I have included in this edition of the Winnunga News a copy of an article which the Canberra Times has published in which I call on the ACT Government to begin a process for the development of a Treaty between the Government and the Aboriginal communities of Canberra. I have also called on the ACT Government to give consideration to the vexed question of how to ensure that the native title rights of the traditional custodians of the land within the borders of the ACT are recognised and honoured.

In making this call I was mindful that in the absence of leadership from the Federal Government, the Governments of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia have either commenced negotiations for a Treaty in their States, as has the Northern Territory, or are in the process of developing a framework to take the issue forward.

The Labor Opposition in NSW has also promised if it is elected at the next election, it will negotiate a Treaty with the Indigenous people of NSW.

In light of the very positive response of a majority of the States and Territories to the almost universal aspiration of Aboriginal people across Australia for their sovereign rights and right to self-determination to be formally recognised through a Treaty it is, I think, imperative that the ACT Government make the same commitment.

In engaging with this important issue I am mindful it will require the commitment, involvement and support of the Aboriginal community if it is to become a reality, and if it is to deliver the recognition and justice which many of us believe can only be achieved through a Treaty.

I am of course acutely aware of the central role which Ngunnawal and Ngambri elders must play in any discussions or negotiations for a Treaty in the ACT and also for resolving the historical injustice which they have endured as a result of their dispossession from their lands in the ACT and the purported extinguishment of native title in the Territory.

While, therefore, I am committed to continuing to be involved with the fundamentally important issue of a Treaty, which progressive Governments around Australia are now actively pursuing, I believe that the local Aboriginal community needs to unite, most particularly behind Ngunnawal and Ngambri elders and the Elected Body to develop an agreed strategy and plan for advancing consideration of a Treaty and the proper recognition of native title in the ACT.
Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner Ms June Oscar Blasts States and Territories for Rate of Imprisonment of Indigenous Women

Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar in a recent lecture at the University of Western Australia blasted the States and Territories for the rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women describing it as a ‘national disgrace’.

Commissioner Oscar said ‘The trajectory of incarceration in this nation shines a glaring light on the systemic inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.

Ms Oscar noted that one of the most concerning trends across Australia is the 77% increase of women in prison and the fact that Aboriginal women account for most of that growth. She noted Aboriginal women comprise 34% of the women behind bars in Australia.

How shameful then and how embarrassing, that the number of Aboriginal women locked up by the ACT Labor/Greens Government at the AMC is, at 55% of those imprisoned, currently almost twice as high as the national rate.

Fact: ACT Corrective Services’ vision is: To be an organisation that contributes to a safe, strong and cohesive community through the delivery of custodial and community corrections services and programs that are recognised for their level of excellence (http://www.cs.act.gov.au/act_corrective_services).
The Barunga Statement

30 YEARS SINCE THE HISTORIC CALL FOR A TREATY

‘Well I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television’, back in 1988 all those talking politicians. Words are easy words are cheap/much cheaper than our priceless land/but promises can disappear, just like writing in the sand. Treaty Now, Treaty Yeah.

2018 Marks the 30th year since Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s visit to Barunga and the delivery of the famous Barunga Statement.

Written on paper surrounded by a large bark painting, painted by artists from Central and Northern Land Councils, the Barunga Statement was presented by Dr. Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM and Mr W. Rubuntja AM, as a log of claims that included:

* Self-determination and self-management.
* A national system of land rights.
* Compensation for loss of lands.
* Respect for Aboriginal identity.
* An end to discrimination and the granting of full civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

‘We, the Indigenous owners and occupiers of Australia, call on the Australian Government and people to recognise our rights’.

On 12 June 1988, during Australia’s bicentennial year, Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Minister Gerry Hand (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) was presented with the Barunga Statement at the annual Barunga Cultural and Sporting festival.

