

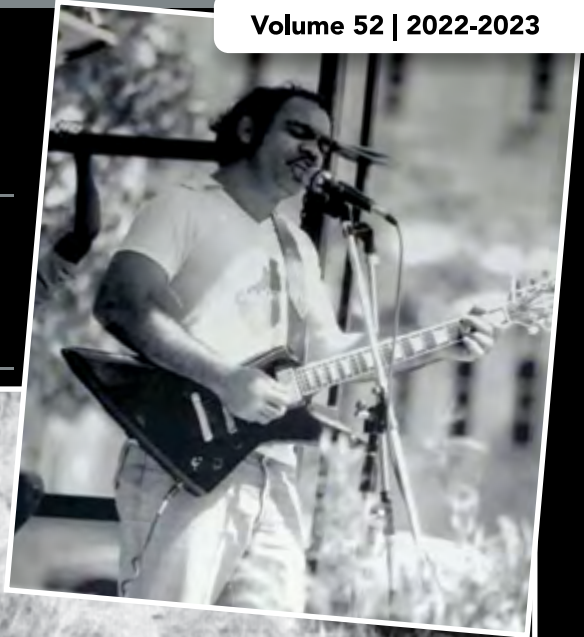


Link-Up (Qld)

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Volume 52 | 2022-2023

SPECIAL EDITION



Still Bringing Them Home

Chairperson Ken Murphy

Welcome to this special Tribute edition of our Link-Up (Qld) magazine, which was out of circulation during 2022 - 2023.

We would like to offer our condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones and encourage you to read our tributes to some of the most influential members of our Stolen Generations within these pages.

The past two-year period has been very challenging for all of us and had a significant impact on our people and community.

Preparation of our magazine was therefore disrupted, however, we have put together a good selection of our reunion stories, events and those special tributes into this special edition.

Our staff have continued to work hard during these challenging times, continuing to support clients on their family history research and reunion journeys.

From Cunnamulla to Cairns, Yarrabah and back again, we have managed to continue our work and offer our best support to those who need it.

Our Apology Day and Sorry Day events have gone ahead regardless, and photographs of those events, and others, are also here in this magazine.

And what special events they all were - with the help of people like Mal Meninga, Aunty Pat Anderson and Troy Cassar-Daly, to name a few, as well as our amazing clients and staff, those events have proved to be as popular as they have ever been.

We even had a special video message from former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd himself to mark the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Australian Government's Apology to our People.



Redress clients and those seeking support to access the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme have also been one of our focuses, as we have moved forward with the support we can offer our clients who need assistance navigating that sometimes difficult terrain.

If you have questions or need assistance in this area, or indeed any of our services, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Our staff and some of our clients were also privileged to attend the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference in Vancouver, Canada in September last year.

The Conference was a great experience for everyone involved and gave us perspective - as we hope we did them - on our shared histories.

As always, the Board of Directors have worked closely with management ensuring that staff wellbeing was taken care of during the pandemic and beyond.

We are on track to publish our next quarterly magazine on time, so volume 53 – January to March 2024 – will also be out shortly.

We hope you enjoy catching up.

... Kenny

Throughout 2022-2023 the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact Link-Up (Qld)'s activities on several fronts, prompting us to adapt our reunification and healing services.



The outbreak of the pandemic meant client reunions and group healing activities experienced delays and setbacks due to travel restrictions, social distancing measures and other health and safety concerns around our often aging clientele.

Family history research was impacted, a crucial component of our services enabling client reunions, with many record holding agencies operating under delayed or suspended records release time frames. Community events such as Apology Day and Sorry Day were live-streamed to accommodate for virtual audiences.

Conferences, workshops and meetings pivotal for networking and sharing findings transitioned to virtual platforms.

Financial constraints also played a role with increased operational costs associating with implementing Covid-19 safety measures and remote work solutions.

Despite a challenging period, Link-Up (Qld) staff maintained a resilient and innovative approach in adapting to changed conditions, adhering to the advice of health organisations and government restrictions, whilst pursuing key performance targets and carrying on our incredibly important work supporting our Stolen Generations.

