
Adult Education at the University
of Technology Sydney. I have three
subjects to go and expect to graduate
in May 2013. Throughout my studies I
have worked full-time and have had to
be very disciplined and organised.

I love my job because I can give back
to my community. Growing up I used
many Aboriginal services and now I
can give something back and help
others. I like the fact that every day
is different, I never manage to get
through my 'to do' list.

I enjoy working at Sydney Secondary
College as I like the staff members and
the strong support from executive staff.
The College Principal, Judy Kelly, has
been inspirational in making Aboriginal
Education a priority at Sydney
Secondary College. I think it's good
that there is more than one Aboriginal
worker in the College; the kids respect
and value us and this goes both ways.
Rebeckah Mooney is great to work
with as we both enjoy our jobs and we
respect and support each other.





Rebeckah Mooney

Aboriginal Education Officer
Sydney Secondary College

I am a Biri woman from Strathmore Station, Queensland, and a Kaanju woman from Coen, North Queensland.

I grew up in the inner city suburb of Glebe. I attended Forest Lodge Public School and then Glebe High School where I obtained my HSC in 1999. Aunty Fay was a great support during my time at Glebe High School. Following school I did a traineeship in food and beverage. I was employed in the hospitality industry for over three years.

In 2005 I was employed as a Student Learning Support Officer at Balmain and Leichhardt campuses of Sydney Secondary College. In 2007 I successfully gained the Aboriginal Education Officer position at Sydney Secondary College. This was a big year in my life as I married my husband, Kevin. We now have two boys – Cian, who is five, and Tadhg, who is two years old.

Family has always been important in my life. My Grandparents and my Parents were inspirational. I have two older brothers and we always wanted to make our parents and family proud. We were brought up to value hard work, they expected us to be good people and finish school. We never wanted to disappoint them. Our home was always full of family and friends. Mum and Dad welcomed everyone.

I love my job as an Aboriginal Education Officer as I get to work with my community, especially because my focus is my Aboriginal community. I see education as the future and every day I am able to see our kids succeeding. I'm proud of their achievements and blown away by their determination and ambitions.

I like working at Sydney Secondary College as Aboriginal Education is valued. My working relationship with Rachel McAusland is critical and strong. We are role models for the students. We are real people. We feel that the students seem more settled with us around. The extra support we get from the Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit and Jeff Hockey (Sydney Secondary College School Chaplain) really helps us care for each and every student equally.

Although it was a struggle for my community when Sydney Secondary College was created, I think it has been a good thing. Students have had an opportunity to meet other communities and experience success. The transition period to high school is hard but it makes the students stronger and it brings different perspectives together. We trigger success now.

Elaine Russell

Community Member
Glebe Public School

Aunty Elaine, an internationally renowned Aboriginal artist and creator of children's picture books, is a community member of Glebe Public School. Recently she has designed and painted a mural for the school with the support of a community grant from the City of Sydney Council. Over the years Elaine has contributed to several school projects, and she has several grandchildren who have attended the school.

Aunty Elaine had to struggle to realise her childhood dream of becoming an artist. The quality of her work as a visual artist and storyteller, is highly valued by the students. Elaine is able to touch people directly through her work, capturing the vivid scenes of her childhood in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, and getting the children talking. Elaine's work hangs in the National Gallery in Canberra, as well as galleries in NSW, and her books are published internationally. As a practising visual artist, who continually challenges herself to take on new projects and improve her skills, Elaine is a wonderful role model for the students and the community.

"We feel so fortunate having Aunty Elaine involved in our school, sharing her amazing paintings and stories."

Katrina Stomann
Community Liaison Officer

"Elaine has inspired me to believe in art and imagination. She is always welcoming and inclusive of all cultures, and carries Aboriginal stories so beautifully."

Liz Rooney
Parent





Kirsty Everett

Teacher

Blakehurst High School

Kirsty Everett is a Darug woman of the Eora Nation. In her role as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Blakehurst High School, Kirsty has made a valued contribution to lifting the literacy and numeracy levels of Aboriginal students. Kirsty facilitated funding through the Norta Norta program so that all of the school's senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could receive tutoring in both English and Mathematics. Kirsty personally tutors four of the seven senior students.

The impact of Kirsty's contribution to Blakehurst High School extends beyond the senior tutoring program. She has recently incorporated Reconciliation Week into the Year 9 English program, where it will remain, and has also raised the awareness of staff and students at the school of Aboriginal culture and issues regarding Indigenous rights and education.

"Kirsty has worked hard within the school community to enrich our understanding of the Aboriginal culture and engender an amalgamation of the societal concepts, which has assisted us in the teaching of our practical subjects, especially in the areas of making our subjects applicable in the real world."

Stuart Moses

Head Teacher – TAS

"Kirsty has been able to raise the awareness level of our teachers and students to the variances in education for Aboriginal students and also the underlying necessity of continuing to acknowledge the rights of the Aboriginal people in our community."

Sue Gerrey

Teacher – TAS

Marcus Arvidson

Aboriginal Education Officer
Glebe Public School

A proud Yuin man from the South Coast of NSW, Marcus is currently the Aboriginal Education Officer at Glebe Public School. He is Chair of the Schools in Partnership (SiP) Advisory Committee and also a member of the Sydney Region Aboriginal Advisory Committee (RAEAC). Since 2010 Marcus has been studying to become a teacher.

With immense dedication and compassion to his role in supporting the learning of students in the classroom, Marcus has also devised extracurricular activities designed to expand the number of enrichment opportunities available to students.

An excellent proponent of Aboriginal Education, Marcus has enriched the knowledge of students, staff, parents and community members, earning the trust and respect of the school community.

In 2011 Marcus was the recipient of a Sydney Region Award for Outstanding Achievement by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Staff Member.

"Marcus is like my son, I am so proud of him going to Uni to fulfil his dream."

Aunty Wendy

School Learning Support Officer

"Watching Marcus grow in confidence over the years he has been at Glebe Public School has been an inspiration for me. I am proud to see him learning, and excelling, in the field of education. He is a credit to youth and to Aboriginal people."

Vicki Pogulis

Principal





Wendy Buchanan

School Learning Support Officer
Glebe Public School

Wendy works as a School Learning Support Officer and relieves in the role of Aboriginal Education Officer. Part of her role is to support transition to high school and a special nine week transition to Kindergarten program called Headstart. Wendy is also a member of the Schools in Partnership (SiP) Advisory Committee and the organising team of NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day events at the school.

A proud Dunghutti and Gumbainggir woman, Wendy provides Aboriginal perspectives to all students, staff and families. Her strong ties to the local community – six of her children were students at Glebe Public School – combined with her kindness and generosity, have seen Wendy earn trust and respect across the school. She is a comforting, nurturing and wise presence for the students and a valued staff member.

“Wendy’s contribution is amazing. At NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day events she can always be seen happily barbequing mountains of sausages or cooking up hundreds of Johnny Cakes, then off she goes to help out at the Youth Centre!”

Katrina Stomann

Community Liaison Officer

“Aunty Wendy teaches me to really respect Aboriginal knowledge and culture, and she gives me good advice about not mucking up at school.”

Luke Streeting

Year 4 student

Liz Sinnott

Principal

La Perouse Public School

Liz Sinnott has an absolute commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students, believing that the best way to improve their social circumstances is to have high expectations. She says her role as principal has been to, 'Ask the hard questions, expect delivery and celebrate success.'

As principal, Liz Sinnott has led significant improvements in the tone of the school, the quality of the learning and the outcomes of student achievement. Literacy and numeracy achievements and NAPLAN value added scores are consistently one of the best in the Botany Bay Network.

In 2011 one of the six students exiting Year 6 was accepted into a selective school for Year 7. This year, two of the eight Year 6 students were accepted. These gifted and talented students are all Aboriginal. Walking through the school you experience an environment where students and staff are respected, part of a team, and striving for their best.

"She built my kid's confidence, built the school up as a family and makes us feel part of our community."

Parent

"I like Mrs Sinnott a lot and forever. I love our school because I get to learn every day."

Mark

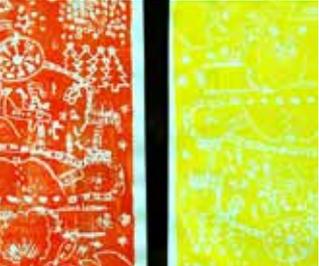
Student

"Mrs Sinnott looks after us. I like taking my work to her 'cause she loves to look at it."

Alea

Student





Frances Grant

Teacher

Bellevue Hill Public School

Frances Grant is a Kindergarten teacher at Bellevue Hill Public School in her second year of teaching. With a personal mission to raise awareness about Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal issues, Frances has assumed a leadership role and actively engages the staff, students and parents in her quest. Her inventive lessons have made Aboriginal stories more meaningful and relevant to her class and other students across the school.

All Kindergarten students and teachers have been actively engaged in art through the Koori Art Expressions initiative. Teachers in Years 1 to 4 have sought out professional learning for Koori Art Expressions and consequently, students from all years will be participating in associated art exhibitions.

Frances has also spoken at staff meetings about the Stolen Generations, relating the experiences of her father and his siblings who were members of the Stolen Generations.

She has urged staff to promote recognition of Aboriginal people and respectful relationships. As a result, teachers have become directly involved in projects to promote reconciliation and

recognition. Units of work containing relevant Aboriginal content have become more prominent, for example, a unit on Democracy in Stage 3 included a study of the Reconciliation timeline which looks at events that have had an effect on the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as the ability to vote, the 1992 Mabo decision and including a proposed referendum in 2012 to recognise Aboriginal people in the Constitution.

Parents value her contribution to the school and are showing greater understanding of controversial issues involving Aboriginal people.

“Fran is an extremely conscientious teacher who has heightened our awareness of Aboriginal issues.”

Parent

“Fran is a great team member who participates in all aspects of the school.”

Principal

Kathryn Dodd Farnawell

Community Member

Sydney Distance Education

High School

Kathryn Dodd Farnawell is a Kaanju-Biri (Gubba) artist. Kaanju is Cape York and Biri (sometimes referred to as Biri Gubba) is North Queensland. She worked for sixteen years as an Aboriginal Education Assistant at Glebe Public School, before becoming a full-time artist. During this time Kathryn was involved in creating cultural awareness programs, and as the lead artist and coordinator with both small and large groups of students created themed murals, banners, paintings, artworks and Year 6 student portfolios for selective high schools.

