

ReconciliationNews

ISSUE NO 26 // April 2013



Kelsi Forrest
on being the
**catalyst for
change**

The Medics talk
**music, tours and
reconciliation**

Paul Vandenberg
reflects on his
mentor journey



Reconciliation
AUSTRALIA

CONTENTS

- 3 National Reconciliation Week
2013 – Let's talk Recognition**
-
- 4 A future we can all be
proud of**
-
- 8 Paving their own way:
The Medics**
-
- 12 Run by young people,
powered by respect**
-
- 13 Setting the scene in schools**
-
- 14 My journey as an
Indigenous mentor**
-
- 18 Working with young people**
-

Old Parliament House,
King George Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600
PO Box 4773, Kingston ACT 2604
Ph: (02) 6273 9200
Fax: (02) 6273 9201
www.reconciliation.org.au

As the national organisation building relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, non-government organisation. Your active contribution and financial support helps us develop innovative programs and resources.

This magazine is compiled by Reconciliation Australia to share reconciliation stories, issues and opinions. Feedback and story ideas are always welcome along with names and addresses of people who would like to receive the newsletter. Please email us at: enquiries@reconciliation.org.au

Caution: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain the images of deceased people.

Cover image of The Medics by Hailey Bartholomew.



**Reconciliation
AUSTRALIA**

CEO message

What a way to start the new year. The launch of the 2012 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Impact Measurement Report and the third Australian Reconciliation Barometer, together with our inaugural RAP Showcase, have certainly helped the reconciliation movement continue to gather pace.

At the start of the Federal Parliamentary year, we celebrated the success of the RAP program at a showcase event at Parliament House, attended by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Julie Bishop and other senior politicians. Over 500 people, including 40 of Reconciliation Australia's RAP partners, attended the showcase, highlighting their successes and contributions to Closing the Gap initiatives. So much enthusiasm filled the Great Hall as people shared stories and learnings while engaging and inspiring each other.

With so many supporters getting on board, we are another step closer to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples in our constitution. In February, on the fifth Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012* was formally passed through the House of Representatives. At the event Professor Patrick Dodson spoke passionately about the important role that young Australians have in progressing reconciliation.

In this issue of *Reconciliation News*, we look at just how young people are becoming an integral part of reconciliation. From the fantastic work that young Western Australians Kelsi Forrest and Lockie Cooke are doing to build better relationships between Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians; to inspiring mentors like Paul Vandenberg— it's clear this next generation of leaders are helping to create a nation that values and respects the First Australians. Reconciliation Australia has also been developing a strategy to help further engage schools in reconciliation. The introduction of The Australian Curriculum and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers means the next few years will provide a perfect opportunity for us to embark on an ambitious project to engage all Australian schools in respecting, understanding and teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

On a personal note I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Shane Phillips, this year's Australian of the Year Local Hero—and the first Aboriginal recipient of the award. Shane has been an inspirational role model for young people in Redfern and instrumental in turning around the relationship between the police and the community. Our Co-Chair Dr Tom Calma AO was named ACT Australian of the Year for his work in advocating for improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Tom has dedicated his life to serving the community and promoting reconciliation and I am proud to call him a colleague and friend.

Finally, I would like to thank the Australian Government for their continued support of Reconciliation Australia with the announcement of another four years of funding, made on the eve of the Prime Minister's annual Closing the Gap statement to Parliament. This support will allow us to continue our effective work in promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community.

Leah Armstrong,
CEO Reconciliation Australia



National Reconciliation Week 2013

Let's talk Recognition

National Reconciliation Week ambassadors Emma-Louise and Thelma Plum. Image, Ali Mitton.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) will this year draw inspiration from the universal language of music as a number of influential Australians come together to show their support for reconciliation.

Starring in this year's national poster are young Brisbane-based singer songwriters Emma-Louise and Thelma Plum. Emma-Louise released her debut single *Jungle* in 2012 where it stayed at the top of the AIR Independent music charts for 26 weeks. Thelma Plum won hearts on Triple J's *Unearthed* with her song *Father Said*, crediting her Indigenous, Australian and Brazilian heritage with shaping her worldview and musical inspiration. Both singers are excited to support National Reconciliation Week 2013 and will also tour together this May and June as part of Emma-Louise's *VS Head VS Heart* album tour.

Joining our two songbirds as ambassadors are a host of talented and inspiring Australians including musicians, comedians, broadcasters and actors. We are pleased to welcome to the team this year:

- Akram Azimi – 2013 Young Australian of the Year
- Alex Dyson – Breakfast presenter on Triple J
- Tom Busby and Jeremy Marou – From the band Busby Marou
- Gail Mabo – Respected mentor, artist, actress and family spokesperson for the late Eddie Koiki Mabo
- Gurrumul Yunupingu with Mark Grose and Michael Hohnen from Skinnyfish Music

- James Henry – Musician and photographer
- Kevin Kropinyeri – Comedian
- The Last Kinection – Australian hip-hop band
- Meshel Laurie – Comedian and Drive Presenter on Melbourne's Nova FM
- Miranda Tapsell – Actress (*The Sapphires* and *Redfern Now*)
- Troy Cassar-Daley – Award winning country music star
- Urthboy – Musician and founding member of The Herd.

While all of our ambassadors will contribute to NRW 2013 in their unique way, each are united in their passion and vision for an Australia that celebrates, honours and recognises the special place that Australia's First Peoples have in this great nation.

At Reconciliation Australia, we believe that recognition and reconciliation go hand-in-hand. National Reconciliation Week is a great way for all Australians to join the reconciliation conversation by 'talking recognition'. And whether it's the significance of the 1967 referendum on 27 May, High Court *Mabo* decision on 3 June, or the current constitutional recognition campaign

Recognise—it's clear that recognition has a huge role to play within the reconciliation movement.