We look forward to moving into 2024 as we continue to tackle the backlog created by the pandemic and deliver positive and sustaining healing outcomes for our clients.



This issue's Cover Story

Vale Archie Roach, Jack Charles, Dennis 'Mop' Conlon and Yarrabah centenarian Alf Neal. Full stories inside.

Disclaimer

Whilst every effort has been made to respect cultural traditions, Indigenous readers are advised that this publication may contain images of people who are deceased.

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You can find Link-Up (Qld) on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn

Reunions 2022 – Heidi O'Donoghue

Heidi O'Donoghue would often dream of crocodiles and later in life found they were part of her Kungarakany dreaming story.

I was born in Darwin, Northern Territory, in 1985, Heidi writes ...

At 18-months-old my mother brought me and my big sister Natasha to Cairns to make a new life.

I didn't see as much of my father after we moved here, him and mum had separated but remained friends.

Over the years dad came and went with work and life, and so did Tash and I.

We would fly back up to Darwin to spend time with him and his family any chance we could.

There has always been a feeling of longing and a sense of calling that stayed with me – I would close my eyes and I could feel the warmth of the wind and the smell of the salt air and red dirt.

It was different to this other place I now called home, it was the place I came from, the land my people walked on – the Northern Territory.

As a child I would often dream of Crocodiles, later in life I found out this was the Kungarakany dreaming.

My mother is of English and Scottish descent.

My father is Aboriginal, a descendant from "Aingindabu" Lucy McGuinness, the last survivor from the Kungarakany Tribe (Paperbark People) on his maternal side.

They were from Chapana, near the Finnis River, in the Northern Territory.

My father's father was forcefully removed as a child from Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, and taken to Melville Island's Garden Point Catholic Mission.

My father never spoke much of his father, nor did he know much of Grandad's country, or his mother and father.



I couldn't for some time understand why it wasn't spoken about or why he didn't ask Grandad any questions.

I know now it was, and still is hard for our people to speak of that trauma.

I'm now a woman with my own children and I want to know more of my Grandad and his mother and her people, culture and country for my knowledge, and to pass onto my children so they are able to pass that onto their children.

In 2019 I became a client with Link-Up (Qld) to help me find as much information as possible on my grandad Jimmy Dunn/O'Donoghue.

My research was completed in late 2022.

My Grandfather's birth was registered in Alice Springs, some 18 years after his birth, and the only information recorded about his mother was her name was Annie.

His father was listed as O'Donoghue, and recorded as a bush birth in Tennant Creek, Northern Territory.

Unfortunately, not everything was recorded, but this is just the beginning for me to find who my grandad's people are and his proper county.

Link-Up (Qld) took me back to Darwin for my reunion and I was fortunate enough to visit his grave.

Sadly just a number was all that was there.

My mother and partner accompanied me on the trip.

My mother helped me put together a pot of artificial native flowers so it will remain there, covering that number, along with two Lotus Lilly solar lights and two little angles, as a representation of me and Tash.

It is making sure he will never be in the dark again and we will always be by his side.

I was sad to leave but happy I honoured him.

I said, "I'll be back Grandad, with my babies to give you the best headstone ever".

Upon leaving the cemetery my mother was walking along the next aisle looking at graves.



She suddenly stopped and yelled out to me: "Heidi look here".

When I looked at that headstone, I couldn't believe the name I was reading: Lucy McGuinness.

I almost fainted – none of us knew that she was there.

I picked a bunch of frangipani flowers and placed them on her headstone and told her thank you for calling for me.

Link-Up (Qld) also took me across to the Tiwi Islands as a place of

significance to my family.

Pirlangimpi was where my grandfather spent some of his younger life and married my grandmother there, my father and his little sister spent time there as babies and were christened into the Catholic ministry in the same little church that is still standing there today.

I got to see what it would have been like for him as a little boy on a big ship sailing into the unknown across that big ocean without his mother clinging onto each other, all the little people so scared.