Her artworks have been shown in many exhibitions and she has been a finalist in a number of art competitions including the Dobell Prize for Drawing in 2009.

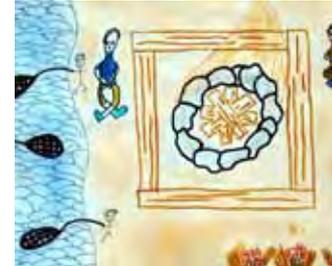
In 2011, Kathryn generously and graciously provided her expertise and talents to assist Aboriginal students at Sydney Distance Education High School in the creation of a mixed media triptych. Aunty Kath described to the students how she has used her painting, printmaking and mixed media techniques on a range of materials, including canvas shoes.

Students who are enrolled at Sydney Distance Education High School come from many areas around Sydney. To attend

the campus involves a substantial journey for the students. This inspired the layout of the collaborative artwork as the school's logo featured in the centre canvas and the sand from the local area was used to add texture and a local connection to the materials. White footprints were added heading into the centre to represent all of the students coming together, physically and in spirit. The students painted the names of their suburbs along the borders of the canvas, and also wrote messages of personal significance, such as 'everyone needs an education' and 'work together to save the wildlife'.

All students were involved in the art making process and Aunty Kath allowed the students to adopt their own direction. Their initial inspiration was taken from the 2011 Koori Art Expressions theme Change: the next step is ours and Aunty Kath asked the students to reflect on their own journeys and how they were 'working together and being together.'

Aunty Kath demonstrated different techniques for the students including stamping to create dots and circles, and also instructed the students in the use of a variety of materials including acrylic paint, textas, acetate, sand and glue. She praised the students for their efforts exclaiming, "It's beautiful and messy!" and reminded them that "we need to be caring of each other." Her guidance and motivation helped make the day a resounding success.





Belinda Shepherd

Community Member
Ramsgate Public School

Belinda Shepherd has brought a true sense of community and cohesion to Ramsgate Public School in her role as the president of the school Parents and Citizens Association, a role she has held since 2010.

With her tireless efforts to support the principal, teachers, students and parents, Belinda helps ensure that Ramsgate is the best place for students to be cared for, nurtured and educated. One student summed up Belinda's work and personality saying, "Belinda rocks!"

She promotes the achievements of the school at every opportunity. Her newsletters and messages to the parents are always positive and supportive. She encourages everyone that she works with in the school community to do the same and to feel the same pride that she feels every day.

"I am proud to be an Aboriginal Australian, I am proud to be a mum and a wife, I'm proud of my children every day, I'm proud to say I choose to send my children to public schools and I am proud to be a valued member of a team of dedicated and passionate people shaping the future of our country."

Belinda Shepherd

Bradley Hansen

School Learning Support Officer
Matrville Soldiers Settlement
Public School

Bradley Hanson is a member of the La Perouse Aboriginal community. Growing up, Bradley attended La Perouse Public School and continued on to Matrville Sports High School to successfully complete his HSC.

After leaving high school Bradley started part-time casual work at Chifley Public School and at Matrville Soldiers Settlement Public School in 2009. He accepted full-time casual work with the latter in 2010-2011.

Through his experience working as an Aboriginal School Learning Support Officer in the classroom, Bradley has gained skills and confidence and is now currently studying his Bachelor of Education Primary through the Gadigal Program at Sydney University. He continues to work one day a week at our school while he is studying.

During his time at Matrville Soldiers Settlement Public School he has built a genuine relationship with all of the students and is a very polite, popular member of staff. He has grown into a mature young gentleman and is a positive role model for all Aboriginal children.

“Bradley is also a very talented sportsman and has played Rugby Union for Randwick, Rugby League for La Perouse United JRLFC and OZTAG for South Sydney. He was selected for the Junior Bunnies and represented South OZTAG at state level.”

Calita Murray
Aboriginal Education Officer







Working together





Djamu

Indigenous Art education at the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Djamu is a word from the Gadigal language and means 'here I am' or 'here I come'.

In 2009 the Art Gallery of New South Wales developed and delivered the first Djamu Program for Indigenous Art Education. Twenty Indigenous primary and secondary students had the opportunity to develop their relationship with art, a sense of participation in the life of the Gallery, and an understanding of professional pathways and career opportunities available in the Visual Arts.

As a result of the successful completion of the initial program, two annual Indigenous art education programs have been initiated at the Gallery: the Djamu Junior program for Indigenous students in Years 5 and 6, and Djamu Senior for Indigenous senior secondary Visual Arts students. Students are given the rare opportunity to engage directly with artworks, practising artists and the wider art world. Students meet curators and educators at the Art Gallery as well as people in many different areas of the art world such as artists, curators, conservators, registrars, and gallery owners. Some of the artists who students have met include Esme Timbery, Genevieve Grieves, Daniel Boyd, Elaine Russell, Jason Wing, Roy Kennedy and r e a. Students also meet other important people from the community and visit places such as the Botanic Gardens, the Powerhouse Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

"My favourite one was Roy Kennedy because I liked the printmaking. He made a little metal plate and he made it where he came from, all the missions and what they looked like when he lived there."

Student, Djamu Junior participant

Students in Djamu Junior meet artists, join in artist led art making workshops and in guided discussion tours of the collections. Senior secondary students participating in Djamu Senior also visit artist studios and galleries, other arts institutions and cultural centres, develop their critical writing and interpretation skills and receive personal support on the development of their Visual Arts body of work from practising artists and educators. All students develop their skills and talents as artists and gain a greater understanding of the art world and their potential to achieve within it as artists, curators or other arts workers. The program aims to raise aspirations, build student confidence and skills and present the arts as a viable career path for the future.

"We learned that artists also do film and media productions and we also learned a bit of our culture."

Student, Djamu Junior participant

The program is free of charge to participating students, and all meals, art materials and transport to and from the Gallery have been provided.

The program has been specifically designed to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts, perspectives and cultural practices. Indigenous museum educators based at the Gallery, as well as teachers from participating schools and the Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU) accompany students at all times.

The partnership with the AEU is an integral part of the successful delivery of the program. The Gallery worked closely with members of the AEU in setting up and running the program. The AEU liaises with schools to co-ordinate transport and at least one supervising teacher from a participating school to accompany the students at all times. The AEU also supplies one member of their team to be present throughout the program. Most transport costs have been met by the Department of Education and Communities. The AEU is also instrumental in liaising with family members of students who experienced any difficulties in attending the program or in their relationships with other students. Jane Stanley, Aboriginal Education Consultant, Sydney Region, has done a lot of the groundwork with the students at their schools and liaised with the schools involved in the Djamu programs.

Key outcomes of the program include the initiation and development of relationships with Indigenous community members, teachers and other education professionals in the Local Government Area, and improved access to the Art Gallery of New South Wales' collection and services for Indigenous primary and secondary students in the Sydney Region.

This innovative and successful program was developed in order to cultivate an ongoing and repeatable education program for Indigenous primary and secondary students to run annually at the Gallery. This outcome has been effectively and demonstratively met as students have become familiar with the Gallery's collections, spaces and staff of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Department. They have developed their knowledge of Indigenous art practices and of a range of other art movements, their insight into the art world and the variety of vocational opportunities available. They have also developed confidence in negotiating the Gallery spaces, discussing artworks and speaking in front of a group.

The Djamu program offers alternate vocational pathways in an area in which Indigenous people are currently under represented in a professional capacity to students who are interested in the arts. The program offers professional development to Indigenous educators who will continue to work with the Gallery in an education role.

Jonathon Jones, curator of the Aboriginal Art Department at the Gallery, features in the online film about the Djamu program on the Gallery's website. Jonathon explains how the program looks "at getting young Aboriginal kids into the Gallery and how we could show them what's going on in the Gallery, all the different areas of the Gallery just so they become familiar with the space, familiar with what goes on here and perhaps feel a sense of ownership as well, and hopefully... be some day interested on coming into the Gallery or working at the Gallery."

"A lot of our Aboriginal kids don't like to put their hands up and ask questions; that's another skill they learned during the program. They were taken on some fantastic excursions."

"It's a deadly program!"

Jane Stanley, Aboriginal Education and Engagement Consultant, Sydney Region





Parliament of New South Wales

The Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates, Yarn-Up (Years 5 and 6), and Speak-Up (Years 7 and 8) are three innovative and powerful programs held annually in the Legislative Assembly of Parliament NSW.

This series of debating and public speaking programs for primary and secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, hosted by the NSW Parliament, engages and challenges students to develop their confidence in public speaking, and connects them with other Aboriginal students responding to contemporary issues. The programs also provide older students with the opportunity to take on leadership and mentoring roles. The events are facilitated by the Education Section of the Parliament, and the training of the students and organisation of the programs has been conducted by officers from the Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

The students who have participated in the program have gained in confidence and have improved their public speaking, debating and expressive language skills. They have also become familiar with the NSW Parliament and its role in our democracy. The opportunity to debate in the historic chambers that are used by NSW Members of Parliament to debate issues and make legislation is an invaluable and memorable event for the students and their families.

Through participation in this series of programs students have developed and improved their communication skills and gained an insight into the principles of Australian parliamentary democracy.

"This is a very worthwhile program that has grown from one small debating event to a series of three events that foster the development of speaking skills and participatory democracy, for a wide range of Aboriginal students from the Sydney Region. It has been a privilege to host these events at the Parliament and to see the enormous good that they have achieved."

Daniela Giorgi, Education Officer, NSW Parliament

Momentum Cloud Technologies

Momentum Cloud Technologies (Momentum), in collaboration with the Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education and Communities, undertook a trial to develop software that would allow educators to track and manage personalised learning plans (PLPs) for Aboriginal students, using cloud-based technologies.

PLPs contain a depth of academic information, anticipated goals and outcomes. PLPs are developed in consultation with the student, the student's family, caregivers and educators, and to be implemented successfully, must contain relevant student data and be readily accessible to stakeholders.

This trial has seen educators access and experience Momentum's online software tools known as ESR Momentum. The trial also provided pertinent feedback on how the software could be evolved to meet the ongoing needs of key stakeholders.