The Prime Minister responded by saying that he wished to conclude a treaty between Aboriginal and other Australians by 1990, but his wish was not fulfilled. Yothu Yindi wrote the worldwide hit song ‘Treaty’ to commemorate the statement lead singer Dr M. Yunupingu, with his older brother Dr. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, AM who wanted to highlight the lack of progress on the treaty between Aboriginal peoples’ and the Federal Government.

Dr M. Yunupingu said ‘Bob Hawke visited the Territory. He went to this gathering in Barunga and this is where he made a statement that there shall be a treaty between black and white Australia. Sitting around the camp fire, trying to work out a chord to the guitar, and around that camp fire, I said, ‘Well I heard it on the radio. And I saw it on the television’. That should be a catchphrase. And that’s where ‘Treaty’ was born’.

Dr. Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM presenting the Barunga Statement to Prime Minister Bob Hawke on 12 June 1988.
‘The Barunga Statement (cont’d)’

Dr. Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM and Djambawa Marawili are the last surviving of the nine senior men who painted the Barunga statement in 1988.

‘NT SIGNS HISTORIC BARUNGA AGREEMENT TO BEGIN INDIGENOUS TREATY TALKS’

Agreement commits NT and Aboriginal land councils to three-year process.

On Friday 8 June 2018 at Barunga the Northern Territory Government signed an historic agreement to begin treaty talks with all four of the NT’s powerful Aboriginal land councils including Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Anindilyakwa and Tiwi.

The Barunga Agreement, signed on Friday, commits the NT Government and the land councils to a three year process to consult all Territorians to ‘develop a process to negotiate a Northern Territory treaty’.

Should a treaty eventuate, it would be ‘the foundation of lasting reconciliation between the First Nations of the Territory and other citizens’ from which ‘all Territorians should ultimately benefit’, the agreement says.

The Agreement sets out guiding principles, including that ‘Aboriginal people were the prior owners and occupiers of the land, seas and waters that are now called the NT of Australia’.

The Labor Senator Pat Dodson, in Barunga to reboot bipartisan talks on an Indigenous voice to parliament and constitutional recognition, said ‘I was sitting in the dust 30 years ago at Barunga, helping to craft the words that went into that statement, so I’m well aware of how long it’s taken and people before me, all the way back to the 1938 day of mourning, calling for someone to take Aboriginal affairs seriously in the federal parliament’.

‘So there’s nothing new about our message’, he said.

‘I was sitting in the dust 30 years ago at Barunga, helping to craft the words that went into that statement, so I’m well aware of how long it’s taken...’
National Reconciliation Week

In every publication, every email and every speech made by ACTCOSS we acknowledge the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who are custodians of country and affirm our commitment to reconciliation.

For ACTCOSS, reconciliation means working to overcome the causes of division and inequality between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. During National Reconciliation Week I want to acknowledge there is still massive unfinished business for ourselves and others.

The Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA) at the University of Canberra hosted a forum this week that provided insights from three Aboriginal leaders in the ACT community on this unfinished business. Here are the key messages I heard and wanted to share with our readers:

There is a feeling of despair that Australian people don’t accept the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being in charge of their own destiny. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were asked to:

* Be more respectful of knowledge and capability held within the community
* Understand the consequences of the history of dispossession, especially intergenerational trauma
* Accept the need for self-determination and a formal reckoning, including through a Treaty
* Be frank about the problems we experience in achieving reconciliation and use that honesty as a foundation for a better approach in the future
* Listen, and trust what you hear needs to be acted on
* Work with leaders nominated by the community
* Acknowledge diversity and be comfortable with working in ways that are unfamiliar
* Be capable of sustaining good practices beyond individual good relationships
* Establish genuinely reciprocal relationships between leaders of mainstream and Aboriginal community controlled services.

Julie Tongs OAM, Louise Taylor and Kim Davison who all spoke at the forum had some very practical advice on what is needed in the service system to close health and wellbeing gaps. The ACT needs strong Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community controlled housing, care and protection and criminal justice diversion/post-release support services that enable self-determination.

Thank you to IGPA for facilitating this panel of speakers and providing this opportunity for both careful listening and respectful dialogue.

