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**Speaker's Annual Report to Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") members for the period 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014**

prepared by Project Manager Wendy Spencer of Heuristic Video Pty Ltd.

**Members News**

Dharriwaa Elders Group staff and members mourned the loss of members Valerie Colliss, Keith Dennis, Ted Thorne, Victor Hill, Kevin Weatherall during this period.

From 1 July 2013 – 13 December 2013 the following Elders Councillors presided: George Fernando (Treasurer), Victor Hill (Speaker), Virginia Robinson (Secretary), Elders Councillors: Gladys Walford, Ted Thorne, Noreen Kennedy, Fay Sands, Stan Sullivan, Bill Kennedy, Ken Dennis.

At the December 2013 AGM the following were elected: Speaker: Victor Hill, Secretary: Virginia Robinson, Treasurer: Ken Dennis. Elders Councillors William Kennedy, Gladys Walford, Fay Sands, Violet Morgan, Marjorie Weatherall, Harry Winters, Clem Dodd. On the 31 January Elizabeth Peters was invited to join the Elders Council. On the 14 March 2014 the resignations of William Kennedy, Victor Hill and Louise Shields were accepted and Norm Kennedy was invited to join the Elders Council. On the 17 March 2014, the Elders Council (i.e. directors) of the Dharriwaa Elders Group appointed Harry Winters as Speaker, John Flick as Treasurer and Elizabeth Peters as an Authorised Signatory for the organization.

During the period DEG's Elders Council secretariat prepared and held meetings 7 August 2013, 5 September 2013, 27 September 2013, 1 November 2013, 29 November 2013, 31 January 2014, 14 March 2014, 17 March 2014, 2 April 2014, 9 May 2014, 14 May 2014, 27 June 2014, conducted the AGM 13 December 2013 and prepared subsequent correspondence and undertook actions arising.

At the December 2013 AGM, Christine Smith, Jodi-Ann Hunt and Jilda Andrews were confirmed as members of the Management Committee. On the 17 March 2014 Associate members Annette Kennedy, Stella Sands, Thomas Morgan and Jason Murray were invited to join the Management Committee.

DEG contributed food vouchers to 16 families for Walgett funerals during the period.

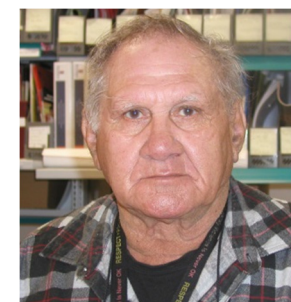
An induction workshop was held for new Elders Councillors Wednesday 16 April 2014



*Left: a scene from an Elders Teach Family project workshop in July 2013.*  
*Right: Elders Teach Family project graduation ceremony held August 2013.*



*Left: Richard Rule, the Connected Communities principal of Walgett Community School was invited to meet with the DEG in July 2013. This opportunity was used to feed back to the Principal findings from DEG's Elders Teach Family project, and to learn about the school's plans for improving the concerning education outcomes for students.*



RIP Victor Hill,  
 Speaker of the  
 Dharriwaa Elders  
 Group.

## Representation

The following members and staff were elected by the Elders Council to attend the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party (“WGACWP”) as the two Dharriwaa Elders Group’s delegates during the year: Virginia Robinson and Wendy Spencer. For the period the WGACWP were supported by the NSW Government to employ its secretariat. This position was sometimes housed by the DEG.

Christine Smith and Virginia Robinson represented the Dharriwaa Elders Group on the Narran Lakes Co-Management Committee, which despite its name was managed by changing staff in the Office of Environment and Heritage. Reports are made as a regular agenda item to DEG meetings by the DEG delegates, and correspondence and business arising is followed through, when DEG delegates are aware of the Committee’s business. The nature and governance of this Committee continues to be problematic for the DEG.

A briefing paper was prepared to Minister Nigel Scullion for the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party, with the assistance of PHD student Inara Walden, in early 2014. This paper was prepared because the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has been invited to meet with the Walgett Aboriginal leadership. No meeting had taken place during the period.

National Rugby League visited DEG with Dept. of Prime Minister and Cabinet to discuss possible joint Walgett community and school projects in May 2014. DEG awaits the opportunity to be engaged to develop and design a program model which could also be rolled out in other communities.