There are a lot of my grandfather's Dunn family still living at Tiwi.

I will return with my children to meet them one day, and yarn and gain as much information as I can.

Unfortunately I didn't get the chance to meet my Grandfather he had passed before I was born.

I will forever hold his memory close to my heart and continue to search for the missing pieces in honour of him.

A special thanks to the Link-Up (Qld) staff for their support over two years, and for taking me home to make sense of the past.

This has given my family and I some direction for the future.



Reunions 2022 – Marina Mollenhauer

Marina Mollenhauer was born in Cherbourg “under the Act” but that didn’t stop her from going back to her country and finding her true links.

1897 – Queensland introduced the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the sale of Opium Act. This allowed them complete control over every aspect of our Elders lives, this included the removal from Country to either missions or reserves.

1969 – They abolished this act.

I was born in Cherbourg, 1957 under the Act, Marina writes ...

My mother was Priscilla Sibley, nee Malone.

As a child I was adopted by a white family.

In 1984, by sheer chance, I ran into my cousin Patrick Malone who took me straight away to his mum’s (Aunty Maude).

That night he turned up with my mother, who sadly passed in 1987.

I approached Link-Up (Qld) while searching for information about my birth father, but I was told it was not possible without a DNA test – which I refused.

They still came back with a detailed family tree for my mothers side, and a name to my grandfather, who



was Donnie Moss.

They offered a graveside reunion with Donnie, which was not possible earlier due to COVID.

My grandson Glen accompanied me for this reunion.

We met Tahj and Lee-Ann at the airport and we flew to Emerald.

We settled into the motel and later went out for a meal.

We were so happy to be there but really nervous – looking forward to the next day when we drove to Clermont cemetery, the resting place of my grandfather.

He was back on Country and that meant having Glen with me was even more special.

A link was formed, then and

there, between my grandson, my grandfather and myself.

But we had not finished yet.

We had lunch and travelled to a camp at Black Ridge, where my ancestors rest.

It was from this camp that my Elders, along with many others, were removed and incarcerated all over Queensland.

My Elders ended up in Cherbourg.

The 1900s in Queensland marked the start of racial segregation under the Act.

It was barbaric.

We felt disbelief and anger at the way they were treated.

The legacy they left – they



survived.

And we complain we’ve had it tough – we don’t know tough.

Resilience – pain – to stand there with Glen 120 years later, where our ancestors rest.

We have returned.

We acknowledge Country.

We then travelled back to Emerald.

In the local park they had a giant Van Gogh sunflower painting – the ‘largest painting in the world on an easel’.

At the end of a footpath we came across two scar trees sunk in concrete.

There was no sign to say why they were there.

We went into the information centre and found nothing about them.

We went back to the motel and had a rest.

Later that night we went out to dinner, and my nephew (Jonathon) Jonno Malone turned up to say hello.

He took Glen out, allowing me to deal with all the emotions the day had thrown up.

I did not sleep well.

Next morning Jonno took Glen and myself to breakfast, showed us their claim, and explained significant areas and sites.

We also visited the weir and a couple of really old scar trees.

He dropped us back to the motel where we packed and made our way for the airport to fly back to Brisbane.

We said goodbye to Tahj and Lee-Ann, and headed home.

When I had been home for a while, about two hours, I played two songs – ‘Dancing Aborigine’ by Angus Rabbit (for Donny and Black Ridge) and ‘Koorie Rose’ by Roger Knox (for my mother).

I want to thank Tahj and Lee-Ann



for everything you did for Glen and myself – you were great!

Look at the journey I’ve been on – it’s your turn.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step – Hao Tzu.

Reunions 2022 – Barry Cornford

Barry Cornford (Anderson, Conlon) always had strong feelings towards all things country, but his adoption didn't mean much to him as he grew up, even though he always had those questions.

Hello, my name is Barry Cornford, I was born in September 1953, which makes me 68 years old at the time of writing.

I was adopted not long after I was born.

I was the only child in my adoptive family and very much loved.

I am part of a very large farming family on the Darling Downs.