Susan Helyar, Director
ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)
It’s Time for a Treaty in the ACT

It is an interesting coincidence that the newly declared ACT Reconciliation Day Public Holiday falls between two significant anniversaries relevant to Aboriginal demands for sovereignty and self-determination, without which reconciliation is illusory. It was held the day after the first anniversary of the presentation of the Uluru Statement and two weeks before the 30th anniversary of the Barunga Statement.

The Barunga Statement, despite having been effectively ignored for the last 30 years, has been given life by the Government of the Northern Territory which has announced that it will, consistent with the demands incorporated in the statement, begin negotiations with the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory for a treaty.

In committing to negotiations for a treaty, the Northern Territory has followed the example of the governments of South Australia and Victoria where the path to a treaty in each of those States has been the subject of detailed consideration. Regrettably the incoming Liberal Government in South Australia has terminated the process for a treaty in that State. However Luke Foley, the Opposition Leader in New South Wales, the jurisdiction with the largest Indigenous population in Australia, has accelerated the momentum for state based treaties by committing a Labor Government in NSW to a treaty with that States Aboriginal people.

While differing in content and structure the Barunga and Uluru Statements are in essence concerned with the same issues, namely self-determination, self-management, sovereignty, land rights, truth telling, an historical reckoning and justice. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia are calling for these rights to be recognised and guaranteed through a treaty or a makarrata.

The response of successive national governments, of both persuasion, over the last 30 years to the widespread aspiration of Indigenous Australians for a treaty has been disappointing, to say the least.

On 12 June 1988 when the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke was handed the Barunga Statement, by one of its main proponents, the then Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, he promised he would enter into a treaty with Indigenous Australia during that term of Government, ie before 1990. Unfortunately after returning to Canberra with the Burunga Statement the Prime Minister abandoned his commitment to a treaty. So disappointed was Galarrwuy Yunupingu that the
It’s Time for a Treaty in the ACT (cont’d)

promised treaty did not eventuate that he asked for the Barunga Statement to be returned to his people. In
doing so he made the following comment:

’Sovereignty turned into a treaty, the treaty turned into reconciliation and reconciliation turned into nothing.’

He asked, therefore, for the Statement to be returned to Barunga, where he said:

‘...we will hold a sorry funeral ceremony. We will dig a hole and bury it. It will be a protest...The time has come
to send a strong message to Canberra and the world about the disgraceful state of Indigenous Australia, where
governments have failed...’

The rejection by the current Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, of the central features of the Uluru Statement
from the Heart was far more categorical than that of Bob Hawke 30 years earlier. It is of course not only the
Federal Government that has failed to meet the expectations or needs of Aboriginal people. ACT specific data
on Indigenous disadvantage in Canberra, whether it be incarceration rates, child protection, housing,
educational outcomes, rough sleeping, homelessness, drug abuse, mental health or poverty is as bad, and in
many cases worse, than in other jurisdictions in Australia.

In response to the aspiration of Aboriginal people across Australia for formal recognition of their sovereign
rights and rightful place in their own country, progressive Governments in South Australia and Victoria
followed by the Government of the Northern Territory and now the Labor Opposition in NSW have not been
prepared to wait for leadership or action from the Commonwealth, and each has formally committed to the
negotiation of a State based treaty.

In light, however, of the example of these other jurisdictions it is a matter of some surprise that the ACT
Government has not evinced any interest in exploring the question of a treaty with the Aboriginal community
of Canberra. The fanfare greeting the declaration by the ACT Government of the Reconciliation Day Public
Holiday, and its purported commitment to reconciliation, should be considered against its apparent disinterest
in a treaty and indeed the paucity of new Indigenous specific funding in the recent ACT budget. It is, after all, a
widely if not universally held view within the Aboriginal community that a negotiated treaty is a pre-condition
to achieving reconciliation.

ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Rachel Stephen-Smith

Fact: A treaty is a binding agreement between two or more states or sovereign powers. It is usually
reached after a period of negotiation
It’s Time for a Treaty in the ACT (cont’d)

An additional barrier to reconciliation in the ACT is the assumption that native title in the Territory was extinguished by the conversion of all land in the Territory (other perhaps than some historical cemeteries and old stock routes) into leasehold, following the transfer of the land from NSW to form the national capital. This issue presents a massive challenge to our capacity to ever achieve reconciliation in Canberra.

If we in the ACT cannot find a way of reversing the extinguishment of native title, even if that requires us to deem that native title is to be treated as having not been extinguished, or alternatively by establishing an appropriate compensation regime in recognition of the fact that it has been extinguished, then we are doomed to never be reconciled.

It is time for the ACT Government to get serious about reconciliation. It is time we in Canberra began to talk about a treaty to acknowledge and right the wrongs perpetrated by the dispossession of Aboriginal people in the ACT from their lands, without consent and without compensation.

Julie Tongs OAM, CEO Winnunga AHCS

Reconciliation Requires That The Gap Be Completely Closed

One of the main indicators of whether reconciliation has been achieved, according to Reconciliation Australia, will be that the gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians in all life outcomes will have been closed.

In the ACT there is currently a veritable chasm in outcomes in some of the most significant measures. The ACT has, for instance, to its great shame, the second highest rate of Aboriginal incarceration and the second highest rate of Aboriginal child removal in Australia. Not only do we have inordinately high rates of imprisonment and child removal they are actually getting worse. The gap is widening not closing.

If the ACT Government is to avoid suggestions that the declaration of a Reconciliation Day Public Holiday, in the face of the extremely poor outcomes being achieved by it in addressing Indigenous disadvantage in Canberra, is not simply a diversion from its manifest failings then perhaps it would be worth the Government releasing a detailed ACT Closing the Gap report on Reconciliation Day to record the progress being achieved year by year.
AMC Prisoners With a Disability Left to Survive as Best They Can

On 2 June 2018, The Canberra Times published a very concerning report revealing that the ACT Government does not know how many prisoners in the Alexander Maconochie Centre have a disability because it has not sought to identify inmates with a disability.

Compounding the concern is the fact that the ACT Auditor-General, in a detailed report in 2015 on the rehabilitation of detainees at the AMC, made specific findings and recommendations about the importance of ensuring detainees with a disability were identified and provided with appropriate support and rehabilitation. The Canberra Times was unable to elicit an explanation from the ACT Government for the reason that the Auditors report had been ignored.

It beggars belief that a prison designed specifically to reflect human rights values and world’s best practice in the rehabilitation of prisoners, does not even bother to assess whether people have a disability.

The Winnunga AHCS Newsletter has previously suggested it is past time that prisoners at the AMC who have contracted Hepatitis C as a result of the refusal of prison authorities to provide them with clean needles, should commence a class action against the ACT Government, seeking compensation for the impact the disease has had on their lives.

Revelations that prisoners at the AMC with a disability are being left to fend for themselves as best they can, suggest that they too should similarly initiate a class action against the Government.

‘It beggars belief that a prison designed specifically to reflect human rights values and world’s best practice in the rehabilitation of prisoners, does not even bother to assess whether people have a disability.’

Fact: The definition of ‘class action’ is a legal proceeding in which persons representing interests common to a large group participate as representatives of the group or class (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/class-action).
Chief Police Officer Wonders Why ACT Police Relations With the Indigenous Community Are Worse Than They Were 18 Years Ago

ACT Chief Police Officer (CPO) Justine Saunders informed the ABC in an interview in late May that relations between ACT Police and the Indigenous community are worse now than they were 18 years ago when she was a serving officer. CPO Saunders did not have an explanation for why things had deteriorated so badly.

Two weeks after her honest admission of a deteriorating relationship between ACT Police and Aboriginal residents of Canberra local media reported a woman had been locked up overnight for being 30 minutes late in reporting to Woden Police Station pursuant to bail conditions to which she was subject.