Individual students continue to benefit from the online solution as it provides an easily accessible space for educators to retrieve, manage and update student plans. The solution assists with the Aboriginal students' continuity of learning by transitioning plan information from one year level to the next, or from school to school.

"This trial with the Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education and Communities has been a valuable experience for us. The development of this software for the management of students' personalised learning plans has also added exceptional value to the educational outcomes that can be delivered through the ESR Momentum software."

Aaron Hughes, Business Development Manager, Momentum Cloud Technologies

Successful outcomes of the trial include the creation of an online portal that aggregates student planning information, and the fact that this student planning information can be easily transferred from year to year, teacher to teacher, and school to school, assisting with the continuity of learning. The trial is facilitating the ongoing development and evolution of a cloud-based application to allow PLPs to be monitored, tracked and managed at school and wider levels.

Another key outcome of the trial that has been met is that educators partake directly with the development of technology tools to ensure their functional requirements are incorporated to meet each user's needs.

"We feel privileged that through the consultation and information provided by regional stakeholders, school executives and educators, we were able to help the Region and NSW state schools using ESR Momentum improve students' educational outcomes."

We look forward to continuing to incorporate the Sydney Region and educators' functional requirements into the online PLP software and look forward to supporting the Region's sustained commitment to improving the education and life outcomes of all students."

Aaron Hughes, Business Development Manager, Momentum Cloud Technologies





Souths Cares

Souths Cares has partnered with the NSW Department of Education and Communities as well as Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, through the Learn Earn Legend brand, to build a School to Work Transition Program. This program works with Indigenous Years 10, 11 and 12 students to help them complete their HSC and develop a pathway to either tertiary education or employment. Some of the many facets of this program include cultural awareness, career assessment, resume building, interview technique, grooming and etiquette. Industry and employer visits as well as tertiary institution visits assist the students in gaining additional information to help them make decisions around their future. Mentoring and case management also provide the students with valuable support and guidance.

The program has had a significant impact on those students and schools that have engaged with Souths Cares. South Sydney High School has been one such school which has embraced the program and many of the students have been able to take advantage of remarkable opportunities.

Cameron Jenkins was one young man close to being totally disengaged from school. Through the Schools to Work Transition Program, First People HR and Souths Cares he managed to secure an apprenticeship with Sydney Cricket Ground.

“Cameron is now totally engaged in a vocation that he loves as an apprentice, Greenkeeper at Sydney Cricket Ground and Alliance Stadium. When meeting with him five months into his job, he spoke passionately about his role and how much he enjoys coming into work.”

Rhys Wesser, Indigenous Programs Coordinator

“My life has positively changed now that I've found something I love. I feel privileged to work for Sydney Cricket Ground Trust and look forward to one day being a fully qualified greenkeeper.”

Cameron Jenkins

Key outcomes of the South Cares School to Work Transition program have been met. To date we have assisted a number of students to gain employment, prepare their tertiary study applications and for a group of Year 10 students to gain school based traineeships in an industry that they have an interest in.

“I see this as a great opportunity for young people to develop a pathway which can empower them to achieve their dreams.”

Rhys Wesser, Indigenous Programs Coordinator

“This program can be frustrating at times but also very rewarding when you see some of the positive results that can be achieved when people and communities work together.”

Reihana Nathan, Indigenous Programs Manager

Australian Theatre for Young People (atyp)

The Aboriginal Middle Years transition program, in partnership with the Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education and Communities, provides a unique opportunity for Indigenous young people to participate in an arts program that spans upper primary to middle high school. Participation and collaboration with a network of peers, mentors, educators and theatre professionals builds engagement, skills and confidence in students, allowing them to experience a sense of belonging and positive, creative connection as they navigate their way into secondary settings.

In late 2008, the Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit approached atyp to develop a drama program for Aboriginal students at risk of disengaging from school. The program includes workshops, a drama camp and a performance at atyp. Participants are Year 6 students and Year 7 mentors who have already completed the first phase of the program.

The introduction of a third partnership with the Sydney Opera House in 2011 provides further opportunities for Indigenous Year 9 and 10 students to gain work experience during the Bangarra season. The opportunity to meet Indigenous dancers and actors provides these young people with outstanding role models and industry connections.

atyp is thrilled to have partnered with the Sydney Region on this project. We are committed to delivering innovative and creative programs with partners who have the same passion for engaging Indigenous young people in school and believe that providing exceptional educational experiences leads to a love of learning.

“The Aboriginal Middle Years program is a perfect example of how, with creative thinking and excellent communication, drama can be applied to support developmental and educational goals. The partnership with DEC has provided atyp with an exceptional learning opportunity, both for the professional artists we work with and for the company as a whole.”

Fraser Corfield, atyp Artistic Director

“The Aboriginal Middle Years program is one of our most rewarding and fulfilling company activities. I am extremely proud of the results of this program over a number of years and look forward to seeing the program expand to support, encourage and mentor more Indigenous students as they transition through their school years.”

Aaron Beach, atyp General Manager

“The value and high regard for this outstanding partnership program is evidenced by the continued and generous funding from Arts NSW (ConnectEd).”

Peter Murray, atyp Development and Philanthropy Manager

“The program is so important... it gives these young people the opportunity to tell their stories in a safe and supportive environment. The performances made me proud to work with a company that encourages such passionate and insightful young people.”

Sarah Parsons, atyp Workshop Manager





Indigenous work experience program

Sydney Opera House – In Partnership with Department of Education and Communities (Aboriginal Education Unit, Sydney Region) and Australian Theatre for Young People

As one of the actions from the Sydney Opera House Reconciliation Action Plan, Sydney Opera House has implemented an Indigenous work experience program. The program gives students an extensive overview of the processes and professions within a large arts organisation. As the leading arts venue of Sydney, the Sydney Opera House provides students with opportunities that reach beyond the scope of other companies in this city.

“I learnt different ways to act and respond to different people and situations, and how focused and professional you have to be at work.”

Student

The aim of the program is to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 9 and 10 who have demonstrated an interest in the arts, in a work experience program which provides a broad overview of and an introduction to the Sydney Opera House (SOH) and its environment, customers, teams, culture and philosophy. An additional goal is that the students will develop an understanding of the theatre and entertainment industry and its networks for future employment opportunities. The program connects students to Aboriginal artists and industry professionals who are on-site or resident at SOH.

“My experience at SOH has been amazing and definitely not one to forget. Everyone was so nice and welcoming and made me feel welcome. It was easy to get here and I really enjoyed travelling to the city every morning.”

Student

“When I’m older I would love to be a dancer in Bangarra Dance Company. Watching them is just so inspiring.”

Student

During 2011 and 2012, SOH has run three weeks of work experience, engaging with 18 students from all over Sydney. All students have been engaged and inspired by their week at SOH, gaining new skills and an awareness of some of the career pathways open to them. One student from the first week of work experience applied for and was accepted to the SOH Youth Advisory Committee. A number of students were invited back for further work experience on the Deadly Awards at SOH in 2011 and 2012.

Feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. Most commonly, the highlight of their experience has been the interaction with Aboriginal artists or producers.

"Being here this week was an amazing experience and a great opportunity and I think anyone coming here would say the same thing. I gained a lot of skills that I can use in everyday life."

Student

"I learnt to be professional and to be more independent."

Student

A wide range of staff, from administration to tourism, catering, production and back-stage crew, engaged with the students during their time at SOH. Staff working with the students all noticed a marked change in their behaviour and attitude from the beginning of the program compared to the end. Staff reported that by the end of the week the students were relaxed, more confident, energised and willing to share ideas and thoughts. All students showed a vastly increased knowledge of the SOH and the workings of a performing arts venue and were able to engage in challenging and intelligent conversation about the work and the industry.

"This was amazing and I would do it again and again and again. This was an experience I'll never forget. Thank you for this opportunity."

Student





Indigenous literacy project: *an important woman display*

Powerhouse Museum

This program was initiated as part of the annual Indigenous Literacy Day event, which seeks to raise awareness of the literacy crisis in remote Indigenous communities within Australia. The Museum invited students from Glebe Public School, a school within the local community, to visit the exhibition *Yinalung yenu: women's journey*, to learn about the important role of women in Indigenous Australian society. Students wrote and illustrated a personal narrative about a woman important in their own lives and what she shares in common with the women in the exhibition, which formed a public display in the Museum.

With a large percentage of the school's student population coming from Aboriginal backgrounds, having their voices heard in such a public forum was an empowering experience for students. They learnt about the transformative power of reading and storytelling in terms of allowing them to communicate personal messages.

"Aunty Rhonda is my Nan and she takes us to Gulargambone, where she comes from. When we are there we go out looking for emu nests so that we can get the eggs. The nests are made out of brown and yellow grass and the green emu eggs are in the middle. We find the nests by looking through binoculars. Nan keeps telling us to watch out for the emus because if they see us they will peck us on the head."

Tyler Weldon, student

Those aunts and grannies that had been the inspiration for many of the students' stories were visibly moved by the students' achievements along with witnessing their very personal stories being told.

"The Aunties were very encouraged by the exhibition and feel that it is the type of experience that will ensure that their culture lives on. Thank you also to the staff of the museum who looked after us all so well The Aunties, told me that they felt like royalty!"

Teacher

The program captured the students' creative literacy achievements and provided them with a platform to engage with the Powerhouse Museum's collection in a personal and meaningful way.

Effective collaboration between the school and the Powerhouse Museum was another key outcome, allowing students to become greater stakeholders in the Museum through their participation as authors of material on public display.

The initiative showcased Glebe Public School's strong reading literacy along with the dedication of teachers at the school to support student learning and achievement.



School programs



NAIDOC Week 2012

Carlton South Public School

During the last week of Term 2, a series of intensive Aboriginal workshops were run by staff at Carlton South Public School culminating in a NAIDOC Week whole school assembly.

The workshops were designed to involve staff and students in achieving greater understanding and tolerance for Aboriginal people, their culture and heritage. The activities included reading and dramatising Aboriginal Dreamtime stories, learning about Aboriginal music, song and dance, creating symbolic art work, participating in weaving lessons, exploring bush tucker and cooking damper. Year 5 and 6 students also profiled the lives of prominent Aboriginal people and reflected on the significance of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy 40 years on.