For the second year we're continuing to expand our online presence with a website that provides a great hub of information including an events register, resources, education kits and, of course, profiles about our brilliant ambassadors. Adding to our website will be some great blogs and videos from our ambassadors, who will also keep the momentum going on Twitter and Facebook.

But you don't have to be an ambassador to support National Reconciliation Week—getting involved is easy! Hold an event in your workplace or school (make sure you register it on our website), attend an event in your local community, post online using the hashtag #NRW2013 and #recognition or take the time to sit back, relax and enjoy the sounds of some great Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians—including some of our talented ambassadors.

Visit www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw

Like us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ReconciliationAus

Follow us on Twitter @RecAustralia

A future we can all be proud of

by Law, Politics and Indigenous Studies student Kelsi Forrest



(Left – right) Dylan Collard, Kelsi Forrest and Brayden Grogan from the National Indigenous Youth Parliament at the launch of National Reconciliation Week 2012. Image, Cole Bennetts.

As a young Aboriginal woman I have a burning desire to create a more inclusive, empathetic and equitable Australia. There are so many things I want to change, and especially see change in my lifetime, but I have come to the realisation that in order to be a catalyst for change I must have some help. There is no way possible that Indigenous people alone can better the situation we are in as a people, particularly since many of the reasons were forcefully inflicted upon us. Australians need to feel empathy and non-Indigenous people need to fully understand, with the deepest respect, how we got to this point. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, and I believe empathy is seriously lacking amongst Australians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.5 per cent of Australia's population, however it is known that Aboriginal people have been on this land for more than 50,000 years—so Indigenous cultures account for at least 99.6 per cent of this country's history. Our culture is so rich and full of life and I feel that many non-Indigenous people would benefit in so many ways if they had more opportunities to relate to us on a meaningful level. From a development of this thinking, I have embarked on a journey with four other university students to ensure that our future generations are free from separation and free to embrace one another's culture without reservation. *I Am The Other* is a student run organisation driven by the optimism of a shared future equal to the dignity of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, which I and a few like-minded people have co-founded. Dylan Collard is a Noongar man in his third year of Law and Politics, Akram Azimi is currently studying a triple major in Law, Arts and Science and Dwain Burrige is in his last year of Medicine. It is with these three outstanding young men that I have decided to take action. We have decided to take action on what we see is a real discrepancy in our universities, as well as our communities at large. We launched our organisation in January of this year and have many events and activities planned throughout semester to allow for meaningful

interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students—on a very deep and human level. It is our belief that interpersonal empathy can be created by Indigenous people sharing their individual stories, culture and history and such interpersonal empathy is the key to intercultural empathy on a more collective level.

“I Am The Other is a student run organisation driven by the optimism of a shared future equal to the dignity of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, which I and a few like-minded people have co-founded.”

I and my fellow co-founders of *I Am The Other* are not the only young people that feel relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples can be improved. Last year, Reconciliation Australia and the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition produced the

Yarn About Youth Report which discussed the findings of a national survey by young people on what issues matter to them. For me, the most telling result of the report was the fact that 90 per cent of the young people surveyed believe that the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is important. However, only 35 per cent think that the relationship is good and even more poignant is the finding that only 16 per cent of young people feel that we trust each other. I feel that this is absolutely heartbreaking from a generation who pride themselves on being more open than any other generation that has gone before us.

These results have been a reiteration of something that I have been feeling for quite some time. This feeling is what caused Dylan, Akram, Dwain and I to join forces to incrementally change the perceptions and beliefs of today's university students—who will be tomorrow's leaders in their respective fields. Through *I Am The Other* we feel that we can offer non-Indigenous students opportunities to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people and as a result, these opportunities will light the way for a shared future where Indigenous knowledge of land and culture becomes a shared source of empowerment to all university students. We have started off with something as simple as providing lunches for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to meet up and share who they are and what their culture means to them personally. Just from our first informal lunch we had non-Indigenous people who met Aboriginal people for the first time, whose only perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had been shaped by something as distant as the media. Non-Indigenous students provided amazing insights into what the lunch meant to them, with one participant saying: "Ignorance is the biggest problem. People are living off stereotypes because they don't know Indigenous people on a personal level and getting to know people on a one-on-one level is the only way to defeat those stereotypes. Everyone is different and you shouldn't base everyone on the same idea." Hearing

from non-Indigenous students just after a few hours of really experiencing and getting to know Aboriginal culture was really uplifting for me. I could see the impact that something so simple, yet so effective, had on the students.

"Through I Am The Other we feel that we can offer non-Indigenous students opportunities to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people and as a result, these opportunities will light the way for a shared future where Indigenous knowledge of land and culture becomes a shared source of empowerment to all university students."

I have had a lifelong goal to change the perceptions, stereotypes and expectations that have been wrongfully placed upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout this country. I have been exposed to such negative beliefs ever since I was in primary school, where I was one of two Aboriginal children in my class and fellow students as young as 10 held negative views. Whilst I did not fully understand the meaning of such views, it hurt me nonetheless. As I got older I came to realise that I was the only Aboriginal person my classmates had met. The negative perceptions

and ideas became more apparent with the remark that "but Kelsi, you're not like the others" supposedly justifying, in their minds, such opinions being held and openly expressed. Furthermore, in today's society where social media holds large amounts of power, there are opportunities for many people to hold prejudicial views through the armour of a keyboard. For some, anonymity provides even greater protection, whilst others seem fine with blatantly attacking Aboriginal people and culture as social media provides the perfect forum. This is a new form of ignorance which is unique to the young people of today and I feel the only way to combat it is to provide alternative messages. There needs to be sharing of positive stories about Indigenous success along with messages of reconciliation where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together through organisations like *I Am The Other*. We have plans of media campaigns, particularly social media campaigns that emphasise the simple, yet powerful nature of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people coming together to hear each other's stories and feelings. Already, I have found that through sharing my story during *I Am The Other* activities I am opening up a whole new world for the listener for which they thank me and express gratitude for giving them a deeper sense of understanding of this land and it's First Peoples. I feel an immense pride in what *I Am The Other* is doing and has the potential to do. I feel as though I am finally putting into action all of the feelings that have swirled around in my head, especially in regard to combatting prejudicial and ignorant views.

