

# Young Indigenous Meatworkers' Gazette

News letter of the Boys from the Bush Projects, Rural & Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS)  
Issue No. 21, Tuesday, 7 August 2012



tasmangroup



This space is reserved for the logos of those meat processing companies that have or are engaging BFTB workers

## Much has happened over the past 8 months since our last newsletter

Eight months have passed since our last newsletter and a number of incredible events have occurred; some of these events are positive whilst some are not so good. These events are not just about the story of the Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS). They also portray the nature of things and the challenges facing both Aboriginal people, and the organisations established to assist some of the most disadvantaged youth in this country. Some of the most important of these events are briefly covered in this issue.

### **RAWS forced out of Narrandera**

The year began with our forced departure from Narrandera. See the articles below.

This unsavoury event was triggered by a local person. This person had stated that they intend to “*work full time on destroying our scheme*” and to “*run us all out of town*”.

Immediately following this threat, our accommodation was broken into on four occasions. Our computer, printer, cameras and a large amount of cash were all stolen. Our bus window was smashed by rocks. Our car had all four tyres slashed. A mob of up to 40 young people had surrounded our home smashing a can of alcohol through our glass window, and calling for our young people to come outside for a fight.

The RAWS' Manager was also the recipient of vicious racial insults, threats of violence, and intimidation. Shortly afterwards, a local adult was arrested, charged and convicted for crimes committed against the RAWS' Manager.

What caused this horrible situation? We believe the cause of this situation can be traced back to a general discontent by certain members of the Narrandera

Aboriginal community, followed by two specific events.

The general discontent arose because certain members of the Narrandera Aboriginal community were not permitted to be involved in our Scheme due to their dreadful reputation. The management of Rockdale Beef stated that if these people were involved in our Scheme, it would refuse to host our RAWs project.

The first of the specific events occurred in November 2011, when an article was printed in the local newspaper. In this article BFTB Projects had criticized DEEWR for its delay in funding RAWs, and the fast tracking of its approval to bring in 20 foreign workers to the Riverina Beef meat processing plant through the 457 visas program. It seems the bureaucratic processes were heavily in favour of foreign workers over the employment of a greater number of disadvantaged Indigenous youth, despite our success. See the article below.

A certain member of the Narrandera community did not like this article saying *“Your article was full of sh\*t, and how dare you criticize DEEWR”*.

The second specific event occurred in early 2012 when two of our new participants said that they wanted to go home. One of them said that he wanted to go home to attend a funeral, but his family was divided in their instruction to him and to us. His mother wanted him home, but his uncle insisted that he should stay where he is, and instructed us to do our best to keep him there.

The second participant said he wanted to go home because he didn't like our rules against drugs and alcohol, and not allowing him to walk around the streets at night.

Even though both of them had money in their bank, they had walked into the local Centrelink Agency asking if they could get a free flight back home. The

Centrelink agent referred them to a local welfare organisation.

It was then we received the telephone call from a local person stating that they were going to report us to their *“friend”* in DEEWR, and that they were going to *“work full time on destroying our Scheme”*, and to *“run us all out of town”*.

Attacks on the staff and participants of RAWs began shortly after we received this threat.

Below are two newspaper articles. One was printed by the Narrandera Argus and the other was printed by The Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser. They make for interesting reading.

On 1 May 2012, because of the insinuations made that implicated DEEWR staff, BFTB Projects wrote to DEEWR asking several questions.

- 1) Was DEEWR knowledgeable of the growing resentment towards RAWs by a certain person?
- 2) If so, what did they do about it?
- 3) Were DEEWR officers complicit in providing a licence to this local person, to embark upon a campaign of terrorising the staff and clients of BFTB Projects?

We received no answer from DEEWR.

## **The success of our female group**

Our group of young female workers continues to be an outstanding success even in the face of adversity, which included the tragic suicide of the sister of one of our female workers, and the tragic deaths of our carers Bob & Sue Jones.

This was followed by the shocking insensitivity and blunder of DEEWR trying to argue that Bob & Sue Jones's care of these young women was a violation of the Aboriginal child placement principle (more on this matter later). These young women still went on to complete their six

months participation agreements. Twelve months later they are still there, and have no desire to give up their job or go home.

Pictured below are Sasha Neal from Santa Teresa and Shannon Palmer from Yuendumu at home with the Moore family.



In April 2012, all of our female workers were sack by JBS Swift, along with 120 other workers, as part of a major shakeup.

However these young women refused to go back home, and in time they were reemployed.

The important point of this story is the incredible success of these young women, and that BFTB Projects has definitely 'cracked the nut' to achieve success with their placement and employment outcomes.