I have always had a strong feeling towards the land, animals, trees and all things country.

At the age of 13, my parents left the land and moved to the Gold Coast, but I still loved the beach, surf and all things that a teen aged blonde surfer kid of the 60s lived for.

On and off my parents would talk about my adoption but not much.

It meant very little to me.

When I left school and joined the army for three years.

After that I joined the PMG (later Telstra) and remained with them for 34 years as a Residential Technician working mainly on Brisbane's south side.

I married (later divorced) and had two children and three grandchildren.



Later I remarried and now have a step-son and two further grandchildren.

All of my life, I had that question of WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHY.

What made it stronger was the fact that I was the only, blonde haired, blue eyed, freckled member of my big family.

Around the age of 50, I was separated and wanted to start a new life.

I felt the need to find some answers.

I found my adoption certificate with birth mother's name on it.

I found out that she was single but no other information.

By 2003, my adoptive parents had both passed away.

Through Births, Deaths and Marriages, I was able to obtain my original birth certificate which gave me more information.

However, it was stamped, NOT FOR OFFICIAL USE, in red ink.

I got my reissued birth certificate with my new surname on it and I also contacted the Salvation Army to help track my birth mother.

They sent her a letter on my behalf.

After about three months I got a reply.

My birth mother had married (not to my father) and I had a half brother and sister all living in Melbourne.

They all felt a strong love of country.



After a time she told me her mother was of Aboriginal descent, a fact that was rarely talked about.

But she did know her mother and sisters were born around Thargomindah and were removed from Cunnamulla and sent to Cherbourg.

At the age of 13, she and her sister were sent to Brisbane to work as home help in Clayfield.

In 1922 her mother and her sister were given an Exemption.

In 1927, she married my grandfather who was a policeman.

For the next 30 years, they travelled all over Queensland.

My birth mother and sisters did not speak of their mother very much.

They said their mother – my grandmother – could be very cold, showing no feeling or empathy towards them.



However they were all brought up well, receiving a good education.

My mother did say that she always wanted to meet her mother's family but that book was closed and locked.

She did ask me if I could find out some information.

All I knew was my great grandmother's surname was Anderson/ Conlon.

About six years ago we contacted a government department in William Street.

After about two months they gave us information on my family tree.

Next step was making contact with Link-Up (Qld).

By this time my aunt in Brisbane had passed away and my birth mother and I had become estranged.

After many meetings and discussions, I found myself in Cherbourg supported by Alison, Christine and Darryl from Link-Up.

Armed with an extensive family tree, we checked into the Council

Administration in Cherbourg.

It was here that I met a distant relative.

We then went to the Ration Shed and Boys' Dormitory.

It was a lot to take in.

One day, I would like to return.

Things that I learnt:

- Children were separated from their parents and brothers and sisters were placed into separate dormitories.
- Food was questionable.
- Discipline could be brutal.
- There was no sign of love or empathy.
- Children could not talk to their parents.
- People were expected to learn a whole new way of life and lose their culture and language.
- Any non-cooperation, led to the people being sent even further away.
- There was no opportunity for their culture to be preserved.

I was a little sad that I could not find my great grandmother's grave.

Many graves were not named and there are no records.

I am grateful for what I have found.

I have not added any names to this story as I believe this is a private thing.

I am now very proud to say that I am a True Australian of 2022.

I am a First Nations man but also have some Irish and German descent.

I am English by adoption and a farming kid.

I am writing this with the hope one day I could find out more information about the Andersons from Thargomindah and even find out what happened to my great aunties.

I do this with the highest respect to all, both my natural and adoptive family.

I was brought up to respect all of those who have come before me.

I feel that I can truly call Australia home in the truest sense of the word.

Reunions 2022 – Janet Walters

Janet Walters overcame anxiety to travel to her roots in New South Wales and reinforce her sense of belonging to her country and to the world.

Lee-Ann and Kerry have been the best company, Janet writes ...

Very caring and wonderful people, from planning until the start of our trip.