My fellow co-founders Akram and Dwain have been lucky enough to experience Indigenous Australian culture in a meaningful way which has directly influenced them to feel an obligation to change the current, very dire situation all Australians face. For me, the ideal result of *I Am The Other* would be to foster more and more thoughts in people like the thinking of Akram and Dwain—who are non-Indigenous people that see the need and feel the burn, feel the desire



Kelsi Forrest with Reconciliation Australia Co-Chair Dr Tom Calma AO at the launch of National Reconciliation Week 2012. Image, Cole Bennetts.

to create change. I feel as though a predominant number of non-Indigenous Australians are missing out on something that we, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know as the oldest surviving culture in the world, are enriched in a way that is unexplainable. We are all strong individuals who together form such diverse communities, and this needs to be shared and embraced by the wider Australia. *I Am The Other* is an organisation which aims to bring people together in a way that fosters sharing, so much so that individuals go away with a piece of

“I feel as though I am finally putting into action all of the feelings that have swirled around in my head, especially in regard to combatting prejudicial and ignorant views.”

that other person within them. Much like drops of water who join together by embracing a piece of one another, but then separating again to be their different selves, whilst always sustaining the part of the other water droplet to keep motivating them and rolling on. I believe that all non-Indigenous Australians need to experience such sharing from an Indigenous person's perspective because our stories, languages and cultures have been shared and experienced for more than 50,000 years—why should we stop now?

Paving their own way

The Medics



If you're a fan of new Australian music, then chances are you've heard of The Medics. Since their debut album *Foundations* was released in May last year, the four piece have become known as a band with honesty and integrity whose live performances are often described as exhilarating, passionate and breath-taking. Their love of performing has seen them play at some of Australia's biggest music festivals including The Dreaming, Woodford, Splendour in the Grass and Groovin' the Moo Festivals in 2012, as well as The Big Day Out national tour and the Saltwater Freshwater Festival in 2013. Their dynamic performances and carefully crafted indie-rock songs have also created a solid fan base—and much respect from those in the music industry.

The Medics are lead singer, Kahl Wallace; drummer, Jhindu Lawrie; lead guitarist, Andrew Thomson and bassist Charles Thomas. The unassuming foursome, originally from Cairns and now based in Brisbane, are keen to make authentic music that is true to their style; breathy vocals, intense guitar work and feverish drumming—the band has weaved in plenty of emotive intent, and a few pleasant surprises, into their first album.

"We're really all about making music that is special and shows that honesty in our writing," says Kahl. "The music that's out there today doesn't seem very honest and real... you've really just got to run your own race."

Attending the same high school together in Cairns, The Medics evolved from semi-regular jam sessions the boys did together in between skateboarding and other outdoor ventures typical to the laid back Far North Queensland lifestyle.

"We were just four guys jamming, having fun, not really caring, just exploring different sounds and music," explains Andrew. "Over time we started to write more songs and eventually we formed the band's current sound and musical direction."

Music has always been a part of Jhindu and Kahl's family. Jhindu's father and Kahl's uncle, Bunna Lawrie, is a respected Elder from the Mirning

Aboriginal community in South Australia and founding member of successful band Coloured Stone—the first Aboriginal band to win an ARIA award (in 1987). As an accomplished singer, songwriter and drummer, Bunna is someone the band describes as a great mentor and honest critic.

“He always tells me what he likes and he’ll hint on things that he doesn’t like, which is good,” says Jhindu. “All in all he’s really supportive, whatever we want to do he’s always there to help out.”

While Jhindu and Kahl say they don’t feel any pressure to be role models for other young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, Kahl believes that it is something that comes along with the job.

“You can go with it or go against it,” he says. “We’re not saying that we’re perfect but if kids look up to us then that’s amazing.”

“It’s a good thing to be able to show the next generation of Aboriginal kids that if we can get this far with our career, then you can do anything,” adds Jhindu.

Andrew and Charles have similar feelings about being role models and hope the band’s success demonstrates to other young Australians that persistence pays off.

“It’s just about being persistent and being honest with yourself,” Charles says. “And realising that the right thing to do is to stick at something—that’s what gets results.”

Unintentionally, the band has also become an example of reconciliation in action—although this is not something any of them think about consciously. Growing up together, the boys were content with being good mates and exploring their musical abilities.

“We’re just four guys who are friends and who work together well,” says Andrew. “We don’t feel like we’re different to one another...we feel together and have a togetherness—both on and off stage.”

The band describes their song writing style as a collaborative process with cousins Kahl and Jhindu often in the driver’s seats and Andrew and Charles completing the songs with their distinct riffs. “Kahl and Jhindu are pretty heavy song writers and while I do a little bit—I’m more likely to come in at the back end of it,” says Andrew.

“And everyone throws in suggestions,” adds Charles. “We’ve kind of come to a playing field where you don’t get offended at other people’s suggestions—you just take it on board and try it out until we have something we all agree on.”