The NAIDOC Week whole school assembly was opened with the enthralling participation of four Aboriginal parents, who delivered the Welcome to Country and demonstrated Aboriginal artefacts, tools, and making and playing the didgeridoo. Highlights included the national anthem sung in Dharawal, and Aboriginal sportsmen explaining and answering questions from the students about their football and basketball careers.

“The activities were fun. I kept thinking of questions to ask.”

Student

One of the senior Aboriginal students, Kaylib Savage, spoke to the assembly about his recent experiences at an Aboriginal camp. A photographer from the local newspaper, The Leader, took photos of school leaders, Aboriginal students and guests, and the

school formation of the Aboriginal flag. Students wore red, yellow or black clothing, according to their Year group and assembled in the required formation on the playground for an aerial photo.

The program has led to an increased recognition of Aboriginal students' backgrounds, and heightened self-esteem. Our Aboriginal families have felt more welcome, breaking down feelings of isolation and discrimination.

“It has been wonderful to share our stories with others and break down barriers.”

Parent

The wider community has been further informed about the role and importance of Aboriginal customs. In addition, the program has acted as a springboard for future initiatives such as regular Aboriginal incursions, expanding school gardens and murals to include native vegetation and more Aboriginal themes and increased signage and flags to welcome our Aboriginal families and visitors.

The program continues to grow and has motivated and generated further lines of inquiry for students and staff.

“The way in which our staff, students and parents have embraced this program is amazing. We as a school community saw the need to increase the school's participation and commitment to Aboriginal Education to build a stronger understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. We are enjoying the journey.”

Principal

Building cultural understanding

The Jannali High School

“We are all one mob.” That was Dean Kelly’s message to the staff of The Jannali High School at their Term 3 school development day program, Building Cultural Understanding. The goal was to enhance and enrich the staff’s ability to further embed Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum delivery by increasing the staff’s cultural knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal people.

All staff visited the Royal National Park where Dean Kelly, an Aboriginal Field Officer, spoke about three pillars of learning in traditional Aboriginal culture – respect, patience and observation – and how knowledge was passed from generation to generation following these pillars. Dean took staff on a walk through the bush and spoke about Aboriginal people’s mental, physical and spiritual connections with the land and between elements of the land.

“Land rights are not about owning but belonging... people belong to the land.”

Dean Kelly

This practical experience made real for staff the sense of belonging that Aboriginal people have to the land. It also served to highlight the belief that the natural environment is an interconnected family and a gift to be treasured and respected.

“To keep it you have to give it away.”

Dean Kelly

One key outcome of this successful initiative was to increase staff awareness and understanding of some of the cornerstones of Aboriginal culture through an experiential and physical journey. The importance of the bush to Aboriginal culture was made real as was the importance of all students having an understanding of the significance of the bush and the connections the bush sustains.

“We have a lot to learn from Aboriginal people... we need to listen.”

Teacher

City to Bush Indigenous Cultural Exchange

Alexandria Park Community School

The City to Bush Indigenous Cultural Exchange program began in 2010. The purpose of this project has been to organise and implement an ongoing cultural exchange and partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students from an urban community in Redfern and students from the remote community of Yirrkala in the Northern Territory. The focus of the project has been to increase retention, resilience and engagement of students from Alexandria Park Community School and two Arnhem Land schools, Yirrkala Community Education Centre (YCEC) and Dhalinybuy Homelands School.

The project has a focus on leadership as students have committed to the project, to their learning and to the requirements of the course. Ten students were chosen in 2010 and 2011 to travel to Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. Students visited and shared the contrasting cultures and experiences with the students from the school in Yirrkala, YCEC, and the homelands school in the outstation, Dhalinybuy.

In order to qualify for this program, students were required to achieve academic and behavioural goals as well as maintaining a high level of attendance. In the lead up to the Arnhem Land visit, students were immersed in cultural studies, learning about the traditional culture and life style of the Yolngu people. Students engaged in on-line communication with students living in the remote community of Dhalinybuy, with whom they spent much of their time during their stay. The Dhalinybuy students shared with their Sydney visitors their knowledge of the bush, teaching the students and staff to hunt for mud crabs and oysters and how to cook them over an open fire.

“When we finished spear fishing we came back to our camp. We had some dinner with the students and Elders. Then when we finished dinner the Yolngu students showed us how to do some traditional dances. We danced for hours around the campfire.”

Nise Tuo pepe

Student

The relationships students formed both with each other and with the Yolngu People were life changing and opened students' minds to the ways of life in a remote Aboriginal community. One of the most profound impacts of the trip was the noticeable increase in the students' self-esteem and confidence.

After they returned from Arnhem Land, the ten Year 8 students wrote stories about their rich experiences. These were written with the support of Sydney Story Factory.

“My favourite part of the trip was going to Bawaka to spear crabs and drink coconut juice. I felt happy to discover beautiful places in Australia. We loved it so much we asked our teachers if we could stay a bit longer but they said no. We never thought it could be as good as we were told, so it was great to go there!”

Douglas Riley

Student

Schools Reconciliation Challenge

Cronulla Public School

The Schools Reconciliation Challenge is an annual art competition for young people aged 10-16 years. The competition is an opportunity for young people to creatively express their concept of reconciliation as well as showcase their schools' commitment to the reconciliation process. The project, run by the NSW Reconciliation Council exhibits the winning entries at the Australian Museum in Sydney during National Reconciliation Week (27 May-3 June).

In 2012, the collaborative artwork by students of Cronulla Public School was selected from more than 1000 entries.

The winning student entry, Postcard from Cronulla, was inspired by vintage postcards and local areas of interest around students' homes and their school, including Aboriginal rock carvings at Jibbon. Visual Arts teacher, Mrs Hackfath, encouraged the students to critically explore the concept of Our Place.

The program, aimed at Years 5 and 6 students, encouraged students to communicate complex themes and social issues. It required an understanding not just of the artwork itself but also of its cultural, historical and social significance.

Creating the artwork helped to raise awareness of what reconciliation means and the need for respectful relationships. This engagement was a positive indicator of improving relationships not only between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people but all cultural groups at a school level.

A major goal of the program was to strengthen the students' awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding reconciliation; and to promote an awareness of social justice, equity and rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. An outcome of the Schools Reconciliation Challenge was to celebrate the importance of respect, different perspectives and diverse cultural experiences. The students were encouraged and inspired to examine the past and understand that it still has an impact today.

"We had a wonderful response from families who attended the award ceremony and exhibition at the Australian Museum during National Reconciliation Week. Their show of support and encouragement to the children involved was very rewarding. The art program at Cronulla Public School is a highly valued part of the curriculum."
Staff member

Koori Kids Big Day Out

South Coogee Public School
Daceyville Public School
Matraville Public School
Rainbow Street Public School
Botany Public School
South Sydney High School

In 2012, these six schools in the Botany Bay and Network 8 networks instigated a new project for Aboriginal students, Koori Kids Big Day Out, which provided an opportunity for these students to come together, celebrate their culture and develop connections.

The first day focused on the students getting to know each other and discussing who or what the students felt connected to, for example their country; a particular plant or animal; or a significant person. Local Elders were invited to spend time with the students, telling their stories. Each student created a mosaic relating to connectedness, which then became part of a collaborative art work in the Koori Art Exhibition. Students from South Sydney High School attended in the afternoon to organise Aboriginal games with the younger students, providing an excellent opportunity for mentoring and support.

The second day of Koori Kids Big Day Out involved the painting and glazing of art works which was able to be done at each of the home schools.

A morning celebrating the achievements of the students took place on the third day of the program. An assembly was held with special guest-speakers in attendance, as well as an exhibition displaying the students' work. A bush tucker morning tea was provided.

The aim of this project was to provide opportunities for Aboriginal students to explore concepts of belonging, both to groups of people and to places. The project focused on the students' local community and local area, and provided opportunities for learning experiences about relationships with family, community, environment and place.

Key outcomes of the Koori Kids Big Day Out program included Network 8 and Botany Bay schools coming together to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Students had the opportunity to explore their culture through storytelling, asking questions, and identifying and creating their own ceramic art work. The students also had the opportunity to spend the day with Elders from the community as well as each other, forming friendships, learning from Elders, and understanding the contributions made by Aboriginal Australians.

NAIDOC Week celebrations

Undercliffe Public School

Each year Undercliffe Public School places a large focus on NAIDOC Week by holding a special day to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. All students from Kindergarten to Year 6 participate in a range of diverse activities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, cooking, sports and music to enhance their understanding of these cultures.

“I liked cooking damper because it is fun and Aboriginal people made it.”

Brant

Kindergarten student

Buia, a Torres Strait Islander student in Year 3, was given the opportunity to perform traditional dances with her father in front of the entire school. When asked how she felt being given such an opportunity she responded, “I felt really excited that everyone enjoyed learning about my Torres Strait Islander culture.”

The NAIDOC Day celebrations empower the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they are involved in traditional activities, increasing their knowledge about their culture. This program also intrigues and motivates all of the Undercliffe Public School students to take part in and understand the importance of learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

As a result of this program, students across the school have engaged with and shown immense interest in learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have also demonstrated increased confidence and pride in their culture.

“I was amazed on NAIDOC Day because some things I already knew about my culture and some things I didn't know.”

Shania

Year 5 student

Maths After School: a program for middle and upper primary students

Glebe Public School

Glebe Public School in partnership with the Powerhouse Museum has been running the Maths After School program since 2010. On Thursday afternoons during school Terms, Years 3 – 6 students from primarily Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds visit the Powerhouse Museum for support with specific mathematics homework alongside hands-on science demonstrations. The students have the opportunity to explore the Powerhouse Museum's collections and exhibitions as well as interact with staff from a wide range of departments, who generously volunteer their time.

The program assists students in better understanding mathematical concepts and to provide a "real world" context in which to explore these concepts. Another objective is to foster the students' passion for mathematics and build their confidence, particularly in the area of numeracy.

"I have learned new things about maths that I didn't know before."

Student

An evaluation study of the program found that the majority of students agreed that the after school sessions helped to improve their level of understanding of mathematics, primarily owing to the more focused one-on-one attention provided by staff in explaining mathematics and mathematical principles.

"I sometimes get distracted at school because there are too many people... I like it here because I can learn better."