I had my mini (meltdowns) anxiety about everything being away from home but Lee-Ann and Kerry, along with my wonderful husband and carer, really helped me to enjoy our trip, from the first day to the last.

We arrived quite easily via the hire car and after a yummy meal we took a short walk away overlooking the water.

A really relaxed evening, thanks everyone.

My family and mob originated from Singleton, Scone, Aberdeen and Murrurundi.

The first information I had obtained was about Lena, my great great grandmother, was that she lived in Murrurundi.


I found out about my connection about 15-20 years ago.

My mother mentioned it.

She said to talk to my Uncle Jimmy.

My Uncle Jimmy was quite aged, his recollection was good and although it was a lot of information, it was like being on a roundabout (very little of the same thing).

I contacted a lot of services where I lived in New South Wales, as that's where my mob was thought to be



from (the Moree area).

Due to funding, a lot of organisations had very limited persons available in remote areas.

It was even more frustrating and difficult when I moved to Queensland.

I was looking for counselling and was referred to Link-Up (Qld).

They not only assisted me with this, but in so many areas.

They have changed my life and how I see me now.

I really was not sure where I fitted in, I had a husband and a couple of close family, but my connection to any history or culture was absolutely non-existent.

Link-Up (Qld) researched my mob and came back with the most overwhelming, amazing, sad and incredible story.

I discovered my great great grandmother Lena Beale was born in New South Wales.

Link-Up (Qld) found her mother, her siblings, her father, her fathers parents – the family tree was just growing and growing, and we were amazed with the results.

We have an entire family, we are no longer disjointed.

And that was how we went to Singleton, Aberdeen, Scone and Murrurundi.

The feeling was overwhelming, especially when we went to the Murrurundi cemetery.

It was really special there.

It was really surreal.

I was looking around hoping to find something because I could feel a sense of closeness, but at the same time a huge distance.

We believed one of my four-times removed grandmothers was buried around this region (Blandford) and, it seems, she was buried in the Roman Catholic Church in Haydonton, which was the original name of the cemetery we found in Murrurundi.

I did get quite sad while we were there, though I am really glad we did go.

It was a huge sense of loss and sadness.

The way the place was so unkempt – broken headstones, upturned plaques and weeds, making it hard



to even see the names.

Some were in such terrible state that they were not even legible.

The day trip from Newcastle to Murrurundi was such an up and down, emotional experience for me, all the different findings bringing up different feelings.

I discovered Murrurundi, where I visited the cemetery, was where my great great grandmother Sarah Gatehouse was most probably buried.

It seems that in 1904, when she passed, that the cemetery was known as Haydonton and Murrurundi had merged into one name in 1913, and we had, in fact, been in the right place.

The journey from Brisbane arriving in Newcastle, taking the trip from Singleton to Murrurundi, I was in awe of the vastness of the land and the feeling of belonging.

The reunion was important for me as I didn't have any previous family history or family connection, as I was given up by my parents along with my siblings at a very young age.

I was not bought up with any culture or family history.

To discover I have such a rich culture and family history gives me a sense of belonging and a history to share with my children and their children.

I will have a chance to meet other mob from the same area and hopefully have the chance to attend a reunion that is occurring in September this year at the



Hunter Valley.

Now I have found my family, I have been sharing the stories and the experience with my siblings, children and nieces and nephews.

I have been reaching further into

the family history so I can learn as much as possible about the past and our families stories, and I am hoping that we as a family can go and spend some time getting to know our country.

Reunions 2022 – Maria McDonald

Maria McDonald had mixed feelings about the ups and downs of tracing her family's ancestry – finding their footprints back in time, as she puts it – but believed it was well worth the effort.

If I were to sum up the emotions I felt on this journey as our family united to retrace and pay respects to our ancestors, I would say I felt a sense of healing and appreciated the importance of strengthening our connections.

My name is Maria, and this experience has taken myself and my family on a journey of ups and downs of emotions, as we retraced our footprints back in time and learned about the injustices our ancestors endured.

It was a lot of different or mixed feelings, which we all feel when it comes to family.