Growing up together and spending their teenage years bonding over music has not only cemented the band’s friendship with each other but enhanced their working relationship as well. Underneath the business of being a band—promo shots, interviews and countless tour dates—mutual respect has remained at the core of their relationship—and it’s something that can easily be seen in both their public and private lives.

“It’s a good thing to be able to show the next generation of Aboriginal kids that if we can get this far with our career, then you can do anything.”

The Medics’ first EP *This Boat We Call Love* was released in 2010 earning them national airplay on Triple J radio and launching them into the spotlight as one of the big Triple J *Unearthed* acts. Following the release of the EP, the band enjoyed a huge touring schedule across the country including playing at the Triple J *Unearthed* station launch in Brisbane. During this time they also recorded their first album at a studio in Byron Bay with producer and confidante Yanto Browning. The goal with *Foundations* was to harness the band’s energy on stage while capturing their growth as individual artists and as a band. And the reaction from critics and fans was overwhelmingly positive with singles *Beggars*, *Joseph* and *Griffin* all receiving high rotation on Triple J. Lead singer Kahl says most of the songs on *Foundations* are quite introspective and at times emotive.

“A lot of the songs on *Foundations* are from a few years ago and were written as a young teenager when you’re just really emotional and want to get your feelings out,” he says.

“The song *Griffin* is about family and the importance of family sticking together and being strong in hard times. Coming from our background, family is something that’s always particularly important to Jhindu and myself.”

Despite living in Brisbane and spending the majority of 2012 on the road touring, the band have retained their strong connection to the Cairns community and say their family and friends are enormously proud of their successes so far. In addition to their work with The Medics, Kahl and Jhindu also composed the music for the children’s play *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Produced by the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and choreographed by Gail Mabo, the play was an adaptation of the book by celebrated poet, author and artist Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

“There’s definitely an opportunity there to do similar things like that,” explains Jhindu. “It was a lot different to working in the band but still an exciting thing to be a part of.”

The Medics have also been busy collecting a number of awards since the release of that first EP. They were named Band of the Year at the 2010 Deadly Awards; Album of the Year, New Talent of the Year and Song of the Year for *Griffin* at the 2012 National Indigenous Music Awards, and were most recently named Best New Talent by the prestigious Rolling Stone Awards—beating popular artists such as The Rubens, Flume and San Cisco. But it’s not the accolades, big name gigs or promise of being the ‘next big thing’ that have made the band so popular. It’s their ability to remain true to themselves—and each other—that has audiences captivated.

“It was always my thing growing up watching the Deadly Awards,” says Jhindu. “To be nominated and win a Deadly was like going to the ARIAs for me. It definitely means a lot to the band—to Kahl and I personally—and to our families.”



The Medics want to inspire more young people to believe in themselves. Image, Hailey Bartholomew.

Something else the band is keen to do is share their stories and experiences through their music—hopefully inspiring others along the way. Empowering young people to have faith in themselves is something that bass player Charles is particularly passionate about. At just 23 years old, Charles took action against bullying by cycling 400km through North Queensland in an effort to raise awareness of the impact that bullying can have on teenagers. With bullying now estimated to affect as many as three in 10 high school students, Charles made it his mission to reach out to teenagers by visiting them at their school, encouraging

them to build their confidence, self-image and well-being. The epic awareness-raising journey also saw Charles named as a finalist for Queensland's Young Australian of the Year.

"I had a house show in order to raise some money for flights, accommodation and food and then I got some sponsors on board and managed to get seven schools under my belt during the trip," Charles says. "I went on a two week voyage from Townsville to Cairns and just stayed at people's houses and hung out with thousands of kids—it was pretty hectic cycling in the rain—but it was the best thing I've done in my life."

The rest of the band were completely on board with Charles' venture offering support both in the lead up and during the 400km 'To the North' trek.

"It was a really good thing to be a part of especially with the amount of youth suicide there is today—particularly in Indigenous and rural communities," Kahl says. "I think North Queensland has one of the highest attempted suicide rates in the country so it's important to make an effort to try and do something about that."

Ever humble about his achievement, Charles explains that change can be led by young people and that you don't have to wait for others to take the lead.



"I'm not the coolest or most famous dude in the world but if I can help make an impact in one kid's life or help change their perspective on bullying then it's worth trying—and I think it's something that anyone else can do as well."

As the summer festival season wraps up for the year, The Medics are now shifting their focus from performing to song writing in preparation for their second album which they hope to record later this year. A break from touring will also allow the band to take stock of the massive list of achievements made since the release of their initial EP and subsequent album launch.

"We're not just going to be a band that comes and goes, we're a band that wants to stick it out and give it a real good go."

"I don't think we can quite fathom it," says Kahl of their recent successes. "It's hard being amongst it but I'm sure when we get a chance to stand back and look at it all we'll be like, wow, that was pretty amazing."

"This year's all about writing album number two, so we're hitting the studio to get some demos together and perhaps heading back to our roots in Cairns to record it," he adds.

"There's no pressure though, for this next step, everyone's pretty content to get the best out of each other and just let it happen."

"We're not just going to be a band that comes and goes, we're a band that wants to stick it out and give it a real good go."

Find out more about The Medics by visiting their website www.themedics.com.au, liking their facebook page www.facebook.com/themedics.band or following them on twitter @themedicsband.

Run by young people, powered by respect

It's been a busy start to the year for Lockie Cooke. Between presenting to a packed room at the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Showcase at Parliament House, to rallying a crew of swimmers competing and raising money in the Rottneest Channel Swim, the 23-year-old certainly has his work cut out. As founder and CEO of the Indigenous Communities Education and Awareness (ICEA) Foundation, Lockie is hoping to inspire more young Australians to become involved in reconciliation.