While the woman’s identity was disclosed in media reports about her imprisonment the fact she was an Aboriginal woman was not reported. The almost unanimous view in the Aboriginal community was, unsurprisingly, that there was no need for the media to report her Aboriginality because when, after all, was the last time, if ever, anyone had heard of a white woman being locked up for being half an hour late for an appointment. It was simply assumed that the victim of this outrage would have to have been Aboriginal.

Magistrate Bernadette Boss is to be commended for cautioning ACT Police that it risked a false imprisonment claim for locking up a person in these circumstances. The Winnunga News is not aware if ACT Police or the ACT Government has issued an apology for the appalling treatment meted out to this Aboriginal woman but if CPO Saunders is looking for insight into the nature of the relationship of ACT Policing with the Aboriginal community she may wish to reflect on this incident. It also goes some way to explaining why from a population base of 1.7%, Aboriginal women constitute more than 50% of women in jail in the ACT. The ACT Government locks up Aboriginal women at a rate almost twice the national average, something else for the CPO to ponder.

As a minimum, and in light of the comments of Magistrate Boss about false imprisonment, the least the ACT Government could do is offer the offended against woman an ex gratia payment for the indignity and the clearly unjustified loss of liberty she suffered.

Fact: ACT Policing is the portfolio of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) responsible for providing policing services to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).
2018 World No Tobacco Day

The annual World No Tobacco Day was held on 31 May and we marked the day in true Winnunga AHCS style. There was something for everyone, activities for little kids and adults alike, including interactive smoking awareness activities, information displays and a healthy lunch.

People had the opportunity to meet and chat with Winnunga’s tobacco workers and find out more about the federally funded Tackling Indigenous Smoking program and Winnunga’s highly successful No More Boondah program, which has been running for over 11 years.

Tobacco Action Worker Chanel Webb said ‘it was important to have events like this because it raises community awareness about smoking harm and tobacco related illnesses’.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and partners mark World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) highlighting the health and additional risks associated with tobacco use, and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption.

According to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014/2015, 39% of Indigenous Australians currently smoke on a daily basis, which works out to be almost three times the level for the Australian population as a whole. Smoking remains one of the major contributors to Indigenous ill health in Australia. Smoking related illness remains responsible for 1 in 5 deaths of our mob.

Ms Webb said it was very pleasing to see her colleagues at Winnunga embrace the spirit of WNTD. ‘Five of my colleagues pledged to go a 24 hour period of abstinence from tobacco. They went from midnight Wednesday 30 May until midnight Thursday 31 May’.

‘Each of them were issued with a survival pack which included patches, gum, lollies, fag lollies, fidget spinner and a tips card. We also recorded their carbon monoxide level before and after with the Smokerlyzer for comparison purposes’ she explained.

One person who knows only too well of the benefits of not smoking is our amazing

Fact: World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is observed around the world every year on 31 May.
colleague Beth Sturgess who joined Winnunga’s No More Boondah quit smoking support program that assists people to identify why they smoke, what triggers their smoking and what strategies can help to avoid or delay their smoking. Come August this year, Beth will be almost 2 years smoke free!

When you break down the stats and look at where Beth is currently at (as of 13 June), she has been smoke free for 671 days to be exact, has not smoked 16,790 cigarettes and saved $13,432.00. Pretty impressive aye!

Beth first took up smoking at a young age. ‘I began smoking when I was a teenager because it was something to do and I thought this was the normal thing to do’ Beth said. ‘I feel so much better. My blood circulation has improved and my lung function is improved by 30%. Don’t worry if you put on weight, Winnunga has a healthy lifestyle program that you can participate in. I reckon if I can give up the Boondah’s anyone can.’

Beth also had these words of encouragement for anyone else thinking about giving up smoking or for who are trying to give up smoking again. ‘I have found it really helps attending our No More Boondah sessions at Winnunga just for a yarn and support. Just remember, if you don’t succeed the first time, try again and again and again. You can do it’.