Student

In addition, a few students agreed that the after school sessions have encouraged them to think more about mathematical problems and how to solve them.

"I understand maths better because there are less people than we have in our classroom, and there are more people here to help us."

Student

For the Powerhouse Museum staff who volunteer their skills and time, the program provides a valuable opportunity to engage with the local community and young visitors. It is a chance to experience the Powerhouse Museum through the eyes of a child, and the questions that students ask are constantly surprising. Above all there is the satisfaction of seeing young minds at work, learning and discovering.

"Watching the students' confidence build as they work mathematically and collaboratively on projects each week is fantastic."

Volunteer

Celebrating influential Aboriginal people

Darlington Public School

At Darlington Public School, Aboriginal culture and heritage is lived and acknowledged every day. Every assembly, special event or activity begins with Acknowledgement of Country, the three houses are named after Aboriginal freedom fighters, every class has a native animal or bird as their symbol and students learn about their importance to the Aboriginal people. This recognition of culture is carried out into the local community through performance of dance and song at various venues, and the local community share their culture with the school.

The focus for Term 2 was on researching Influential Aboriginal people, culminating in Mabo Day and NAIDOC Week, when the establishment of The Tent Embassy 40 years on was recognised and celebrated. All students from pre-school to Year 6 were involved in the activities.

“I love Kooni Week when we get to join in all the fun activities.”

Student

For NAIDOC week a replica of the Tent Embassy was built with the outside area being a collage of many Aboriginal students, both past and present, who have attended the school.

These celebrations created a visual impact that welcomed all people as they entered the school. The students recognised that Eddie Mabo had to fight for what he believed in, to be persistent and not give up the struggle.

“I knew Eddie Mabo was important but until we studied him in detail I didn't know just how hard he had to fight.”

Student

The spirit of Eddie Mabo lives on at Darlington Public School as there is an expectation that all children will work hard, uphold the Aboriginal spirit and culture to achieve their dreams.

“These two celebrations once again highlight the fact that whatever you want in life you must be prepared to work hard to achieve your dream.”

Colleen Hayward

Principal

Each student had a sense of achievement as all written work, art, craft, singing and dancing were displayed and enjoyed.

“I loved performing at this school when we don't just perform for the students but they join in to sing and dance with us.”

Visitor

The location of Darlington Public School ensures the ongoing community involvement, the performances at various locations, learning about the past and its impact on the present. The culmination of these celebrations was held at Central Station, where the whole school shared their culture, knowledge, spirit and talent with the public.

“An enjoyable day where we were able to join in with the whole school community”

Parent

Celebrating Aboriginal Education

Camdenville Public School

For four weeks in Term 2 each year Camdenville Public School prepares for an end of Term NAIDOC Week celebration. Each year the school chooses a focus or theme that supports Aboriginal Education. This year the focus was a showcase event where the students presented to the community the learning they had engaged in that met Aboriginal Education outcomes.

Marrickville Council provided the school with additional funding in 2012 through their OPEN events program. These funds were used to support involvement with Aboriginal artists and story tellers from the local community. These community members worked with the students to create artworks and stories, which were featured at the end of Term celebration.

Camdenville Public School's Aboriginal students took centre stage during these activities, leading events and sharing their own experiences. This empowers the students and assists in the development of self-esteem and leadership skills. The Aboriginal Education workers at the school also played key leading roles in the program, showcasing their own talents, building their leadership skills and standing in the community.

Students learned about Aboriginal peoples in their community and recognised that different groups in the local community have specific identifying features, customs, practices, symbols, religion, language and traditions. All students developed their understandings of key events related to the British colonisation of Australia and identified the changes and consequences

for Aboriginal peoples and the continent. They were able to explain how different cultures and traditions contribute to Australian and community identity.

Community members developed their understandings of the importance of Aboriginal Education being a feature of learning in their local school.

"I just wanted to say how impressive and moving I found your address and the whole assembly on Friday. I'm proud that Edie is going to a school that demonstrates commitment and respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and issues in such a way."

Parent

A personalised approach

Georges River College Peakhurst Campus

Georges River College (GRC) Peakhurst Campus is committed to improving Aboriginal student engagement through increased participation in literacy, numeracy and technology programs at a school and regional level. The creation of personalised learning plans for all Aboriginal students has allowed staff to focus on specific learning goals and develop strategies to support these students in meeting the agreed goals.

Peakhurst Campus is very proud to have had two students participating in the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates at NSW Parliament for the first time in 2012. Michael Baggow (Year 10) and Keira Walsh (Year 9) are congratulated for their efforts in preparing for and successfully participating in this wonderful event.

Aboriginal students in Year 7, 8 and 9 were provided with an opportunity to participate in a series of numeracy enrichment activities culminating in a two day workshop, Eco Urbia, at Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre. Jake Potter Daniels (Year 7), Jake Ernst (Year 7), Tully Brown (Year 8) and Louise Masters (Year 9) all relished the opportunity to participate in the very challenging but rewarding activities offered.

Aboriginal students at our campus have continued to excel in school sport in 2012. In particular, the achievements of Tully Brown (Year 8) deserve special mention. Tully is an outstanding athlete, participating

and achieving at a high level across a number of disciplines. Tully represented Georges River Campus Peakhurst Campus in Oztag, soccer and touch football. Her outstanding abilities resulted in her being selected in the Sydney East touch football team. Tully was a member of the GRC Peakhurst Campus cross-country team and represented at a district level. She also represented the school in athletics at the zone championships, becoming age champion, participating in the following events - 100m, 200m, 400m, 90m hurdles, relay events, long jump, high jump and javelin. She then went on to represent at district and state levels.

We are extremely proud of Tully's achievements this year.

Composing Dreaming style stories with a school values focus

Bald Face Public School

Bald Face Public School initiated a whole school based, integrated unit of work on Aboriginal Dreaming stories across the key learning areas of English, Creative and Performing Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. The emphasis was on composing Dreaming stories but the program also covered reading, communicating, writing, self-expression and personal reflection. This creative eight week unit of work focused on developing field knowledge, language skills and exploring many Dreaming stories, their structure and purpose.

The students read and viewed a variety of traditional Dreaming stories using picture books, digital texts and YouTube clips. They participated in discussions exploring the nature of Dreaming stories, their narrative style and most importantly, how they delivered a message of considerable value. Vocabulary charts of descriptive words to use for characters and settings were jointly created by students and teachers. Collaborative class texts were created, before individual students or small groups composed their own narratives.

Students then chose a multi-media manner in which to present their stories including PowerPoint presentations, illustrating their compositions using Comic Life or clip art, scriptwriting their stories and presenting them as nightly news items or as puppet shows, before filming these varied methods of presentation.

“I couldn't believe how well my daughter had presented her story. She was so involved in her work.”

Parent

Dreaming stories were studied from multiple perspectives, other than merely read as a story, providing increased insight into Aboriginal culture and beliefs. A distinction of this program was that teachers challenged themselves and their students by exploring new and different ways of incorporating digital texts and technologies into classroom practice.

The students were exposed to a great deal of background knowledge building. Much of what they thought they knew to begin with was highly stereotypical. The students developed a knowledge base about Dreaming stories, their purpose and construction. The place of pictorial representation in Dreaming stories was explored as students learnt the value of story-telling within Aboriginal culture. Students also learnt more of the importance of the land, its elements and native animals to Aboriginal people.

“What a fantastic experience. The teachers and the students were totally engaged in what they were doing.”

Sally Lawson

Principal

“It was great to see the students so involved in thinking about and interpreting the Dreamtime stories.”

Kim Sinclair

Assistant Principal and class teacher

“Can we do another one? This is so awesome!”

Student

Aboriginal Languages Program

Tempe High School

The Aboriginal Languages Program has been running continuously at Tempe High School since 2001 with an emphasis on the Wiradjuri language. All Year 7 students complete a short course and the students can elect to continue their Aboriginal language studies in Year 8. There are usually two Year 8 classes timetabled for three periods each week. Dance, songs, stories, painting, shell work, bush tucker, fishing, multimedia presentations and games are all used to enhance learning language and culture.

“I have learned that being Aboriginal isn't as easy as it looks.”

Student

As a result of the Aboriginal Language Program, all students gain knowledge, understanding and respect for Aboriginal languages, culture and people. This has included improved student awareness of the history of the local area through bushwalks along Cooks River and Wolli Creek, and excursions to La Perouse, Taronga Zoo and Bidjigal Reserve.

“We chose Tempe High School because it offered Aboriginal languages.”

Parent

The program has a strong academic focus, which is a source of pride for Aboriginal students and makes other students feel more connected and included in Aboriginal issues. The Koori Room initiative supports both the languages program and the Aboriginal students.

“Including Aboriginal languages in the curriculum is a wonderful starting point for raising the value of Aboriginal culture amongst the non-Aboriginal students and staff, as well as fostering self-esteem in the Aboriginal students.”

Teacher

“It validates the culture of Aboriginal people within the school.”

Principal

Learning about Aboriginal culture

Gardeners Road Public School

What does it mean to be Australian? This was just one of the concepts students in Years 3 and 4 had to consider in their exploration of the theme 'Being Australian'.

The students were encouraged to examine what it involves to be a part of a unified and changing community. Gardeners Road Public School welcomed and greatly appreciated the time taken by Ms Elsie Gordon, who spoke to the students about her life as an Aboriginal person and described the many changes that have taken place during her lifetime.

The students were enthralled to hear about what it was like to be born in the bush, and to live off native foods including kangaroo, grubs and berries.

"I found it interesting that you had to be very careful if you were going to kill an echidna to eat. If you bruised it too much it was not good to eat."

Jasmine

Student

Aunty Elsie explained to the students how her family had moved around looking for work, and how at one stage she'd had 50 people living in her house in Alexandria. Aunty Elsie called on the students to keep working to bring about change so that all Australians could live the best life possible.

From their engagement and enthusiasm with the project and their interactions with Aunty Elsie, the students gained a greater understanding of life from a historical and Aboriginal viewpoint. Another valuable outcome was the students' enhanced understanding that Australia is a vibrant and changing community.

"Australia is changing all the time and we are learning to do things better."