"I never dreamt that ICEA would grow as much as it has or that the organisation would have the capacity to engage such a large number of people in the community today," he says.

"Although there are times when I wonder why things aren't happening fast enough, I know that taking time to build relationships and develop understandings is important to fostering lasting reconciliation in Australia."

Lockie first started ICEA as a way of responding to a basic need he saw in the remote communities on the Dampier Peninsula. The lack of educational resources available to students in this part of Australia was far removed from the opportunities and facilities he had enjoyed during his schooling in Perth.

"I developed the confidence to build ICEA Foundation when I realised how many

supportive and passionate Australians believed in fostering reconciliation and increasing the opportunities available to students in the Kimberley," Lockie explains. "I joined forces with a number of like-minded people, who continue to support each other like a family. Working with these people has made me confident that we can make lasting change happen."

The ICEA Foundation believes that mutual respect and understanding are essential to progressing reconciliation. The group of around 14 staff and 200 volunteers encourage young Australians to take active roles in promoting reconciliation by creating opportunities for passionate young people from local schools and community groups to have their voices heard. As CEO of the Foundation, Lockie says he does his best to empower his team and to give them the confidence to share their own stories.

"The ability to tell other people why they're involved with ICEA is important, as people are more likely to be inspired when they learn how current ICEA members became engaged in the movement."

"By engaging other young people to become passionately engaged with ICEA, I am able to help them to become leaders in their own right."

In addition to running ICEA, Lockie studies commerce at the University of Western Australia, volunteers as a surf lifesaver and hopes to represent Australia in sprint kayaking at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

"To balance my kayaking, study and ICEA work has been an art I have tried to master, with many failures!" he says. "However, the challenge of combining these demanding tasks has shown me that it is possible to achieve big things when you set your mind to it, and that you can get all of the things that need to be done, done if you are passionate about them!"

ICEA's main goals for 2013 are to replicate the Perth *Marja Mob* program in Broome, establish a youth drop-in centre in Djarindjin/Lombadina community on the Dampier Peninsula and hold the fourth ICEA classic event at Cottesloe beach on 31 August. The event is expected to engage 5000 young people in cultural activities and it's grass roots activities like this which Lockie says is helping to drive reconciliation.

"We are making a significant difference to the communities that we are working with and we understand that all good things take time," he says. "By engaging with the right people and sticking to our values and what we believe in, we can't go wrong."

ICEA CEO Lockie Cooke with fellow Western Australians Max Coppin (left) and Nelson Coppin (right) from the Yijala Yala Project at Reconciliation Australia's RAP showcase. Image, Cole Bennetts.





Setting the scene in schools

by Alex Shain, Reconciliation Australia Schools Manager

The 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations was an important part of the nation's reconciliation journey. In education, it sparked and refuelled the national debate about incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into all Australian schools. Since then, schools at a local level have been taking action to support reconciliation at varying levels—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags are flown, acknowledgements of country are delivered and local connections to country and people are being forged. But despite numerous examples of local engagement, a consistent national education focus has been hard to achieve—until now.

By the end of 2016, all 9500 or so schools in Australia will be teaching the same content in English, Maths, Science and History from Foundation (five years old) to Year 10 (16 years old). This achievement should not be underestimated in a country that administers education through a maze of State and Territory Government departments, Catholic Education Commissions as well as Independent schools. Across these four

subjects are three cross-curriculum priorities, one of which requires—for the first time in many cases—Australian primary and secondary schools to engage in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, divided across a framework of Country/Place, Culture and People. For each cross-curriculum priority, a set of organising ideas will reflect the essential knowledge, understandings and skills to guide teachers.

In addition to this curriculum content, the 290,000 teachers across Australia now have a consistent set of standards which outline what they should know and be able to do. These standards cover everything from maintaining supportive and safe environments, to engaging with colleagues, parents/carers and the community. Teachers need to show evidence of how—in the classroom—they understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation Australia is perfectly placed to assist them in meeting this focus area in particular.

Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane was one of the first schools to launch a RAP. Pictured here is Elder in Residence Aunty Joan Hendriks with students Natia Burns (left) and Toomirriki Burns (right) in the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre. Image, Kylie Kluger.

This is a fantastic opportunity for Reconciliation Australia to make a real impact on how teachers, students and their families think and act about reconciliation. Our new schools team have been busy seeking input from a variety of government and non-government education organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies and other education experts. This consultation will help shape a new strategy addressing the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Teaching Standards and a model for school community based actions. The schools team are reaching the end of this consultation process and are keen to share the new program in the coming months.

If you are a teacher or involved in education and would like to find out more about Reconciliation Australia's schools program please email: schools@reconciliation.org.au



Paul with Rhett Burraston and Kelsi Forrest presenting on the IYLP at the Jobs Australia Conference 2011 in Brisbane. Image, Rob Walls.

My journey as a mentor

by Paul Vandenbergh

A community spokesman, former pro-basketballer and devoted educator, Paul Vandenbergh was already a leader in the community when he signed up to a program designed to nurture and inspire a new generation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from all across the country. Here he writes about living the lessons of a program he is passionate about.

When I first heard about the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP), the thing that jumped out at me was the possibility of walking the Kokoda Track. I'd played a lot of sport when I was younger, and I've always been really interested in health and fitness. I thought: what a great opportunity that would be!

Once I was accepted into the inaugural 2010-11 program as a mentor, though, I began to realise that Kokoda was just one part of it. IYLP was established in 2009 by the Jobs Australia Foundation to strengthen the skills and confidence of young Indigenous leaders. Aimed at people aged 17 to 25 who have shown a commitment to

leadership in their communities, schools or work—IYLP provides a two-year custom-built leadership training program based around powerful and immersive experiences. Participants are recruited from right across the country and each state team has a mentor to support its young 'mentees'.