Most of us have endured some sort of trauma in our lives, our ancestors sadly weren't given any choices.

I believe situations happen for a reason in life, and when I learnt of our family history, I felt the spirits of ancestors still around me, guiding and showing me how to be resilient.

Our steps back in time took us to our Great Grandmother Alice Hart. Gran had four children – George, Paddy and twins Daisy and Lilly.

Under the 1904 Act three of her children – Paddy, 9, and the twins, Daisy and Lilly, aged 4 – were taken



to Deebing Creek Mission for their own 'protection and education'.

There was no information about what happened to their brother George, as far as I am aware.

Alice was allowed to accompany her children to Deebing Creek, but was soon turned around and sent back to Roma without them.

She wrote relentless letters to see them, but to no avail.

She was never to see or know of what became of her children.

Thanks to Link-Up's research we can also put to rest the disappearance of one of the twins, Lilly, who had health issues.

I do believe she had epilepsy.

She was taken to Brisbane for treatment but from one of these visits wasn't returned to Deebing.

Her disappearance had been troubling our family for a

number of years, but through Link-Up we found out she was taken into care when she was 10-years-old with a family in Brisbane.

We believe she was doing domestic duties.

When she was ill she was transported to Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on Stradbroke Island, where she was also used as a domestic, and passed away at only 28 years of age.

We can all agree on what an emotional journey these young lives must have endured, and how resilient it must have made them.

Thanks to Link-Up (Qld) we were able to use what they found from their research to connect with family we never knew existed.

The connection when we met my cousins Kate and Kelly was remarkable.

It was like we always known each other as family.

Kate, Kelly and I took this journey together to take the same steps and pay our respects to our footprints back in time.



TRIBUTE 2022 – Archie Roach

Archie Roach's life story is not only a testament to resilience, but also a reminder of the indomitable spirit that transcends the darkest chapters of our shared history.

He was a revered musician and a voice for the voiceless, whose contribution and work we will always have as a tribute to the stolen generations.

He died in July 2022.

Born into the Budjik clan in Victoria in 1956, Archie's early years were marked by the cruel intrusion of authorities who tore him away from his loving parents.

The experience became a defining chapter in his life, setting the stage for a lifetime dedicated to unravelling the tangled threads of pain and healing.

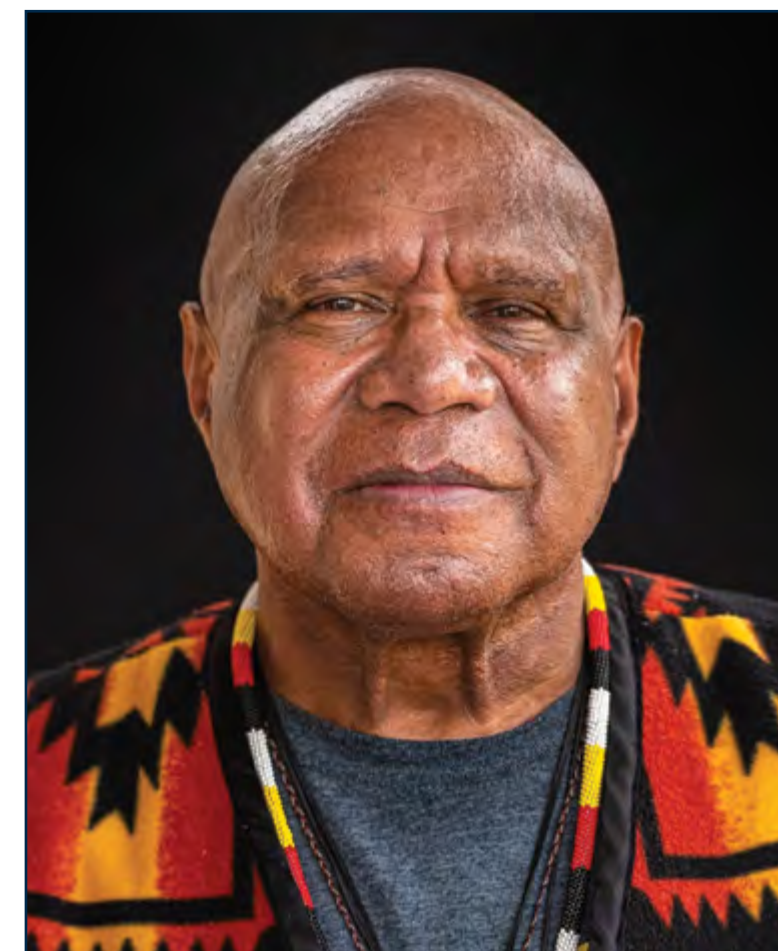
Through his music, he wove a narrative that transcended personal tragedy, becoming a collective anthem for those whose voices were muted.