Korey

Student

Dear Aunty Elsie

4/3K and 4/3MB would like to thank you for coming to talk to us. We learnt so much about your childhood out in the bush. It was interesting to hear about how you had to find your own food. It seems funny to us that there were no shops for you to go to.

It was just amazing that you had no shoes. Some days your feet must have really hurt and if they did hurt, there was no hospital to go to.

We think it was really sad you were not allowed to go to school when you were little.

It was interesting to think about how Australia changed during your lifetime. Your talk really gave us a lot to think about.

Yours sincerely

Jasmine and Izayah

Connecting Numeracy to Deadly Careers

Sydney Secondary College

Once a week for three hours, Aboriginal students across Sydney Secondary College, met with Aboriginal guest presenters working in a range of diverse careers. This community based program, Connecting Numeracy to Deadly Careers, showcased and highlighted for students the links between mathematics and technology and potential occupations.

During 2012, Aboriginal students visited a number of workplaces and universities. The project gave students greater knowledge about choosing the right career path and examined various professions while incorporating numeracy.

The success of the program was reflected in the increased willingness of students to participate in group activities and their greater confidence while speaking within the group about their potential careers post school. Attendance for the program was extremely positive and the students were enthusiastic and excited about visiting community organisations.

Connecting Numeracy to Deadly Careers allowed Aboriginal students to explore a range of organisations and consider how numeracy is connected to everyday events, and how to gain employment and select the right subjects for Years 11 and 12. The program also

increased the students' capacity to use technology for learning and make connections with the local community. Staff participating in the program gained a greater understanding of the students' needs and aspirations, and provided deeper contact with the Aboriginal community.

Warada Dancers

Matraville Soldiers Settlement Public School

Students across Years 3-6 are taught traditional and contemporary Aboriginal dance by Calita Murray, an Aboriginal Education Officer and trained NAISDA dancer. This program enables students to create, rehearse and perform within the local area and at important Sydney events, including performances for the Prime Minister, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veteran's Day and important days that hold significance to Aboriginal people.

Primary school Aboriginal students at the school have the opportunity to learn dance, create and interpret movement to tell a story. Rigorous weekly rehearsals over the past few years have created a disciplined group of students.

Over the past three years local community members have also taught didgeridoo for inclusion in performances and dances in which boys can tell their stories. As the program has grown, the Schools in Partnership (SiP) committee funded a second community member to teach dance in an Aboriginal context during 2012.

Passing the skills of dance from senior primary students to the younger students demonstrates to young children in the primary school context, a custom within the Aboriginal community of passing traditions down through the generations. Key outcomes of this program include pride in Aboriginal culture tangibly demonstrated to the local community, and

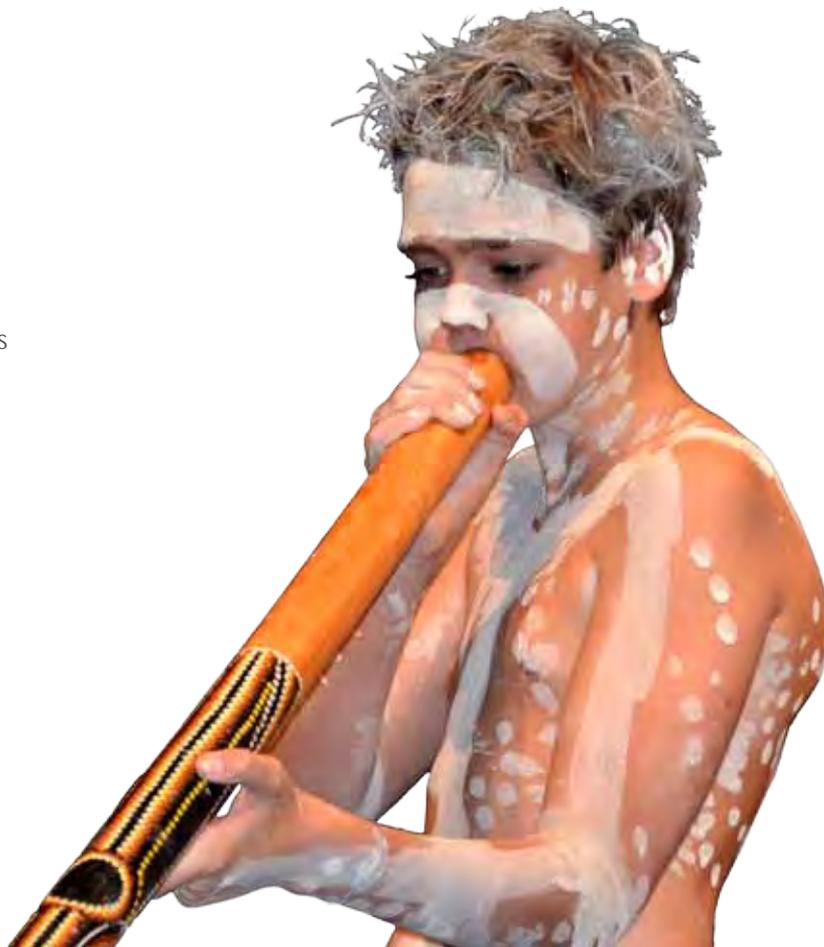
recognition of the skills of local performers. Intrinsic discipline is being developed in the students through rehearsal and performance, and their abilities to interpret and tell Aboriginal stories through dance are nurtured and supported.

"The performance at the Little Bay Community of Schools launch where the Warada dancers performed with the choir of Brown Skin Baby was very moving bringing a tear to my eye."

Local Aboriginal Elder

"To see young primary students so engaged and skilful in their heritage is such a positive story to tell."

Local AECG President



ASSIST *(Aboriginal Students Supported In Secondary Transition)*

Endeavour Sports High School

ASSIST is a targeted transition program designed for Year 6 Aboriginal students so that they have a seamless transition to high school. The program has been developed to welcome and connect Aboriginal students to Endeavour Sports High School using a range of effective and culturally appropriate transition strategies.

During Term 4, an Aboriginal teacher mentor visited each student at their primary school and liaised with their class teacher to gather relevant information concerning the students' academic progress. The mentor contacted each student's family and together they developed a pre-secondary personalised transition plan. In the plan, each student reflected on their primary school progress and identified their personal strengths and interests. They shared their concerns about transition to secondary school and negotiated achievable goals.

The Year 6 Aboriginal students were invited to participate in a special orientation day, where they familiarised themselves with their new school environment and staff. They met and socialised with current Year 7 Aboriginal students who shared their journeys at Endeavour Sports High School. Students were also supported by cross-aged Aboriginal student mentors during planned cultural activities, where they chatted in a supportive environment.

"I felt more comfortable and it helped me to know more people."

*Latisha
Student*

Students who participated in the ASSIST program were embraced by the Aboriginal school community which enabled them to quickly adjust and settle into their new secondary school environment. When surveyed, all students who participated in the ASSIST program found it enjoyable and helpful. They remain connected to our Aboriginal program and want to be involved in the next ASSIST program.

"I got to know other students and if I ever felt lonely I know I could always count on others in the Koori Room."

*Katie
Student*

Whole School Approach to Aboriginal Education

Balmain Public School

Aboriginal Education is a vibrant and ongoing part of the curriculum at Balmain Public School. All staff have taken part in professional dialogue on the importance of, and strategies to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching and learning programs, resulting in numerous opportunities for students to participate in activities that celebrate Aboriginal culture and heritage. Art making, Aboriginal stories, dance and sport are just some of the programs in which students are engaged.

During 2011, Balmain Public School students participated in the Koori Art Expressions exhibition with the theme Change: the next step is ours. Artwork by students in Years 3 and 4 was displayed at the Australian Museum.

The end of year art show also featured a large number of works with Aboriginal content. Students had created a representation of an animal from a Dreamtime story. All students from Kindergarten to Year 6 also decorated a boomerang using Aboriginal symbols.

Barry McGrady, a Sydney Region Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, shared his football skills with many of the Balmain Public School students in 2011. Students across the school were motivated by these humorous, energetic instructions and activities.

Aunty Fay visited Balmain throughout 2012 attending NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week celebrations; viewing the Easter Hat Parade, making classroom visits and attending the Presentation Day assembly. Aunty Fay continued to share her stories about Aboriginal Australia while educating students about our country's history.

Aboriginal students from Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus were invited to share their presentations on Aboriginal Australia during NAIDOC Week. A positive relationship and link was formed between the primary and secondary schools. All staff participated in planning sessions in order to provide enriching learning experiences about Aboriginal Australia for their students.

During Reconciliation Week our students performed an Aboriginal dance which was highly commended by Aunty Fay. A senior student also shared his research about Aboriginal Australia and its history. In 2012 students entered the Wakakirri story-dance competition with a performance that stemmed from the text *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley. The students performed expressive Aboriginal dance pieces that demonstrated their understanding and respect for Australia's Aboriginal heritage.



Regional programs





Aboriginal Secondary Students Great Debates

2012 saw the sixth year of the Great Debates held in NSW Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students in Years 9 to Year 12. In previous years the program was opened to students in Years 7 and 8. As the Great Debates grew from its inception in 2007 with six students debating one topic to featuring over fifty students from sixteen schools debating a number of topics in 2011, it became necessary to limit the number of topics debated on the day. A new public speaking program was developed for students in the junior secondary years.

This program, developed by the Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit in consultation with Parliament NSW, provides outstanding opportunities through workshops and the final debates for students to utilise and finesse their public speaking, debating and presentation skills. Emerging and talented public speaking students across Sydney Region schools have their skills nurtured and boosted by this successful and stimulating program.

The students are divided into debating teams and are allotted their topic and position as either government or opposition. The topics focus on contemporary themes related to, but not exclusively, Aboriginal current affairs and civics issues. At least one of the topics correlates with the NAIDOC Week theme of that particular year: Since 2010 the students have been empowered by the fact that they actually formulate the debate topics and, after much deliberation, choose the ones to be debated.

Students who have previously debated are invited back to assume leadership and mentoring roles. All of the students, teachers, families, mentors and staff involved in this program demonstrate great professionalism and pride.

Students have gained from the feedback and support they received over the years from politicians and public figures, such as Professor Larissa Behrendt, Director of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney.

Since 2010 audiences have enjoyed the live adjudication system provided by Keepad Interactive, whereby the audience adjudicates as the debate is taking place.