## **MINTRAC National Training Conference in March 2012**

In March 2012, Milton James was invited by the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC), to give a presentation on RAWs at its 8<sup>th</sup> National Training Conference on Workforce Development and the Australian Meat Industry. Milton's presentation was titled "*True Australians, ideally suited to the meat processing industry, going to waste.*"

All those in attendance had scored his presentation as either "*interesting*", "*above expectations*" or "*outstanding*". Many respondents mentioned his presentation as being among the highlights of the conference, and several indicated that they wished to discuss the potential of RAWs with their company.



Pictured above is Milton giving his presentation at the MINTRAC Training Conference in March 2012.

## **The establishment of our second girls' group at Lobethal in South Australia**

At the MINTRAC National Training Conference several companies expressed an interest in taking on a group of young Aborigines from remote northern communities. One of these companies was T & R Pastoral in South Australia.



T & R Pastoral agreed to taken on two groups; a group of young females at their Lobethal plant in the Adelaide Hills – in the heart of Lutheran country, and one group of young males at their Murray Bridge plant. Both groups are now operating and are ready to be expanded. See storey below printed by The Courier.

Pictured below are three young women working at the Lobethal plant, along with Bri and Simon Hermel and their children. Bri and Simon are the carers of Ellie Murphy aged 17 from Yuelamu, who is pictured in the foreground.



An important point about these groups is that they are operating completely free of government funding.

These groups are in fact funded in large part by T & R Pastoral; the first time ever that a meat processing company has agreed to pay BFTB Projects for its services.

A big thank you to Ms Elena Fulga, Human Resources Manager, T & R Pastoral for her tremendous support. Also, a big thank you to all the young

women at Riverina and Lobethal, for their commitment and showing us the way.

## The Aboriginal child placement principle – the facts

The Aboriginal child placement principle was developed by Aboriginal people and others, out of concern that Aboriginal children who were removed from their parents for whatever reason and placed with non-Aboriginal carers, were losing their attachment to their extended family and community, and some were even losing their Aboriginal identity.

In the late 1970s there was a concerted effort to come to grips with this problem, due in large part to the work of Aboriginal people themselves, which resulted in the development of Aboriginal Child Care Agencies (ACCA). One of the founders of this movement was the late Molly Dyer of Horsham.

Pictured below is Milton James at his home with his friend and mentor Molly Dyer. They first met in the late 1980s when Milton was a statutory child welfare officer and coordinator of state government foster care programs in regional South Australia and Victoria, which included the placement of Aboriginal children.



The above photo was taken in the early 1990s. In fact it was on this occasion that

Molly urged Milton to leave welfare work and head off to the frontier where his knowledge and unique skill sets were most needed – assisting Aboriginal youths living in remote northern communities. It was on this very night that a decision was made that eventually led to the development of the present day BFTB Projects, Remote Area Work Scheme.

The idea that was central to Molly's work, was that the needs of Aboriginal children who were removed from their families should be met in ways which do not involve them being separated from their own people. The legal expression of this idea has become known as the **Aboriginal child placement principle**.

The principle involved two components. Firstly, there is a guideline for the placement of children where they should be placed (in descending order of preference) with members of their own immediate or extended family, or with members of their community, or with other Aboriginal people. Only if none of these placements can be found, should they be placed in the care of non-Aboriginal people.

Secondly, there should be Aboriginal participation in the decision-making process.

Unfortunately, today we have “Johnny-come-lately” DEEWR bureaucrats running around the country side, with little or no understanding of what they are doing. They do not understand the Aboriginal child placement principle, nor its context and application. Moreover, they have the impertinence of accusing Milton of breaching the principle.

These bureaucrats cannot tell the difference between a child who has been removed from its parent for abuse or neglect, from a young woman wanting to leave home for work and a better quality life in some other part of the country, and encouraged to do so by her parents.

These bureaucrats cannot tell the difference between a child being placed into foster care, or put up for adoption, from a young women living in a boarding home or renting a room from some kind people.

Our message to these DEEWR bureaucrats is to stick to what they have been paid to do - administration work - and to leave the business of serious project development and implementation work to those who know what they are doing and know what they are talking about.

# Narrandera Argus

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2011

Independent Bi-weekly Published Tuesday and Thursday.

Print Post approved - 240792/00001

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## 'EMERGENCY' AT AIRPORT

Narrandera emergency services were on full alert on Tuesday night for their annual mock exercise at the Narrandera-Leeton Airport. Police, fire, rescue and ambulance personnel, together with volunteers from the community, showed they have what it takes for the real thing when responding to the mock emergency. Further photos and story next week's *Argus*.



Rescue Squad members transport 'casualties' at the scene of the mock exercise.



Fire volunteers hose down blazes at the scene.

## Fair go sought for workers

Boys From the Bush founder Milton James and secretary Phillip Duncan yesterday lashed out at Government bureaucracy with claims that foreign workers were being recruited for positions that could be filled by remote Australian workers.