*Left: In June 2014 DEG were consulted by consultants working for the NSW Government regarding renovations to Walgett High School buildings and environment. These renovations were prompted by a visit to Walgett by Minister Piccoli – who Elders did not know was visiting until they read about it in the media - “NSW worst school”.*



*Left: In November 2013 Kirsten Thorpe of the State Library NSW Indigenous Unit made a quick visit to update the Unit’s developing relationship with DEG and train staff in the utility of Trove in cultural heritage business.*



*Angledool Reserve and Cemetery was gazetted as an Aboriginal Place in 2013, in response to a Dharriwaa Elders Group 2002 nomination. DEG attended the ceremony in October 2013, taking a busload of community members. Christine Smith accepted a certificate acknowledging the DEG from staff of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.*



*Right: DEG hosted a visit of the NRL with Dept. Prime Minister and Cabinet in May 2014 to discuss possible Walgett joint projects*



*Left: DEG hosted a visit of Dubbo Elders in May 2014.*

*Below: DEG met with Gosford Councillors and staff attending Walgett as part of the Sister City relationship to attend the Walgett Community Festival in August 2013.*



On 5 April 2013 the DEG Elders Council resolved to manage the finances of the Aboriginal Women of Walgett ("AWOW"). DEG continued offering this service to AWOW during the period.

### **DEG activity highlights**

During the period the DEG produced with support from Dept. FAHCSIA, three of four special, reduced-size issues of Yundiboo magazine that it had previously produced monthly for 10 years until June 2010, during the period.

Advocacy activities during the period included: Various meetings occurred throughout the period with externally based Walgett NGO service providers including Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation, Centacare, UnitingCare Burnside and Mission Australia. DEG learnt that these bodies were sometimes funded to undertake Walgett projects better suited to DEG's engagement. After workshops in March 2014 DEG made a submission to the NSW Government in response to its proposal for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Reforms; DEG met with NSW Dept. of FACS Area Manager Jo Lawrence in April 2014, In April 2014 Minister Dominello visited Walgett without visiting the Elders Group or the Community Working Party.

An important project continued during the period was to work with Indigenous Community Volunteers (and provided accommodation with staff) to undertake cataloguing of DEG's cultural collection.

The Dhuningarraay-gal dhiyaan dhiirali (old people teach families) project was begun in February 2013 and the Project Officer Christine Smith was engaged 29 April 2013. Dharriwaa Elders Group completed Part 1 of its first - session project on 5 August 2013, after a series of workshops that increased students and caregivers' engagement with schooling and lifelong learning that were rooted in cultural identity and belonging to community and country. A graduation ceremony for the year 9 and 10 student participants witnessed by Elders, parents and community was held on the first day of the Walgett Community Festival. The Dharriwaa Elders Group has a responsibility to pass on cultural information and promote the wellbeing that comes from belonging to family, community and country. Unexpectedly, this project was extended by the Federal Government to include a visit to Sydney cultural and tertiary learning institutions in November 2013, where employment opportunities and links to repositories of Walgett's Aboriginal cultural heritage were introduced to participants.

During the period DEG began to negotiate with NSW Environmental Trust a project to develop a Walking Track with 10 x Environmental interpretive signs. After an extended and time-consuming negotiation period, the project contract was offered and the project began. DEG added 5 cultural content signs and a picnic shelter to the project that it had attracted funding for from the Rudd Government's Economic Stimulus funding. During the period DEG was asked by community to research Walgett Aboriginal servicemen and women for a community display during NAIDOC week. DEG quickly wrote a submission to the Dept of PM&C for NAIDOC Week funds and added this subject to their work for another interpretive sign, as well as a banner to be displayed during NAIDOC Week in early July 2014. Elders and Wendy Spencer undertook extensive research to compile a list of servicemen and women. DEG members uniquely contributed information regarding Aboriginality of names found in War Memorial and National Library archives (as this information is not available in records searches).





*Lunch at Llanillo during an Aboriginal cultural heritage training survey conducted September 2013.*



*Elder Violet Morgan shows Christine Smith places she remembers from her youth at Llanillo Station Sept 2013.*



*Staff learning survey techniques from Peter Thompson at a scarred tree. September 2013.*



*During the period DEG held a short program of women's healing workshops aided financially by Interrelate.*



*Left: In September 2013 DEG hosted a community focus group to discuss preliminary findings for 'Indigenous Australians with Mental Health Disorders and Cognitive Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System' research conducted by the Uni of NSW.*





*Left: Part of the Old People Teach Families Project included a journey by some participants to Sydney cultural institutions, learning about employment and lifelong learning opportunities. They were welcomed by the ABC and toured the Ultimo Centre.*



*Heuristic Video produced a DVD of the 30 November 2013 White Ribbon Debutante's Ball. DEG sold copies to attempt cost recovery. Costs were not fully recovered as no debutantes bought copies from DEG after copies were purchased by the organisers!*



*Left: MPs Kevin Humphries and Linda Burney took the time to meet with the group at NSW Parliament House. The group was invited to attend question time as guests of Minister Humphries, and was welcomed by the Speaker.*



*Above: NSW State Library Indigenous Unit introduced the group to its resources relevant to Walgett's identity*

## **Dharriwaa Elders Group sustainability**

Efforts to build the capacity of the Dharriwaa Elders Group (an Aboriginal Walgett community cultural organization of 15 years standing) were continued during the period. The main achievement was to attract the support of the Walgett Gamilaraay Aboriginal Community Working Party to include DEG's sustainability as one of its 13 Community Priorities (for implementing Walgett's IRSD Local Implementation Plan).