2007 Australia has come to its senses (census)

2008 Reconciliation is a "Sorry" dream

2009 **Honouring our Elders, Nurturing our Youth**

That the police always target Aboriginal youth

That all teachers have low expectations of Aboriginal students

That there should be no flags

That land is more important than money for the Aboriginal people

2010 **Unsung Heroes, Closing the Gap by Leading Their Way**

That anybody can lead the Aboriginal people

That intervention is needed for Aboriginal people to adjust to today's society

That government policies assist in closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities

That remote Aboriginal communities are the key to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people

That we need Aboriginal figure heads to inspire the Aboriginal population to achieve higher

That there is enough media coverage of Aboriginal achievements

2011 **Change: the next step is ours**

That having Aboriginal Education Officers in all schools will improve engagement and outcomes of Aboriginal students

That Sydney is the only city Australia-wide that has developed acceptance for Aboriginal communities

That there should be more structure for Aboriginal students to pursue professions they hold interest in

That there are enough young Indigenous leaders from our own community and generation

That health services should be inclusive of Aboriginal health practices for the wellbeing of Aboriginal communities

That having pride in our heritage and diversity will promote changes in the stereotypical image of Aboriginal people and culture

That Kevin Rudd's apology has increased awareness of the impact of past government policies upon Aboriginal people and communities

2012 **Spirit of the Tent Embassy: 40 years on**

There will always be a need for the tent embassy

The media concentrates on the negative side of Aboriginal affairs

Success cannot be imposed by the Government and individuals have a responsibility for their future

There is a need to recognise Aboriginal people as the first Australians in the Constitution

Being a young Aboriginal person is a disadvantage





“Most people won’t get the chance to come to Parliament House and sit in Parliament House chambers, but we get to go in and debate each other on topics that are relevant to our culture and our people.”

Benjamin Dennison
 Newtown High School of the Performing Arts
 Great Debate host 2011

The following schools have participated in this program:

Alexandria Park Community School

Ashfield Boys High School

Burwood Girls High School

Canterbury Girls High School

Caringbah High School

Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design

Endeavour Sports High School

Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus

Georges River College Peakhurst Campus

George River College Penshurst Girls Campus

Gymea Technology High School

JJ Cahill Memorial High School

Marrickville High School

Matraville Sports High School

Newtown High School of the Performing Arts

Port Hacking High School

Randwick Boys High School

Rose Bay Secondary College

South Sydney High School

Sydney Girls High School

Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus

Sydney Secondary College Blackwattle Campus

Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus

Sylvania High School

Tempe High School

Main supporters:

Parliamentary Education Section,
 Parliament of NSW

Keepad Interactive

Other supporters:

Art Gallery of NSW

Australian Museum

Nura Gili, University of NSW

Yarn-Up

The Yarn-Up initiative aims to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 5 and 6 to develop skills in public speaking and debating.

The program, which started in 2011, consists of two full days of workshops and a showcase held at one of the chambers of the NSW Parliament. At the workshops the students learn about listening, body language, speaking plans, positive feedback, impromptu speaking and preparing a speech – skills that instil confidence in public speaking and debating. The students are supported at school by their teachers and other mentors. The showcase is an opportunity for the students to share what they have learned with their peers, families, school staff and guests.

The talent demonstrated by these young Aboriginal public speakers has blown audiences away. This confidence-building program has been developed to enable students to have a smoother transition to high school. Transition from primary to secondary school has been identified as a critical period in the lives of Aboriginal children, and Yarn-Up is one of the transition programs specifically targeting Aboriginal students in order to involve them in school life and see them grow in confidence as they prepare to move to high school.

In 2011 54 boys and girls participated in the program. This number increased to 59 in 2012, including students who had participated in 2011 and new participants.

“The prepared speeches demonstrated the confidence and skills these talented students possess in researching and constructing an argument, and powerfully conveying a message with clarity and passion. The Stage 3 students displayed their talents at developing persuasive arguments and expressing their opinions.”

Alicia Gilmore

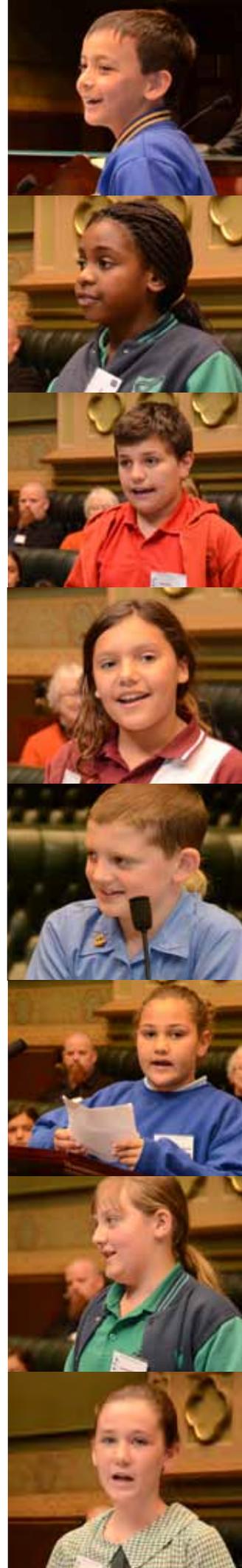
Teacher

Sydney Distance Education High School

Main supporters:

Parliamentary Education Section, Parliament of NSW

Nura Gili, University of NSW





The following schools have participated in this program:

Alexandria Park Community School

Ashbury Public School

Banksmeadow Public School

Bexley Public School

Birchgrove Public School

Botany Public School

Bourke Street Public School

Bronte Public School

Camdenville Public School

Canterbury Public School

Chifley Public School

Darlington Public School

Ferncourt Public School

Forest Lodge Public School

Glebe Public School

Kirrawee Public School

Kurnell Public School

Leichhardt Public School

Malabar Public School

Maroubra Junction Public School

Marrickville West Public School

Mascot Public School

Matraville Public School

Matraville Soldiers Settlement Public School

Miranda Public School

Mortdale Public School

Orange Grove Public School

Penshurst West Public School

Randwick Public School

Rozelle Public School

Sans Souci Public School

South Coogee Public School

Sutherland North Public School

Tharawal Public School

Ultimo Public School

Wilkins Public School



Speak-Up!

Speak-Up! was developed in 2012 to offer a continuum from Yarn-Up (Years 5 and 6) to the Aboriginal Secondary Students' Great Debates (Years 9 to 12), and to alleviate the pressure on the latter program caused by its popularity. The Great Debates had literally reached capacity.

The program is based on the Yarn-Up structure – two workshop days and a showcase at Parliament NSW – but focuses on developing self-confidence and resilience in junior high school students.

Along with the Aboriginal Middle Years transition program with the Australian Theatre for Young People, Speak-Up! is a way of building students' confidence and public speaking skills and to involve them in school life.

“Remember that the debate started with six students and it has grown to accommodate 50 young people. So, in fact, we have started on a positive footing.”

Lynne Irvine

Participating schools:

Ashfield Boys High School

Marrickville High School

Rose Bay Secondary College

South Sydney High School

Sylvania High School

Main supporters:

Parliamentary Education Section,
Parliament of NSW

Nura Gili, University of NSW





Enrichment programs and other initiatives

Sydney Region has conducted various enrichment programs with the support of other organisations.

Numeracy and science enrichment programs

Various numeracy and science workshops for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as mentoring programs, for Years 4 – 12 have been offered since 2009.

These programs aim to stimulate the students' interest in the areas of science and mathematics and provide guidance and academic support, as well as knowledge and understanding of what studying mathematics and science at a tertiary level can offer, and career paths.

These workshops have been offered in collaboration with:

Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning,
University of Technology Sydney

Keepad Interactive

National Centre for Indigenous Excellence

Nura Gili, University of NSW

Observatory Hill Environmental
Education Centre

QUESTACON

Work experience with VIBE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students with an interest in the various disciplines involved in the arts and entertainment industries have participated in work experience programs with Deadly Awards at the Sydney Opera House and NAIDOC Week celebrations at Hyde Park.

Students had the opportunity to gain experience in back of house management, stage management, general event running, front of house management, media and public relations.

They revelled in the opportunity of meeting Aboriginal performers, some who have been their idols since childhood.

Gadigal Connections with the Australian Museum

The Sydney Region Aboriginal Education Unit and the Australian Museum started working on a program designed to support students in Years 11 and 12 enrolled in Aboriginal Studies in completing their major project for the NSW Higher School Certificate. In 2011 a one day workshop for a small number of students was offered, as a precursor to the full program. Sydney Region has worked with the Australian Museum and the Aboriginal Studies teacher from Sydney Secondary College Blackwattle Campus in 2012 in order to develop the program.

Through Gadigal Connections students:

- discuss their major project for the Aboriginal Studies HSC syllabus
- become familiar with the Museum environment
- learn about the Museum's cultural, historical and scientific collections
- meet educators, interpretive officers and curators
- access restricted areas of the Australian Museum, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections.

Visual arts workshops with the College of Fine Arts

Another promising program-partnership has developed with the College of Fine Arts (COFA), University of NSW. Seventeen students, two Visual Arts teachers and one regional consultant participated in a full-day hands-on workshop with Peter Sharp, a COFA lecturer and practising artist. We are working on providing further workshops and some work experience opportunities through this collaboration.



Koori Art Expressions

Koori Art Expressions is a visual arts initiative open to all students Kindergarten to Year 12. This initiative reinforces our commitment to educate all students about Aboriginal Australia and showcases the diverse talents of our students and the dedication of our teachers. The submitted artworks demonstrate the deliberate consideration, efforts and creative abilities invested by the students. The exhibition highlights stunning works from all over Sydney Region in primary and secondary settings, including schools for specific purposes. Many more works are exhibited at the respective schools and in classrooms.