His soulful melodies and lyrics served as a bridge, connecting the past to the present and inviting the world to bear witness to a history that had long been suppressed.

One of his most iconic songs, "Took the Children Away," became an anthem for the stolen generations, resonating with its hauntingly beautiful melody and heart-wrenching lyrics.

Through this masterpiece, Archie Roach shared the pain of separation, the struggle to reclaim identity, and the enduring strength that emerged from the depths of his despair.

The song became a rallying cry for



reconciliation, a call to acknowledge the scars of the past and helped to pave the way for healing.

Archie Roach's advocacy extended beyond the realms of music, as he courageously spoke out against the systemic injustices faced by communities.

His presence in the reconciliation sphere became a beacon of hope, inspiring others to confront the uncomfortable truths of Australia's history.

Through his resilience and courage he reclaimed not only his own identity but also empowered a generation to confront the painful legacy of the stolen generations.

His body of work included 10 studio albums, three live albums, one soundtrack album and four compilation albums.

His music continued to resonate as at the 2022 ARIA Awards where he posthumously won best independent release for "One Song," the final song he wrote.

He was deeply committed to creating opportunities for First Nations artists across all creative platforms and the Archie Roach Foundation honour his legacy and continues his work, promoting cultural identity, personal and community healing and reconciliation.

As we celebrate Archie Roach, we honour not just the man but the enduring spirit of a people who refuse to be silenced.

In his melodies and lyrics, we find a tribute not only to Archie's personal journey but also to the countless stolen children whose stories remain etched in the soul of a nation.

TRIBUTE 2022 – Jack Charles

Jack Charles was a man of many titles – an Aboriginal actor, a survivor of the Stolen Generations, an advocate for justice, and a beacon of hope for Indigenous communities across Australia.

He was also a known criminal – as he would have said, labelled as such from birth – and an addict.

He was born a Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Woiwurrung, and Yorta Yorta man to Blanche Charles in Carlton, Victoria, in 1943.

At just two years old, he was forcibly taken from his mother.

For twelve long years, Jack lived in the confines of the Salvation Army Boys' Home in Box Hill - a cruel world, far removed from the rich cultural heritage that was rightfully his.

Surrounded by strangers and deprived of his heritage, he endured a lonely, confusing and difficult childhood.

It wasn't until the age of seventeen that he discovered the truth about his Aboriginal heritage.

This revelation was a turning point in his life, a spark that ignited a lifelong journey of self-discovery and activism.