Mr James claimed that this was happening due to a delay in implementing the Remote Area Work Scheme (RAWS) by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

In a joint statement issued yesterday, RAWS spokesperson Mr James and Mr Duncan explained that RAWS was for disadvantaged

Aboriginal youth from remote communities and was operated by Boys from the Bush (BFTB), a not for profit organisation.

They said currently RAWS had 20 young Aboriginal Australians working at the JBS Swift abattoir and feedlot near Narrandera. These participants had been voluntarily recruited from several remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

"Most of these RAWS participants have made the successful transition to being full time non-subsidised employees in the meat processing industry," Mr James said.

"The initial bureaucratic delay in bringing RAWS to Narrandera was around 18

months. During that time we lost a lot of opportunities to provide employment to young Australian workers.

"For a meat processing company who wants to bring in foreign workers, the turnaround time is three months, compared to 18 months for these Aboriginal workers.

"It seems the bureaucratic process is heavily in favour of foreign workers."

The workers in the RAWS program started off as labourers and many had since moved into skilled positions, Mr James said.

"(JBS) Swift told me they are bringing in 20 foreign workers this month," he said. Foreign workers are brought in on 457 visas, and

one of the requirements for these visas is that the employer must have exhausted all efforts to employ indigenous people who are available to fill these vacancies, said Mr Duncan.

"However, the DEEWR does not check whether or not the applicants have rejected an offer by RAWS to provide young Aboriginal workers," he said.

"Further compounding this problem are sections of the meat industry whose management continues to fast track recruiting foreign labour via the 457 Visa approvals, when the supply of domestic labour in the form of indigenous youth is available. "The RAWS model could

be replicated elsewhere or increased in its scale of operation to provide similar work opportunities to a greater number of marginalised and disadvantaged Indigenous youth.

"However, this potential outcome can only be achieved if the Government in partnership with employers, genuinely commit themselves to affirmative action to provide ongoing employment for Indigenous youth. They remain part of Australia's socio-economic fabric long after foreign labourers have filled their wallets, disappeared from our shores and returned to their country of origin.

"They have exhibited their productivity and

sustainability as competitive employees in the meat processing industry."

JBS Swift were unable to be contacted for comment on the issue before going to print yesterday.

Lawyer Noel Pearson, founder of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership which supports economic and social development in Cape York, has accepted an invitation to inspect the RAWS this month.

"We welcome his interest in RAWS and look forward to introducing him to the RAWS participants," Mr Duncan said.

He described Mr Pearson as a nationally prominent indigenous spokesman and leader.

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**FREE COURTESY BUS**

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Saturday: 6.30pm till late  
Friday: 6.30pm till late  
Sunday: 11.30am till 5pm

# Narrandera Argus

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2012

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## BOYS LEAVE TOWN

The Boys from the Bush projects (BFTB) has relocated from Narrandera to Leeton because of threats of violence and racist insults allegedly made to the scheme's founder Milton James.

The claims are made in a letter to the Editor in today's *Narrandera Argus* from BFTB Projects secretary Phillip Duncan and were reinforced by Mr James in a telephone conversation with an *Argus* journalist on Tuesday.

Mr James said he had never before been subjected to the racism or fierce parochialism he had encountered from some Aboriginal residents in Narrandera.

He said his accommodation at the Star Lodge had been broken into four times in four weeks and personal property was stolen.

The BFTB scheme places young indigenous Australians

from remote northern communities with no employment opportunities in jobs in meat processing plants in the southern States.

Placement in the scheme is voluntary and has the support of the participants' families.

It has operated in Narrandera for two years with the support of the Narrandera Shire Council and Riverina Beef which employs eight young men from the Northern Territory who up until recently were bussed out to the feedlot, now operated by JBS Swift Australia, daily from the Star Lodge.

In his letter Mr Duncan expressed appreciation on behalf of the Aboriginal boys to the "good people" of Narrandera for their cordial hospitality and outlined the scheme's objectives and success.

"As a measure of the good

character of our young people and their families, not one of them has caused harm or has been disrespectful to any member of the Narrandera community," he said.

The young people had spent all of their hard-earned wages in the town for the betterment of the community.

Paraphrasing the words of the late Al Grassby MLA, Mr Duncan said the scheme had given young people a new economic independence and a new status as human assets, instead of being a burden to be regrettably carried.

"This could be a recognition of their potential to develop themselves and their country in the north, while setting an example of success to the Aboriginal people in the south," he said.

"Unfortunately their fine deeds were not shared by segments of the Narrandera Aboriginal community who have

made it impossible for us to stay any longer.

"It is not often that Milton is the recipient of unwarranted and vicious racial slurs."