What is the Winnunga AHCS No More Boondah Program? No More Boondah is a quit smoking support program that assists people to identify why they smoke, what triggers their smoking and what strategies can help to avoid or delay their smoking.

When is it held and what can I expect? No More Boondah runs a weekly one-hour support group but can also provide phone support, outreach and follow up for people that find it difficult to attend the weekly session.

Through Winnunga’s GPs, we offer access to quit smoking products such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) - patches, inhalers and gum as well as oral treatments.

The drop in session runs every Thursday’s from 11am to 12pm.

Access to our No More Boondah program is completely free – no costs involved at all.

What else should I know? Often participants have tried to stop smoking before but are encouraged to try again, acknowledging that it can take some people many attempts before they succeed.

If you are ready to stop smoking or you are thinking about it, we invite you to participate in our No More Boondah program by attending the weekly session and/or participating in phone support and outreach.

Who should I contact for more info or if I want to join? You can contact Winnunga AHCS Tobacco Control Workers on 6284 6222 or drop by and see us at 63 Boolimba Crescent, Narrabundah.
The Flu Low Down

Studies have shown that influenza can survive for:
* An hour or more in the air in enclosed environments
* more than 8 hours on hard surfaces such as stainless steel and plastic
* up to 15 minutes if transferred from tissues to hands
* up to 5 minutes after transfer from environmental surfaces

One of the hardest things about stopping the spread of the flu is that people can be contagious a day before experiencing any symptoms. Of course, this means we are out and about and unfortunately spreading the virus before anyone knows they are unwell.

Influenza vaccines help to protect our community from the virus and its severe consequences. The flu injection is up to 70% effective in young healthy adults and at least 70% effective in children. In older adults, vaccines can be less effective depending on their health (30% to 80%), however older adults are at greater risk of complications from influenza so are advised to take precautions.

Annual flu vaccination is the best way to prevent yourself from getting the flu, and from then passing it on to someone else. Flu vaccination is very important for people who are at-risk of complications from influenza, and for those in close contact with at-risk people.

The flu is very easy to spread, especially when in close contact with other people. You can catch it when an infected person coughs or sneezes as they release small virus-containing droplets into the air. It’s also important to remember that touching contaminated surfaces (including hands) and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes can also lead to infection.
* you cannot get the flu from the vaccination
* influenza is a highly contagious disease that kills more Australians per year than road accidents.
* people with a chronic disease have forty times the risk of death from influenza.

There have been a total of 13,783 laboratory confirmed notifications of Influenza in Australia for 2018 (as at 4 June), 133 in the ACT.

The flu vaccine is available at Winnunga AHCS and is free for:
- All children aged 6 months to under 5 years
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 15 years and over
- Pregnant women
- People 65 years and over
- Anyone over six months of age with underlying medical conditions, which predispose them to the risk of complications from influenza

Fact: Influenza is highly contagious and can be spread for up to a day before symptoms appear and for five days afterwards.
Calls to Have Boomanulla Oval Back in Aboriginal Hands

Winunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service chief executive Julie Tongs has called for Boomanulla Oval to be returned to Aboriginal control. The ACT budget has allocated $770,000 for capital works at the neglected Narrabundah oval over the next four years with the government to maintain control of the site.

Boomanulla Oval received funding in the ACT Budget but Julie Tongs is concerned the project won’t be given Indigenous autonomy.

Photo: Sitthixay Ditthavong

Boomanulla closed in 2014 after the operators went into voluntary administration partly because, Ms Tongs said, it had been operated beyond what it had been budgeted for.

‘It’s a gathering place for Aboriginal people. Over the years there was lots of functions here,’ Ms Tongs said. Ms Tongs put in an operation tender with the ACT government in September but said it remained unclear how the tender was being processed. The oval sits next to the Narrabundah Ballpark, which received $4.5 million in last year’s budget, despite Ms Tongs calls at the time for money to be budgeted for Boomanulla.