Short-term projects were granted to DEG by the Dept. Education and Employment and Workplace Relations PACE program and the Dept. FaHCSIA for a contract to produce 4 smaller issues of Yundiboo magazine. The Department of Social Services granted the organisation additional capital funds immediately preceding 30 June 2014 to assist the organisation to deliver its HACC services, and these funds were used to trade-in the Kia Carnivale and purchase (second hand) a Hyundai i30 and Toyota Hiace Commuter bus, and erect a more secure gated area at the rear of the premises for the vehicles to be locked in as the vehicles had been routinely affected by vandalism attacks.

Meg Bishop of Indigenous Community Volunteers, worked with DEG in August 2013 in the cataloguing of the DEG collection, and training staff and a director in its ongoing management. Staff attended training at JoomlaDay Sydney in October 2013, and attended training surveys in September 2013. Individual staff undertook Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and Certificate III in Business Administration during the period.

### **Dharriwaa Elders Group wishes to acknowledge the following for their valuable contributions:**

DEG project staff this year were Elders Cultural Support Officer: Neil Weatherall; Elders Support Officer July – Dec 2013: Leah Sullivan; Elders Support Officer 17 March 2014 – 30 June 2014 Richard Lake. Casual services: Virginia Robinson. Dhuningarraay-gal dhiyaan dhiirali (old people teach families) Project Officer July – December 2013 and March – June 2014: Christine Smith. All staff were employed as casuals part-time except for Neil Weatherall who was employed as a permanent part-time employee working 20 hrs a week under the Commonwealth Government's National Job Package.

CASE Inc supplied network administration and software development services.

Keith Whiteman provided accounting services. Individuals supplied art and exhibition content for the DEG shop, publications and exhibitions.

Wendy Spencer of Heuristic Video Pty Ltd provided project management, submission writing, bookkeeping, IT and resources production services. Her resources production services attracted small project contracts that enabled her to provide sometimes voluntary project management services for the organisation again this year. It is incredible that after 15 years, project management of the Dharriwaa Elders Group is not recognised as vital for its sustainability. But then is this organisation's sustainability recognised as important for governments and community to achieve their aims for Walgett? Probably not, so the above individuals and organisations continue contributing while they can, until the value for money and importance of Dharriwaa Elders Group is appropriately resourced in ways that do not require as much personal sacrifice.



The Dharriwaa Elders Group was supported financially or in kind by:

1. The Commonwealth Government through the
  - a. Indigenous Culture Support program of the Dept. Regional Australian, Local Government, Arts and Sport and after September 2013 the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
  - b. National Jobs Package Program of the Dept. Regional Australian, Local Government, Arts and Sport and after September 2013 the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
  - c. The Dept. of Health and Ageing and later the Dept. of Social Services HACC Program
  - d. The Dept. of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs RSD Program, later of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
  - e. The NSW Environmental Trust
  - f. The Your Community Heritage program of the Dept. of SEWPAC, later of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
  - g. Dept. of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations PACE program, later of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
2. The following companies and individuals
  - a. NSW Far West Medicare Local
  - b. Gilbert + Tobin
  - c. Ashursts Lawyers
  - d. Environmental Defenders Office
  - e. NSW Legal Aid
  - f. Dharriwaa Elders Group directors
  - g. CASE volunteers
  - h. Heuristic Video Pty Ltd
  - i. Ms Heather Redmond
  - j. Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service
  - k. Western Catchment Management Authority
  - l. Interrelate

Below are images from the three cultural education projects DEG undertook during the year (completed or launched in the 2014-2015 year). They are the production of a responsive website guiding visitors to Walgett places the Dharriwaa Elders Group wish to share information about. The website includes video recordings of Elders, maps and other location information. Below left is an image from the July 2014 launch of the exhibition produced by the DEG about the Walgett Aboriginal community that lived on the "Dewhurst Camping Grounds". The images at right are from the Walgett "Caring for Country" Walking Track project that DEG is producing whereby a new track is created along the Namoi River at Walgett and 16 interpretive signs offering Aboriginal cultural and environmental information to Walgett visitors. A banner was made for 2014 NAIDOC week about Walgett Aboriginal servicemen and women.