He said instead of being offended, Mr James pitied those who failed to come to grips with multicultural Australia, and the fact that union and collaboration between people of different races was becoming more common, and essential for improving the quality of life for many people.

"The adverse behaviour that Milton James has been subjected to by a segment of the Narrandera community that has vowed to run him out of town includes being threatened with personal violence, racial slurs, having his accommodation broken into and damaged, having his laptop with its intellectual property stolen, and having the tyres

on his vehicle slashed," Mr Duncan said.

"Thus far the police have arrested and charged one individual in relation to some of these offences. It is highly unlikely that this person is the sole perpetrator.

"Some of the intellectual property stolen includes irreplaceable material, stories given to Milton by highly respected Aboriginal elders who as young men, travelled from remote communities in northern Australia to work in agriculture, and to perform other labouring tasks in the southern states of Australia."

Mr Duncan said BFTB challenged the key local indigenous agencies to demonstrate and publicise in the *Argus* the outcomes they had achieved in relation to sustainable employment for their young people.

He asked how their achievements to date com-

pared with those of the Remote Area Work Scheme and said appointed representatives of the indigenous agencies declined Mr James's offer to provide his services free of charge.

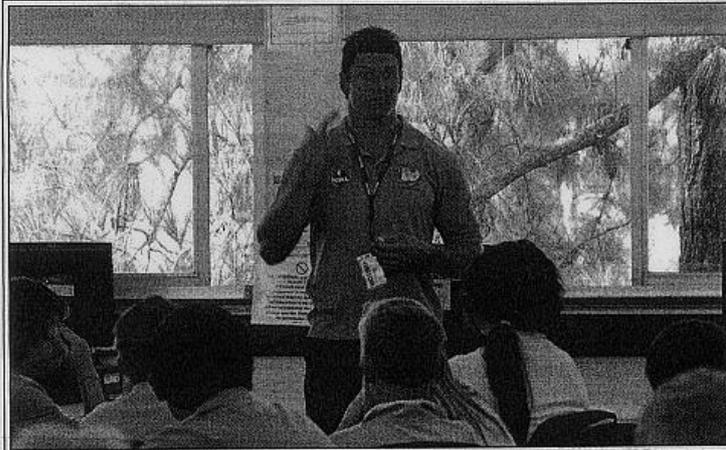
"Is their 'practice wisdom' helping to close the gap for indigenous Australians?" Mr Duncan asked.

Kristy Greedy, Narrandera community support service co-ordinator with the key local indigenous agency Sandhills Aboriginal Corporation, likened Mr James to the old-style "mission manager" and refused his claims.

"We tried to build relationships with Milton James, but he wouldn't come on board," Ms Greedy said.

"He wanted things done his way."  
Myself and Michelle Kilgover, when she worked with the Foundation, tried to

continued page 3



## NRL legend at schools

Rugby League's One Community Ambassador Trent Barrett was in Leeton and Narrandera on Monday to deliver health and education programs to 11 local primary and senior schools during his two-day visit.

The former Dragons and Sharks captain began his Riverina tour with Yanco Primary School on Monday, followed by visits to seven primary and high schools in the area, meeting with both students and teachers.

Barrett made a stop at Leeton Junior Rugby League club, finishing the day by overseeing training with the Leeton Under 16s Rugby League team that night.

On Tuesday morning Barrett visited St Francis Primary School, Yanco Agricultural College, St Joseph's School, Narrandera High School, Narrandera Primary School and finished his day at Narrandera East Infants.

"Rugby League has had an amazing three weeks of 2012 Community Carnival, and so many of our players and Ambassadors have had the opportunity to visit regional areas and meet with the local communities," Barrett said.

Kangaroos veteran Trent Barrett speaks to Years 7-12 students in the Narrandera High School library on Tuesday.

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SUNDAY SPORTS RAFFLE: Sunday at 1pm  
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Sunday: 11.30am til 8pm

# Program is hit by 'racism'

## Indigenous youth forced to move

►NARRANDERA

THE Boys from the Bush (BFTB) project has been forced to flee from its Narrandera base after a vicious string of racially fuelled attacks left the program's participants fearing for their safety, the scheme's founder Milton James has alleged.

Mr James claims he and the 12 boys who are participating in the BFTB program, which helps indigenous people from northern Queensland and the Northern

Territory find stable employment at abattoirs in southern NSW, had been targeted by people from Narrandera's indigenous community.

Mr James and the boys had their accommodation relocated to Leeton last week.

The reports of racial intimidation come less than two weeks after Narrandera Shire Council's former general manager Mark Amirtharajah claimed to have also been driven from town following allegations of heightened

racial slurs and social isolation.