‘It’s got to be back in Aboriginal hands. It gives [the Indigenous community] a sense of belonging and ownership,’ Ms Tongs said.

The tender before the government would have a trust set up for the oval, with a trust managing the company to operate the site. Ms Tongs said the ACT government already ran the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre in Yarramundi and the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm in Tharwa.

‘Where’s the self determination in all of this?’ Ms Tongs said, adding when it came to determining Aboriginal ‘destiny’, governments seemed to prefer to determine it for Indigenous people.

Aboriginal Legal Service ACT chief executive Leo Nicholls blamed a downturn in Aboriginal and police relations on the oval’s closure. ‘We used to have regular touch football matches with federal police; barbecues and all that stuff,’ Mr Nicholls said. ‘We don’t have a home and stuff to go to anymore.’

Despite this, Mr Nicholls said the funding in the budget would ‘got the ball rolling’, but he questioned whether it was enough and what the government’s plans with the oval were.
Is the Scathing NSW Report Into Child Protection a Preview of What is to Come in the ACT?

The NSW Government has recently released the Tune Report into child protection in that State. The report is scathing in its assessment, finding that the system is ‘ineffective and unsustainable’ and that it fails ‘to improve long-term outcomes for children and families’ especially those with complex needs.

The report provides a very specific focus on Aboriginal children in the care and protection system not just because, as is also the case in the ACT, of the massive over-representation of Aboriginal children but because they are also the fastest growing cohort in out-of-home-care.

Representatives of Aboriginal groups involved with the care and protection system in NSW have responded to the damning report with calls for the appointment of an Aboriginal child and family commissioner with responsibility for managing the provision of child and family services for the Aboriginal community.

The Chief Executive of AbSec the peak organisation for Aboriginal organisations involved with child protection, Mr Tim Ireland said ‘we are calling for a new statutory body to focus investment on Aboriginal community-controlled child and family services, led by an Aboriginal child and family commissioner.’

Almost all data on child protection in Australia which provides a comparative analysis of the outcomes achieved in each of the States and Territories shows NSW performing at a higher level than the ACT. For example on the single indicator of the number of children in out of home care the ACT is consistently either the worst or second worst performing jurisdiction in Australia.

Additionally the ACT received the worst rating in Australia in the latest Family Matters analysis of compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles.

The ACT Government is also the only Government in Australia that has refused to support any role for an Aboriginal community controlled organisation in the front line delivery of care and protection services.

It doesn’t take much imagination to understand the likely outcome of the current inquiry into child protection in the ACT.

Fact: The Tune Report can be accessed at https://www.dropbox.com/s/k8o856svgeedkt/TUNE%20REPORT%20indep%20review%20out%20of%20home%20care%20in%20nsw.pdf?dl=0
Winnunga’s Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) attended the ANFPP annual National Conference ‘Strong Women, Strong Families, The Answers are Within’ in Brisbane earlier this month on the lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera Nations.

The conference was an opportunity for our newest team to network and learn from and with other national and international health professionals, organisations and delegates. Some of the speakers and presenters at the annual conference included Dr Mark Wenitong, Odette Best and Debbie Sheehan, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Wellington Aboriginal Corporation Health Service and the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health.

Winnunga ANFPP team member and Home Visitor Nurse Rona Bunag attended the conference and said her new found knowledge will assist greatly when it comes to understanding and working with her clients.

‘They discussed strong women and the role they play, especially in the health care sector. It was very enlightening and empowering as well because they faced so much in the past but they still powered through it. They were just so strong and they just made a difference within the Aboriginal community at the same time as themselves as well’ Ms Bunag said.

She further added ‘They also discussed how someone who doesn’t have any Aboriginal background can be more sensitive, when it comes to the cultural differences. It just really opened our eyes how different each tribe is, it’s the same, but it’s different at the same time’.