My first task as a mentor was to help identify some young people who could really benefit from something like this. In 2010, I was in my 16th year working as a public servant in the South Australian Government, and Kelly was a shy young woman who was working with me at the time. She fitted the criteria, and I thought IYLP might bring out her full potential. Then I heard about a young man who'd had some trouble with the law when he was younger, but who had got himself back on track becoming the first person in his family to get his Year 12 certificate. I knew right away he was someone who'd make the most of the opportunity.

The three of us started training together for Kokoda. Every weekend we hiked Mt Lofty outside Adelaide. Tyrone was really fit, and really energetic; Kelly struggled a bit at first, needed a bit more motivating. For me, the challenge was thinking hard about what it meant to be a mentor. I'd mentored younger people before informally, but this was my first experience of consciously taking on that responsibility. The fact that the three of us had a strong 'West Coast' connection really helped us form a bond. My family comes from an Aboriginal community called Koonibba, just out of Ceduna on the west coast of South Australia. Kelly was from Ceduna too, and Tyrone had grown up in Port Lincoln. I think coming from families with the same kind of connection to land really made a difference in terms of our relationship and understanding what each of us wanted to achieve.

Trekking Kokoda in 2010 was extraordinary and life-changing. The night we hiked into Port Moresby was a fantastic feeling I've never forgotten. You form very intense and honest connections with people doing something as demanding as that.

I was still on a high when I got home, and on my very first day back I saw a job advertised for an Aboriginal engagement and employment manager at Port Adelaide Football Club. After so many years it was a bit daunting to think about leaving the public service, but the confidence I'd taken from Kokoda inspired me to take the leap. I've been here at Port for over two years now. My role is to manage all the Indigenous engagement programs, including the Aboriginal Power Cup. Involving over 300 Aboriginal students from 24 schools around the state, the Power Cup uses Australian Football League to

motivate Indigenous kids to knuckle down at school and learn about their culture. Many schools have really battled to embed Aboriginal culture into the curriculum, and more and more of them are seeing the Power Cup as a great way to do that.

Different parts of the IYLP experience impact people in different ways. One of the most affecting experiences I had were some sessions with Associate Professor Simon Forrest. He planted the seed for some of the ideas that have become really important to my work with Indigenous kids. I think I was just shocked to realise that I'd just been taking my culture for granted. I'd always considered myself pretty connected to culture, but the truth was there was just so much I didn't know.

“It's crucial to get our young people interested in their own backgrounds and cultures so they can start being proud of who they are. I realised that this was part of the legacy that I want to leave behind.”

I had another opportunity to think about this during the Kimberley culture walk we completed in 2011. A team of young men from Jarlmaidangah Burru near Broome took us on a five-day trek through their country. We saw rock art that has never been seen by whitefellas, swam in water holes, hunted for goanna and ate bush honey straight from the tree. Every day these young guys were teaching us different things. They were just amazing.

Kelly couldn't do the Kimberley walk—she was at uni—but Tyrone came. Because he originally comes from a remote community, with a lot of initiated men in his family, he fitted in really well. Tyrone's the sort of person who can make friends with anyone, but seeing him draw people in, seeing his energy translating to that sort of quiet strength, was awesome for me as his mentor. But I also felt jealous of the Jarlmaidangah Burru men. I remember thinking: these guys know so much. It was almost unbelievable. That's what really lit the fire in my belly. I found myself thinking more and more about what I was going to do when I got home, both in terms of my own culture, and how I could help the Power Cup participants feel that curiosity too, and start making their own connections to where they'd come from. So many of our kids aren't sure

Paul with Tyrone Roderick and Elle Mitchel at Deniki, on the Kokoda trek. Image, Rob Walls.





Northern Territory participants of the IYLP at a low rope team building exercise at Anglesea, Victoria in January 2013. Image, Rob Walls.

of their identity. It's crucial to get our young people interested in their own backgrounds and cultures so they can start being proud of who they are. I realised that this was part of the legacy that I want to leave behind.

Now I'm also on the board of the Jobs Australia Foundation. My contribution there has emphasised the importance of identity in leadership training for Indigenous people. IYLP is very strong on leaders being able to 'walk in two worlds', being confident in both Indigenous and western contexts. And that has to start with understanding who you are. That was an aspect of the first program that really struck home with everyone. The power of that lesson drove some changes to the 2013/2014 program, which kicked off this January in Anglesea, Victoria, when 20 young leaders and seven mentors came together to begin their IYLP journey. This time, the emphasis on culture is strong from the beginning. Along with all training in the classroom, the young leaders will be doing their cultural walk on the Larapinta Trail, in the Northern Territory in the first year, and then Kokoda in the second.

James Moreland, a 22-year-old man from Nerang, Queensland, says he felt some trepidation about finding his place in the 2013/2014 program. "I was brought up by a white family, and I'm very vague actually on

my culture and history. So I guess my personal concerns were about my knowledge of my culture and how that would be perceived." James needn't have worried though. Straight away he knew he belonged. It didn't take long for real 'team spirit' to emerge, which he says was thanks partly to the sheer rigour of the week. "Initially I was a bit gobsmacked... there we are punching out 16-hour days, including a 90 minute PT session every morning! But it was a great way to break down barriers. You see people at their peak, but also when they're struggling, and everyone supports each other at different times."

"IYLP is very strong on leaders being able to 'walk in two worlds', being confident in both Indigenous and western contexts. And that has to start with understanding who you are. That was an aspect of the first program that really struck home with everyone."