Mr James believes members of the local Aboriginal community may have become jealous of the employment opportunities and support the BFTB programs offer the young men and sparked a violent outburst.

"These people, that minority group in Narrandera, have a lot to answer for," Mr James said.

Mr James said when he first arrived in town in 2005 he introduced himself to the other Aboriginal support services in

### Boys from the Bush

- Milton James is a social worker who has worked in child protection and juvenile justice for more than 20 years.
- The Boys from the Bush helps men from northern Queensland and the Northern Territory gain employment and develop skills to better their quality of life.
- Each week the men are able to allocate a percentage of their wage to a managed savings account, which is monitored by Mr James and a caretaker.
- The men are also offered a budgeting service which sees the men only ever carry a limited amount of money to avoid being hassled on the streets.

Narrandera and offered to share his expertise and set up a program similar to the BFTB for local indigenous men free of charge.

BFTB projects secretary Phillip Duncan said the program is based on voluntary participation and the men are allowed to return to their families at any time.

## Twelve, going on three

►WAGGA

LEAPLING Georgia Cox doesn't look three years old.

But that's how old the Wagga schoolgirl has turned today - if you count the number of actual birthdays she has had.

In reality Georgia has lived for 12 years but she said she had no end of fun using her special birth date to her advantage.

She revealed she sometimes likes to shock people when they asked how old she is.

"I tell them and they won't believe me," she said.

"I do like having February 29 as my birthday - it's unusual."

Her mother Danielle said her eldest was a fantastic sister to her younger brothers Bailey, 9, and Cooper, 4.

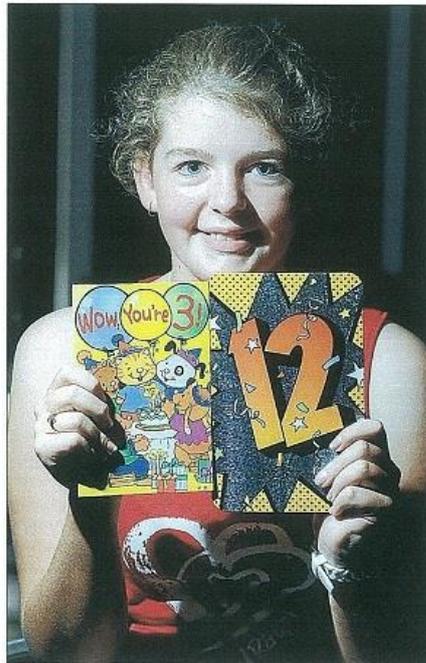
But Georgia was quick to point out that technically she was the youngest because she is only three years of age.

To mark the special occasion she will have a sleepover party with her best friends and they will set up tents in the backyard.

"She's only had two birthdays so far so I guess we'll make a bigger deal about it," Danielle said.

For Wagga resident Noreen Tuckwell who will be celebrating her 19th birthday today, the special date has been the secret to staying forever young.

"I only count them



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** Georgia Cox doesn't look three but that's how many birthdays she has had. She is a leaping and this is her first birthday in four years. Picture: Addison Hamilton

every four years now," she said.

"I've got grandchildren and they've all passed me."

Her grandson Travis Cohalan said

he thought it was funny his grandmother was younger than him.

"It's a weird feeling - we've always traditionally celebrated

her birthday on the day before," he said.

"We'll celebrate this year by having a family dinner together - she doesn't like to make it a big deal."

## Final farewell for priest tomorrow

►RIVERINA

A VIGIL for well-known Riverina florist Father Gerald Iverson will be held tomorrow after he passed away peacefully on Friday, February 24.

The vigil will be held at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 198 Old Prospect Road, Greystanes, at 7.30pm. A Pontifical Concelebrated Mass of

Christian Burial will be held at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 198 Old Prospect Road, Greystanes, on Friday, March 2, at 11am.

The funeral will then leave for Castle Hill Cemetery. Father Iverson, the son of Patrick Claude and Kathleen (deceased), was ordained to the priesthood on July 16, 1960.

## Wagga man at memorial

WAGGA man John Woods was one of the seven Australian survivors of the Battle of Sunda Strait who gathered at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra yesterday to mark the 70th anniversary of one of the greatest naval battles of World War II. He was aboard HMAS Perth when it and an America ship sailed into a Japanese invasion fleet.

**Wagga Wagga South Lions Club**

### Lions Gold Cup Chariot Race



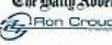
*Sunday, 29th May 2012*

**9:30 am Baylis Street, Wagga**

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## Forestry nursery fate hangs in air

The future of the Narrandera Forestry Nursery hangs in the air after tenders for its lease closed last week.

The nursery is one of six earmarked for privatisation.

Narrandera Mayor Cr Jenny Clarke said she was aware that two interested parties had toured the facility but was unaware if they had submitted tenders.