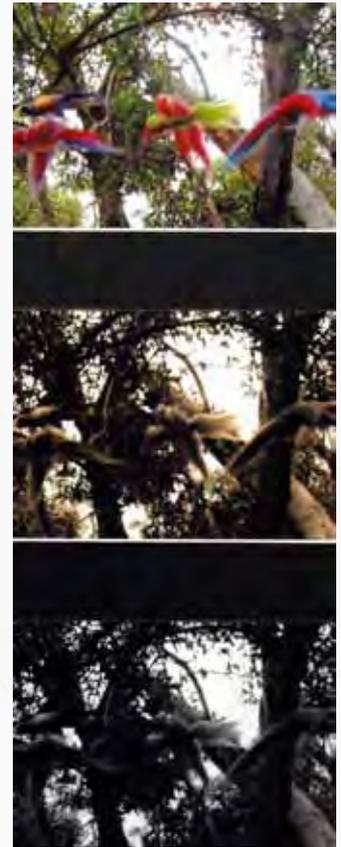
The program is a testament to the wonderful collaborations with other agencies that Sydney Region has been developing and nurturing for over six years now.

We initially drew from the experience of the Not Just a Brush Committee members Kathy Horner and Marie Gibson, who continue to be an integral part of the *Koori Art Expressions* team.

The teachers' exhibition focus day is a highlight in the regional professional learning calendar. We have all appreciated the generosity of Jonathan Jones (Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art), who has shared his vast knowledge with our teachers, and enjoyed the program put together by Amanda Jones (Coordinator of Aboriginal Education Programs). We have been fortunate to listen to and learn with so many outstanding artists and museum educators associated with the Art Gallery of NSW. Both Jonathan and Amanda are members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Department of the Art Gallery of NSW.

The very hard task of selecting the art works has been made easier by the hospitality of the staff and students of Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design (the only visual arts school in the state), where we are able to prepare the works for exhibition. These students have amazed us with the inspired programs and invitations they designed for us over the years.





Students, parents and carers, principals and teachers involved in the program are invited to attend the official opening functions.

Over the years Koori Art Expressions has been the catalyst for the forging of many professional friendships and we would like to make a special mention of our friends in the Australian Museum Learning Services: Jenny Horder, Laura McBride, Sheryl Connors-Young, Charlotte Galleguillos and many other members of the Learning Services team; and to Jan Spencer and Monica Ling, NSW Department of Education and Communities Corporate Events.

Each year the theme of the exhibition follows the NAIDOC Week theme of that year. This gives students the opportunity to express their understanding and appreciation of the NAIDOC Week topic. NAIDOC originally stood for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. This committee was once responsible for organising national activities during NAIDOC Week and its acronym has since become the name of the week itself.

2008

The Apology: first steps

2009

Honouring our Elders, Nurturing our Youth

2010

Unsung Heroes, Closing the Gap by Leading Their Way

2011

Change: the next step is ours

2012

The Spirit of the Tent Embassy: 40 years on

“We value measurements and rightfully use data-driven analysis to inform decision making, so why do we place such importance in programs like Koori Art Expressions? We believe that when young people are involved with the arts, something changes in their lives.”

Dr Phil Lambert

Artists and guest speakers involved with the teachers' professional learning and launch of the exhibitions (in alphabetical order by surname):

Tony Albert, artist

Mr Steven Alderton, Assistant Director, Public Engagement, Australian Museum

Daniel Boyd, artist

The Hon Linda Burney MP, Former Minister for the State Plan and Minister for Community Services

Les Bursill OAM, Dharawal historian, archaeologist and anthropologist

The Hon Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Citizenship and Communities

Nicole Foreshew, curator

Mr Frank Howarth, Director. Australian Museum

Roy Kennedy, artist

Emily McDaniel, Artist and former Teacher Lecturer with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Department, Art Gallery of NSW; currently appointed as Aboriginal Emerging Curator, Biennale of Sydney, NSW Aboriginal Professional Development Program

Peter McKenzie, artist

r e a, artist

Elaine Russell, artist and author

Lucy Simpson, artist





Exhibition spaces:

2008	Pine Street Gallery
2009	Fountain Court, Parliament NSW
2010, 2011	Australian Museum
2011, 2012	The Atrium, NSW Department of Education and Communities State Office
2012	Powerhouse Museum

Main supporters:

Alexandria Park Community School
Art Gallery of NSW
Australian Museum
Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design
Matraville Soldiers Settlement Public School
Not Just a Brush Committee
Powerhouse Museum

Participating schools 2008-2011:

Alexandria Park Community School
Annandale North Public School
Annandale Public School
Arncliffe Public School
Ashbury Public School
Balmain Public School
Banksmeadow Public School
Bellevue Hill Public School
Bexley North Public School
Birchgrove Public School
Bondi Beach Public School
Botany Public School
Burwood Girls High School
Canterbury Boys High School
Canterbury Public School
Carinya School
Carlton Public School
Centennial Park School
Chifley Public School
Clovelly Public School
Coogee Public School
Daceyville Public School
Darlinghurst Public School
Double Bay Public School
Dulwich High School of Visual Arts
and Design
Ferncourt Public School
Gardeners Road Public School
Georges River College
Penshurst Girls Campus
Glebe Public School
Heathcote Public School
Hurstville Public School
Illawong Public School
Jannali Public School
JJ Cahill Memorial High School
Kareela Public School
Kensington Public School
Kirrawee Public School
Kyeemagh Infants School
La Perouse Public School
Lewisham Public School
Malabar Public School
Marrickville High School
Marrickville Intensive English Centre
Matraville Sports High School
Menai Public School
Orange Grove Public School
Randwick Public School
Rose Bay Public School
South Coogee Public School
South Sydney High School
St George Hospital
St George School
Sutherland North Public School
Sutherland Public School
Sydney Children's Hospital School
Sydney Distance Education High School
Sydney Secondary College
Balmain Campus
Sydney Secondary College
Balmain Campus Support Unit (Physical)
Sydney Secondary College Glebe Pathways
Sydney Secondary College
Leichhardt Campus
Sylvania Heights Public School
Taren Point Public School
Tharawal Public School
Wilkins Public School
Woollahra Public School







Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards



The Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards are a highlight of the Sydney Region calendar each year, and they celebrate the academic achievements, leadership skills and attendance of Aboriginal students in our 228 schools. Each school nominates one student, irrespective of the number of Aboriginal students enrolled.

These awards recognise the many Aboriginal students in the Region that are doing well and achieving improved results, challenging the misconception that Aboriginal families do not have high expectations for their children. The immense pride and excitement that the award recipients and their families feel is palpable. Over the last four years, more than 500 students from Kindergarten to Year 12 have received a Deadly Kids Doing Well Award.

The event, held at CarriageWorks, provides a platform for our talented Aboriginal artists and public speakers to shine. Over the years primary and secondary students have dazzled audiences with their performances and have shared their plans and dreams for the future.

In 2012 the Deadly Kids Doing Well Awards were sponsored by First State Super.

“The response from schools over the years has been truly wonderful. The positive feedback we have received from both schools and the families of the award recipients has been very uplifting.”

Dr Phil Lambert

Hosts:

- Simone Armstrong, Newtown High School of the Performing Arts (2010)
- James Bridges, Ashfield Boys High School (2011)
- Nathan Fitzgerald, South Sydney High School (2010)
- Alicia Johnson, Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design (2009)
- Grant Maling, JJ Cahill Memorial High School (2012)
- Georgia-Lee Ockerby-Pickett, Gymea Technology High School (2011)
- Marni Reti, Tempe High School (2012)
- Cory Smith, Rose Bay Secondary College (2009)

Artists:

- Alexandria Park Community School choir (2010)
- Darlington Public School Koori dance group (2010)
- Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design musicians, Emily and Alicia Johnson (2010)
- Glebe Public School choir (2009)
- Matrville Soldiers Settlement Public School girls dance group (2011)
- Matrville Sports High School dance group, Garrabarra, (2009)
- Matrville Sports High School didgeridoo players, Koby Duncan (2011), Dean Kelly, Brock Tutt (2011, 2012)

Miranda Public School didgeridoo players, Kane and Kodi Pettitt, (2010)

Newtown High School of the Performing Arts
Aboriginal dancers: Amy Johnson, Kate Lienert,
Maddison Paluch, Coby Smith-Carr (2012)

Newtown High School of the Performing Arts,
Baden Hitchcock, violinist (2012)

Paul Sinclair, didgeridoo player (2009)

Speakers:

Danny Allende, Matraville Sports High School (2012)

Jessica Cox, Canterbury Girls High School (2011)

Violet Craven-Miller, Penshurst West Public School (2012)

Hal Cumptson, Randwick Public School (2011)

Charlotte Edwige, Darlington Public School (2010)

Stephen Foster, Matraville Sports High School (2010)

Emily Lyons, Matraville Sports High School (2011)

Joshua Marr, Camdenville Public School (2009)

Tahjee Moar, Burwood Girls High School (2009)

Guests and award presenters:

Jimari Bastable, former student, Sydney Boys
High School (2011)

Professor Larissa Behrendt (2012)

Captain Kali Belleair, Parent, Bronte Public School (2012)

Aunty Fay Carroll (2010-2012)

Luke Carroll (2010)

Michael Coutts-Trotter, Director-General of Education
and Training, Managing Director of TAFE NSW (2009)

Narelle Daniels, President Met East Regional Committee
AECG (2012)

The Hon Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Citizenship and
Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (2012)

Trevor Fletcher, Deputy Director-General, Schools (2009)

Michael Keyte, Business Development Manager,
First State Super (2012)

Dr Phil Lambert, Regional Director, Sydney (2009-2012)

Jeff McMullen (2010)

Professor Robert Tierney, Dean, Faculty of Education and
Social Work, University of Sydney (2011)

Aunty Mary Silva (2009)

Gillian Tatt, Public Relations and Corporate Affairs
Specialist, Teachers Mutual Bank (2012)

Ian Thorpe (2010)

Main supporters:

First State Super, sponsor (2012)

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Coordination: Corin Millais, Emma Campey, Gillian Tatt (Teachers Mutual Bank) and Zea Vargas (NSW Department of Education and Communities, Sydney Region)

Artworks selected from Koori Art Expressions exhibitions 2008-2011

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The NSW Department of Education and Communities (Sydney Region) would like to thank all the participating students, schools, staff, community members and program-partners, as well the regional Aboriginal Education team.

Note: Within this publication, "Aboriginal" has sometimes been used inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as this is a resource originating from NSW and Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of NSW. This is the protocol used by the NSW Department of Education and Communities. The word "Indigenous" has in some cases been used in the contributions submitted by external agencies, as that is the convention used by those organisations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the names of all Aboriginal nations are spelt correctly. However we accept that spelling may vary.