The getting-to-know you process, says Anthony King, a 32-year-old mentor from Tasmania, happened astonishingly fast. "Something about everyone taking each other on face value, I think, and everyone being so open. I've never seen a group gel so quickly. It was a fantastic way to start the program, and I think it set a really strong foundation."

Brooke Dunemann, a 24-year-old Djakunde Jangerie Jangerie woman from the ACT who works for the Australian Federal Police, has participated in leadership programs before. Some, she says, have been barely up to par. "It's like, come along, we'll have a chat, do some exercises, and voila! You're a leader." This is why she was so pleased to find in Anglesea a strong emphasis on skills and capacity-building. "So far the content has reinforced my idea of real leadership, which is not about dictating to people, but leading by example to bring out the initiative and energy of others around you."

One of the things we decided to do with the 2013-14 program was to align the curriculum to a Certificate IV in Community Development with support from Kangan Institute's Indigenous Education Centre. This means our young participants earn a qualification that acknowledges their effort over the two years. And an important new focus of the course is fundraising. Now we ask all the participants, mentors and mentees, to raise \$4000 towards the cost of their participation, so that they're working a bit harder for the experience they're getting—it shouldn't all be a free ride—and they're also gaining confidence from making good things happen themselves.

Anthony King, who is mentoring two young participants from Tasmania, believes that showing that sort of 'get up and go' is key to getting full value from the program. "I don't want to get into a position where I'm providing all the direction or leadership," he says. "I would like to see the mentees stand up and show initiative themselves. I'm very mindful that you can get involved in these programs in your formal sessions times, but that can change when you go back home to all the daily pressures. It can be hard to maintain that excitement and motivation. That's a challenge all of us need to take on, I think."

The other reason we chose to incorporate fundraising is that it's becoming an essential skill for people who want to create positive change. In the not-for-profit and community sector, lots of groups compete for limited funds, so our future leaders need to start thinking early about how to sell their vision to others. If we want our participants to go home afterwards and lead real change, it's important to be realistic about the real-world skills they'll need. The IYLP is itself in this position. There are other programs in this space, so our challenge is to make sure potential supporters understand what we're doing, and why it's unique. Currently there are no other programs available to young Indigenous leaders that run over a two-year period of intensive, custom-built training, and lead to a Certificate IV qualification. It all requires a significant investment from the Jobs Australia Foundation and its partners. The Foundation got the IYLP up and running, with significant and ongoing financial and other contributions from Jobs Australia.

“If we want our participants to go home afterwards and lead real change, it's important to be realistic about the real-world skills they'll need.”

Support from organisations including Aon Risk Services, Allianz, Kangan Batman Institute and Tim Fairfax Family Foundation have given the program the stability and it needs to consolidate and plan for future growth.

But we are always looking for more partners. IYLP is a great opportunity for other companies and organisations to invest in the capacity of impressive young people who

will shape our future. But we have to be able to demonstrate the program's effectiveness. Rigorous evaluation is crucial. That's why Professor Nereda White, Leon Appo and Paul Chesterton from the Australian Catholic University's Centre for Indigenous Education and Research are overseeing our program evaluation. Data gathered from the first program clearly shows that it has driven some significant career moves and major life changes among the participants. But it's hard to put a value on strong networks, on the life-changing experience of sharing fears and triumphs with other people tackling huge challenges.

One invaluable thing I took from the program is simply the bond between me and my mentees, Kelly and Tyrone. We're still really close, and in regular contact; they still ring me for advice. It's inspiring to see them doing so well. But I also think the full impact of our experience together will only be seen in the decades to come. And that's what's so exciting about the IYLP.

ROCK FOR RECONCILIATION

7:30PM 20 JULY | THE STREET THEATRE
thestreet.org.au

FREE
EVENT
BOOKINGS
ESSENTIAL

Reconciliation Australia proudly supports the Centenary of Canberra event, Rock for Reconciliation, featuring the Tjupi Band (toured by Artback NT) and local ACT band Hung Parliament.

Tjupi (Honey Ant) from Papunya, 250 kilometres from Alice Springs play energetic and emotive desert reggae. Singing in Luritja (as well as English), they are the foremost musical inspiration for people across Central Australia.

Ben Slabb, a Bundjalung man and Drewe Mitchell, kicked off Hung Parliament in 2010 with the idea of creating great sounding music in the blues, rock, soul and funk styles. Ben and Drewe were later joined by Aurey Vasta, a Wathaurung man and Jon Dyer.

Rock for Reconciliation is a Centenary of Canberra project, proudly supported by the ACT Government, the Australian Government and Reconciliation Australia.

Rock for Reconciliation is supported by Playing Australia, Reconciliation Australia, The Street Theatre and Northern Territory Government.



Tjupi Band
Image by Ollie Eclipse



Hung Parliament
Image by Drewe Mitchell



Working with young people

By Jason Glanville, National Centre of Indigenous Excellence CEO and Reconciliation Australia Board Director

Prime Minister Julia Gillard with participants of the NCIE's Constitutional Recognition Forum in March 2012. Image, Wayne Quilliam.

At The National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) we promote youth leadership and engagement through our programs and across all aspects of our work. A key member of the NCIE family is the *National Youth Advisory Council* which consists of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from around the country. The Council's primary function is to provide strategic advice and support to the NCIE's Management Team on the Centre's ongoing engagement with young Indigenous Australians.

The Council ensures that NCIE programs, policies and engagement strategies are infused with perspectives and expertise of our young people.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is a relatively young population with an average age of 21 years compared with 37 years for the non-Indigenous population. It is therefore crucial that the voice most influential in Indigenous policy should be the majority of our population which is our young people. Young people view the world differently; they are often not jaded by bad experiences and can bring a fresh, positive and innovative look at issues that need a new perspective, energy and creativity.