Narrandera Deputy Mayor Cr Bob Manning, who has led Council action to ensure the future of the facility, said he understood that the 19 employees were very concerned about their jobs.

He reiterated that it was just an exercise in waiting to see if any tenders had been received.

at the **ROXY**

**SHERLOCK HOLMES** (M)

Friday 24th February:  
7.30pm to 9.40pm

Saturday 25th February:  
7.30pm to 9.40pm

Box office open half an hour before movie starts. Office Hours: 9am to 3.30pm Wed & Fri.  
For movie enquiries & bookings Ph: (6959) 20743

## TRIVIA NIGHT

Hosted by the Combined Rotary Clubs of Griffith, Yenda, Leeton & Narrandera

**Saturday March 3rd**

6.30pm for 7pm start  
Yoogali Club  
Cost: \$10.00/person

You can bring your own food but drinks must be from the bar.

Peter or Lyn Sparks on 6964 3818  
Joining together to raise funds to eradicate Polio from the world.

## FOOD cents

FOODcents is based on a simple concept: To have a healthy diet, we should spend most of our grocery money on 'eat' most foods and spend least on the 'eat least' foods.

'Eat most' foods are often cheapest, so this spending model leads us to buy more nutritious foods and save money.

The course: 3 x 2 hour sessions over 3 weeks.

#1 The latest on nutrition

#2 Cooking

#3 Price comparison shopping

March: Monday 5, 12 & 19th.  
Session times: 11 am - 1pm. Lunch provided

April: Monday 16, 23 & 30th  
Session times: 11 am - 1pm  
Venue: Narrandera TAFE Kitchen Lunch provided.

Healthy Communities Initiative  
This National Partnership agreement in Preventative Health Initiative was funded by the Australian Government.

## your say: letters to the editor

# BOYS SAY FAREWELL

**EDITOR:** On behalf of the young men from the Northern Territory working at Riverina Beef, Boys from the Bush Projects offers our sincere appreciation to the good people of Narrandera for their most cordial hospitality over the past two years. Sadly, the time has now come for us to say goodbye.

Our highly successful and most unique scheme was developed by Milton James to help improve the lives of some of the most disadvantaged people in this country - young Indigenous Australians living in remote northern communities. These young people and their families know that the key to a better life is to obtain a proper job in the real economy.

Unfortunately, there are no proper jobs for them in their community. If a young person really wants a job, he or she has no choice but to look for work outside of their community. Boys from the Bush Projects was set up to assist these young people, should they and their families request it.

We approach meat processing plants on their behalf to secure an offer of full-time group employment.

Also should they request it, we can provide them with essential off-site support and supervision, which includes board and keep, transport and from work, assistance with savings and budgeting, and constructive social and recreational activities. These structures and supports also help to protect them from the ravages of illegal drugs and alcohol.

As a measure of the good character of our young people and their families, not one of them has caused harm or has been disrespectful to any member of the Narrandera community. Furthermore, all of them have spent much of their hard earned wages in Narrandera, for the betterment of the community, unlike the newly arrived foreign workers on 457 work visas who take most of their earnings back to their own country.

To paraphrase the words of one of your greatest sons, the late Mr A J Grassby MLA, this scheme

has given these young people a new economic independence and a new status as one of the human assets of our nation, instead of being a burden to be regretfully carried.

This could mean a recognition of their potential to develop themselves and their country in the north, while setting an example of success to the Aboriginal people in the south. Unfortunately, their fine deeds were not shared by segments of the Narrandera Aboriginal community, who have made it impossible for us to stay any longer.

It is not often that Milton is the recipient of unwarranted and vicious racist insults. I suppose he should have been offended, but he could not bring himself to feel this way. Instead, he felt more pity for those falling to come to grips with multicultural Australia, and the fact that union and collaboration between people of different races is becoming more common and essential for improving the quality of life for many people. It is indeed most rare and highly dispiriting for a parent to be despised by their children for reasons of their race.

The adverse behaviour that Milton James has been subjected to by a segment of the Narrandera community that has vowed to run him out of town includes being threatened with personal violence, racial slurs, having his accommodation broken into and damaged having his laptop with his intellectual property stolen, and having the tyres on his vehicle slashed.

Thus far the police have arrested and charged one individual in relation some of these offences. It is highly unlikely that this person is the sole perpetrator.

Some of the intellectual property stolen includes irreplaceable material stories given to Milton by highly respected Aboriginal Elders who as young men, travelled from remote communities in northern Australia to work in agriculture, and to perform other labouring tasks in the southern states of Australia. Their stories are invaluable and cannot be replaced as they are a few survivors from an era long gone, who have valuable stories of their productive lives that need to be recorded and passed on for the benefit of current and future generations of Indigenous Australians. It is also critical information for educating the broader Australian community, and in so doing helping to close the gap for Indigenous Australians.