Fact: The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) is a nurse-led home visiting program that supports women pregnant with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child to improve their own health and the health of their baby (source: https://www.anfpp.com.au/about-anfpp).
Some of the topics presented and discussed during the three days conference included Intergenerational Trauma & Family Violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Supporting clients with complex challenges, Belly-cast session, Father inclusive practice, Historical snapshot of strong Aboriginal Nurses and Midwives and Learning from the remote ANFPP model.

Winnunga Nurse and ANFPP team member Ada Ochayi said she benefitted a lot from attending the conference especially from hearing the stories about what happened in the past and how Aboriginal people overcame many barriers put before them.

‘Hearing how Aboriginal women in the past weren’t allowed to do certain kinds of skills, like some of them, they wanted to do nursing but they weren’t allowed to do it and the few who were allowed to, they weren’t allowed in the same class room with their other class mates, like even in the hostel. They were segregated and discriminated on but they were still so resilient’ Ms Ochayi explained.

‘They still became nurses and worked in the Aboriginal communities. They made huge changes and some of them worked as nurses for almost 30, 40, 50 years or until they died and they did this despite Aboriginal people being marginalised’ she said.

The significance of attending the Strong Women, Strong Families, The Answers are Within conference, on behalf of Winnunga, wasn’t lost on Home Visitor Nurse Ruby Kaur, who is new to the ANFPP team. ‘Attending the conference was a very good learning experience. I was able to understand the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program better, from where it originated from and all the history’ Ms Kaur said.

‘Also getting to know the history of Aboriginal nurses. I personally got to understand the program, as I was quite new to this whole scenario and had less of an idea of what’s going on. I think it’s really helped me to meet the Home Visitor Nurses from the other sites and also hearing from Debbie Sheehan, the International NFP educator. I think it was a really great experience’ she further added.

For Bronwyn McClure, Winnunga’s Family Partnership worker, the conference was an opportunity to check out some of the more creative things on offer and think towards the future.

Fact: 49 births were recorded by the Winnunga AHCS Midwifery Program in 2016-2017 financial year.
‘The Belly casting was fantastic. I thought it was really, interesting how they put the fur in the cast of the belly so that a baby could lie in it’ Ms McClure explained.

‘I really enjoyed this year’s conference but I’m looking forward to next year’s as our team gets to present our program. We have to work harder in the next 12 months to see what we come up with, some interesting things to show them’ she said.

Want to know more about Winnunga’s Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP)?

In the next Winnunga newsletter, we will profile this team and the work they do. But in brief, the ANFPP is a program designed to start down the road to motherhood from the 16th week of her pregnancy right up until bub turns two years of age.

To join the program you need to:

- Be a first time mum or this be the first time mothering your baby
- Your baby needs to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Be between weeks 16 and 28 of your pregnancy

Come and join in on the fun.

For more information call 6284 6222 and ask to speak with a member of the ANFPP team or email ANFPP@winnunga.org.au

Fact: The Winnunga AHCS midwifery team provided 385 home visits, 169 hospital services and 979 telephone services in the 2016-17 financial year.
**Staff Profile**

**Name:** Kathryn Norris

**Position:** Midwifery Access Worker

**Who’s your mob?**  
Torres Strait Islands and Australian.

**Where’s your country?**  
Kala Lagaw Ya Language group, specifically Waiben (Thursday Island) Nagi (Mount Ernest) and Badu (Mulgrave Island).

**Who is your favourite singer/band?**  
‘Passenger’ a solo Irish musician, I like lots of different types of music and have a long list of favorites.

**What is your favourite song?**  
Forever Young.

**What do you like most about working at Winnunga?**  
It is a community organisation and I enjoy meeting people from different ‘mobs’.

**My favourite pet?**  
I was once gifted with a baby bird with very large claws, an Osprey (I think). I had to catch fish for it every day until I convinced the person who gave it to me to put it back in its nest.

**What is your pet hate?**  
Road rage and watching cars cut in front of trucks.

**What do you do on the weekends?**  
Keep warm, if not warm usually out and about making plans to check out the local surrounds, keen to try skiing or snowboarding.

**What is your favourite food?**  
Pineapple.