Our biggest inspiration is the generosity, creativity and innovation of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

who make change in their communities on a local level; who lead personal change, trust in their own excellence and understand their capacity to be game changers on a local and national level. Every day there is a new story of resilience, hope and possibility and the NCIE's commitment over the next couple of years is to, with the permission of our young leaders, share those stories on a scale never done before. Our commitment is to move beyond tokenism, to ensure that policies created by governments and non-Indigenous community organisations are driven by the needs, perspectives and insights of our young people. There is not one single issue affecting Indigenous people that does not impact on our young people and at 75 per cent of our population our young people need to be the change makers of today.

At the NCIE, we have made a real commitment to paying much more attention, not just to what young people think and have to say, but to recognise, celebrate and honour that our young people bring this extraordinary level of resilience—and that comes with being a blackfella. Whether you're in the bush, or in the city, whether you are considered to be disadvantaged or whether you have had access to education, there is racism and prejudices that come with being young and black—and we see it every day on the

streets of Redfern. Whether you have three PHD's or you have just come out of gaol you get the same treatment. So the day-to-day excellence that young people demonstrate to make it through the day, to survive and thrive and to succeed and achieve needs to be honoured and celebrated and recognised.

During 2012 we saw Indigenous excellence and youth leadership personified at forums hosted by the NCIE such as the Constitutional Recognition Forum (CRF) and NIYLA National Conference. Young people designing a program, implementing it through a three tier facilitation team and measuring it's outcomes through an evaluation process. At NCIE we also acknowledge the expertise of our old people and established leaders in our communities. The three tier facilitation model utilised at the CRF enabled experienced facilitators like Billy Gordon and Jodie Siezer to mentor upcoming young leaders like Benson Saulo and April Long. At the NIYLA National Conference we saw our tier two facilitators take the lead in facilitation and program design.

The next step for the NCIE is to share our model of youth engagement with other non-government organisations and government to ensure that our young people can continue to have a seat at the table, not as tick box exercise or at the end of a process to get a sign off, but from the very beginning and at all stages.

Rock for Reconciliation

Music has brought people together for centuries. Some have travelled across land and seas to sing, dance and celebrate. This year Australians will come together for yet another historic moment—to celebrate the Centenary of Canberra.

Throughout the year, the Centenary of Canberra program of events includes an Indigenous focus to celebrate our First Australians. The year-long program also showcases what's already happening in the Capital each year and highlights the people, places and events that contribute to Canberra's role in our national story.

To recognise the world's oldest continuing living culture, and in the spirit of reconciliation, The Street Theatre presents *Rock for Reconciliation*, a concert on 20 July 2013 featuring the Tjupi Band from Central Australia, supported by Canberra's own Hung Parliament.

Singing in Luritja as well as in English, Tjupi Band plays energetic and emotive desert reggae and provides inspiration for people across Central Australia. Hung Parliament formed in late 2010 with a mission to write and perform soulful, blues based rock. This free event is sure to be popular, but seats are limited and bookings are essential. For more information visit www.thestreet.org.au

Rock for Reconciliation is a Centenary of Canberra project, proudly supported by the ACT Government, the Australian Government and Reconciliation Australia.

To find out about more events visit www.canberra100.com.au



Youth Awareness Resource Network

The Youth Awareness Resource Network (YARN) believes that to change Australia they first need to inspire the future leaders of tomorrow. Their philosophy of building relationships through the power of story has seen the organisation grow from just a handful of students from the University of New South Wales in 2007, to over 300 Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students across ten different universities.

Founder and CEO, Warren Roberts, says YARN provides a safe space where trust and respect can grow between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

“Like any relationship between two people, it requires good communication,” Mr Roberts says. “Storytelling forms the foundation of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and it's for this reason that YARN is a great program for all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.”

The growing network provides students and other young people with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories while building support networks and creating positive links to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

From film nights to fundraising lunches, YARN's community events and initiatives are helping to create greater understanding and respect between Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. It's this understanding and mutual respect that Mr Roberts says will ultimately lead to long-lasting relationships. “I believe if we really want Australia to change it will require all Australians to realise they need to be actively part of the direction it must take,” he says.

University students and other interested young people can sign up to YARN by visiting www.yarnaustralia.com.au or follow their Facebook page for information, ideas and upcoming events www.facebook.com/YARN2

Choir expands to Western Australia

The Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir will launch an exciting new project in the East Kimberley this April. *The East Kimberley Collaboration* is a multi-year project between Gondwana Voices and Indigenous children from Western Australia's spectacular Kimberley region which incorporates songs, stories and art from the region into a new children's opera.

Expanding the Choir into Western Australia on a permanent basis has also been made possible with a new partnership between the Choir and Rio Tinto.

Gondwana Choir's Artistic Director and Founder Lyn Williams OAM said the three-year partnership with Rio Tinto will help expand the activities of the choir, reaching new communities and performing songs in Indigenous languages.

“Rio Tinto's support will ensure that talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children get the opportunity to take part in musical, social and cultural education and performance opportunities and share the voices of their generation with the nation and the world.”

The Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir works with hundreds of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country each year, providing acclaimed music education, training and group performance opportunities at no cost to choristers or their families.

To find out more visit www.gondwanachoirs.com.au





Australian
Human Rights
Commission

RACISM. **IT STOPS** **WITH ME**

RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME

IS A CAMPAIGN WHICH INVITES
ALL AUSTRALIANS TO REFLECT
ON WHAT THEY CAN DO TO COUNTER RACISM
WHEREVER IT HAPPENS.

itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au

Adam Goodes
Sydney Swans