We implore the persons or persons who stole Milton's laptop, to either return it or have it returned anonymously to the Editor of the Argus in honour of these Indigenous Elders and their brothers who are no longer with us.

Boys From The Bush Projects also challenges the key local Indigenous agencies to demonstrate and publicise in the Argus, the outcomes that they have achieved and are achieving, in relation to sustainable employment for their young people. Comparatively, how do your achievements thus far match the outcomes of the Remote Area Work Scheme?

Milton James's generous offer to provide his services free of charge to these Indigenous agencies was declined by appointed representatives of these agencies. Is their 'practise wisdom' helping to close the gap for Indigenous Australians?

The answer to this question is best answered by the Aboriginal Elders whom Milton has interviewed, and whose stories have been stolen so that current and future Indigenous generations, are deprived from celebrating the lives and noble deeds of these yet to be celebrated proud Australians.

I implore any member of the Narrandera community who has knowledge of where Milton's laptop is, to make every effort to have it returned anonymously to the Editor of the Argus for the sake of these wonderful Aboriginal Elders who blazed the employment trail, so that future generations could follow in their footsteps.

**Phillip Duncan,**  
Secretary,  
Boys From The Bush Projects.

### WEATHER

	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED
Min	12.5	12.0	11.5	12.0	11.0	15.9	18.5
Max	30.2	30.2	29.5	29.3	31.7	32.2	34.1
Rain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### RAINFALL

FEBRUARY - 6mm  
2012 - 75mm

### FORECAST

Forecast for Thursday - Sunny

MIN: -15 MAX: -34

## Narrandera Argus

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- Mail to P O Box 5, Narrandera 2700
- Hand deliver to 167 East Street, Narrandera
- Email: liz@narranderaargus.com.au

Letters to the editor should be no more than 500 words and if not entitled should be clearly and neatly written. Correspondents should include their full name and address and a contact telephone number. Letters may be edited. Opinions expressed in this section of the newspaper are not necessarily the views of the Narrandera Argus management and staff.

## Narrandera Argus

### VOLUME 133, No 14

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### DEADLINES

4.30pm Tuesday for Thursday's paper  
4.30pm Friday for Tuesday's paper  
(weekend sport editorial - 9am Monday)

## Live Well Narrandera and Studio 9 present

Aqua Aerobics starting Wednesday 15 February 2012 and each Wednesday 6.30pm at Lake Talbot while in demand.

**Cost \$10pp per session**

**Live Well Narrandera offers the following discounted rates**

**For Live Well Narrandera Heartmoves Participants - \$5 entry**  
To claim discount pick up your discount vouchers at Monday 9.30am Heartmoves class or from Narrandera Library

**For Concession card holders - Free entry**  
Produce your card to pick up your entry vouchers at Narrandera Library

This National Partnership agreement in Preventative Health Initiative was funded by the Australian Government

Live Well HARRANDERA

STUDIO 9 FITNESS LESMILLE

# Big project to grow little plants

By Genevieve Cooper

Tucked safely away from the hail in a greenhouse in Mt Torrens are some of the first cuttings being cultivated for a "seed orchard" for an ambitious project to restore native grasses to the northern Hills.

The cuttings are being grown by Kate Constable who owns and runs Future Generation Natives.

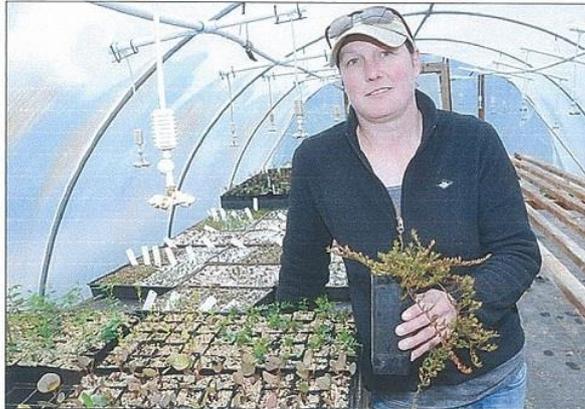
She is the first among a few "local" nurseries being targeted by the Upper Torrens Land Management Project (UTLMP) to build up their capacity to supply seeds and cuttings for the \$1.5m grassy groundcovers revegetation project.

The project, funded by the Federal Government through its Clean Energy Future grants program, is just starting its six-year schedule.

The funding will enable the UTLMP to increase biodiversity and habitat in grassy woodlands in areas around Mt Pleasant, Gumeracha, Mt Torrens and Birdwood.

Native grasses produce up to 90% less fuel for fire and they also help the environment by improving soil quality and water run-off quality.

Eventually the project aims to restore 200ha of habitat, revegetate another 200ha and do "threat abatement" work, such as reducing weeds and



Kate Constable of Future Generation Natives at Mt Torrens, one of the Hills nursery businesses being recruited to develop seed and cutting orchards for the \$1.5m grassy groundcovers revegetation project in the northern Hills.

rabbits, on 500ha. UTLMP project manager Gerry Butler spoke about the first stage at the Adelaide Hills Council meeting last week.

He said the group was spending more than \$200,000 this financial year on research trials and "capacity building" to supply the seed and cuttings needed.

"We need about a tonne of native seed to get 40 species," he

said. Rather than over taxing remnant vegetation, the group is focussing on "upskilling local nurseries" to raise the seed and cuttings.

Mr Butler said the UTLMP was also talking to Trees for Life about growing plants for seed.

Mrs Constable has only just started working on her fledging orchard this month. She said the project was in

its early stages but she was excited by the opportunities.

"I've always been interested in cuttings and growing ground covers and middle storey plants from seed," she said.

The project aims to spread up to 60 native grass and understory species across the target areas particularly in places such as Mt Pleasant which were historically grassy woodlands.

## Roadsides going green for summer

Work is about to start on trials to revegetate roadsides with native grasses and groundcovers to reduce fire risk.

Eight trial sites of between 100m and 200m have been chosen in the upper River Torrens catchment between Mt Pleasant and Mt Torrens and the upper Onkaparinga River catchment near Woodside.

The trials are being run by the Upper Torrens Land Management Project (UTLMP) and involve the Adelaide Hills Council, the local Natural Resource Management Board, the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) and local landholders.

UTLMP manager Gerry Butler told the Adelaide Hills Council last week the chosen sites were full of highly flammable phalaris grass and would be slashed in September and then sprayed twice over spring and summer.

Revegetation with a mix of native grasses and ground covers would start next year.

Once established the new plants would remain green over summer and would provide less bushfire fuel.

"At the moment keeping roadsides clear (of bushfire fuel) is a major issue for landholders, the council and the CFS and it gobbles up large amounts of council budgets," Mr Butler told *The Courier* this week.

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### 2400 homes for NBN

Work will begin in the next few months on the rollout of National Broadband Network (NBN) services in Strathalbyn.

The installation of cables to 2400 homes is part of stage 2 of the NBN rollout in SA.

Alexandrina Council strategic manager of information services Colin Shackelford said the planning stage had started but work would not begin until the final map for the work was released in August.

"Services should be ready to connect within a 12-15 month time frame from the release of that map," he said.

For further information call 1800 881 816.

## Tree change for desert women

Bri and Simon Hermel had been thinking about taking in a boarder when they saw a leaflet at their local supermarket in Lobethal.

It sought people to take in young Aboriginal women who were set to start work at T&R Pastoral's nearby abattoir.

Immediately Mrs Hermel was interested and attended a meeting with Milton James, director of not-for-profit closing the gap organisation Boys from the Bush (BFTB) Projects.

"We had the room and we thought it would be a great opportunity to get involved cross-culturally and a challenge for both of us," Mrs Hermel said. "We thought it would be good for the kids too, to share their home."

BFTB aims to offer young Indigenous Australians from remote communities employment opportunities and finds accommodation for them to establish their independence and make a living - escaping lives of poverty and welfare as part of the Remote Area Work Scheme.

Employers provide training and once the girls have a home, they are financially responsible for their own services, board and transport to and from work.

The Hermels and their two children Amaya, 3, and Seth, 2, took in Ellie Murphy, 18, from Yuelamu in the NT.

"Already we've really enjoyed the experience, we're pretty impressed at how Ellie has started work, coming from a completely different environment where it's nice and warm to very cold," Mr Hermel said.

"Ellie has to get up at 4.30am to walk to the abattoir, going from no work to full-time work, we think she's handled it really



Ellie Murphy, front, is living with Lobethal family Bri and Simon Hermel and their children Seth and Amaya while she works in Lobethal's nearby abattoir with Joyce Briscoe and Nadia Stafford. The three women are from Yuelamu, NT, and have been brought to the Hills to establish a new life.

well. Plus, the kids love her."

Miss Murphy works with Joyce Briscoe, 22, and Nadia Stafford, 18, who are from the same town and have been billeted to a home together in Lobethal's main street.

Miss Briscoe, 22, described the Hills as "a bit colder and a lot greener" than her hometown.

"There's nothing much to do back home, I'll be able to meet new people here," she said.

Mr James is hoping people within the Lobethal, Woodside and Mt Barker areas will be able to open up their homes.

He can be contacted on 0429 644 645 or for more information visit [www.boysfromthebush.org.au](http://www.boysfromthebush.org.au).