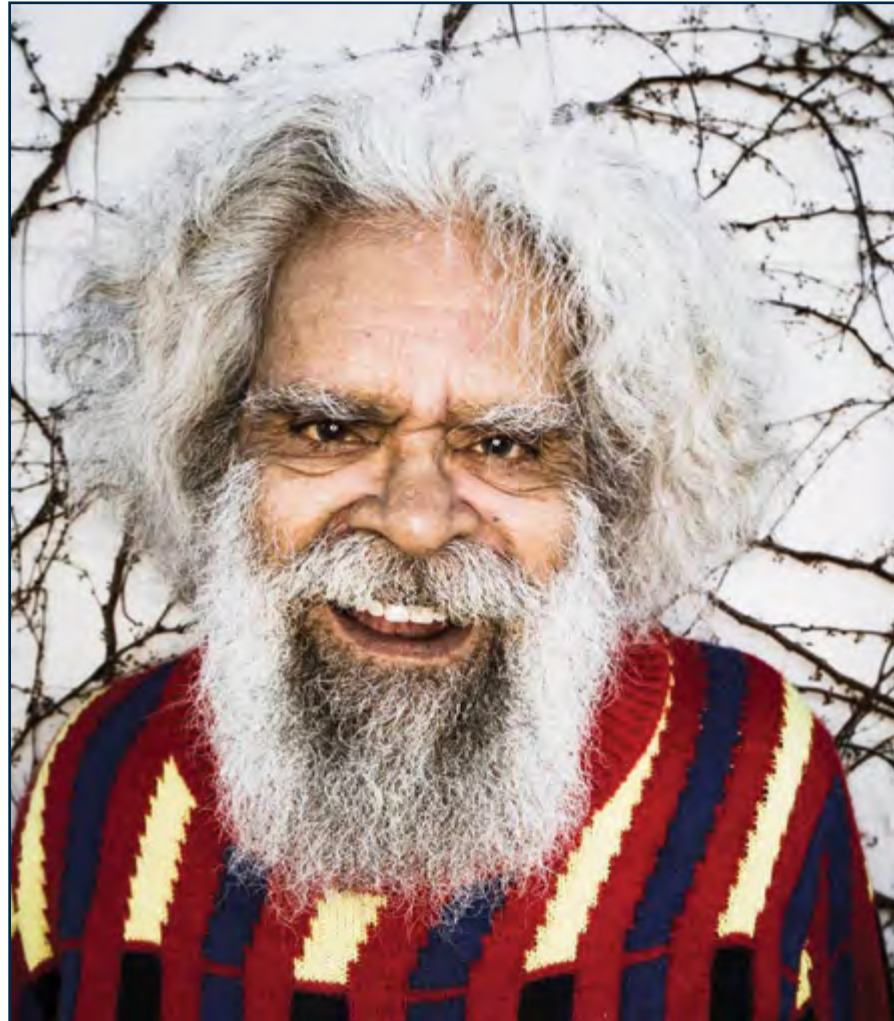
He co-founded Australia's first Indigenous theatre group, Nindethana, at Melbourne's Pram Factory in 1971 as a place where Indigenous voices could finally be heard and celebrated.

He dabbled in and out of acting over long and intermittent career.

In 2009, he was honoured with the Tudawali award, celebrating his lifetime contribution to Indigenous media.

It was never easy.

Over the years, Jack Charles faced a series of trials and tribulations as he struggled with addiction and found solace in drugs that "dulled



the memories and pain" of his traumatic past.

He faced numerous incarcerations, 21 in total, for crimes related to his addiction and burglary.

Yet, he never lost sight of his purpose.

In the midst of his personal battles, Jack emerged as a champion for young men caught up in the unforgiving cycle of the prison system.

His life became a testament to resilience and the power of redemption.

Through his acting roles and his advocacy work, he inspired countless individuals to overcome their struggles and reclaim their identity.

In 2022, Jack Charles made history as the first to appear at the Yoorrook Justice Commission's hearing, a platform for truth-telling and reconciliation.

It was a testament to his enduring commitment to justice and the healing of his people.

Recognition and accolades followed his remarkable journey.

In 2022, he was named NAIDOC Male Elder of the Year, a recognition of his wisdom and leadership within the Indigenous community.

Jack Charles' life was a tapestry woven from the threads of hardship, resilience, and triumph.

Through his struggles, he found his purpose in advocating for justice, preserving Indigenous culture, and empowering the marginalised.

His story serves as a reminder to us all of the power of perseverance and the importance of never forgetting one's roots, no matter how painful the past may be.

TRIBUTE 2022 – Dennis "Mop" Conlon

Music transcends many boundaries, and there was no better example of that than the contribution made by Dennis "Mop" Conlon and his many bands over his years.

Lead singer, guitarist and writer Dennis was born in 1956 and left us in September 2022.

He was the first born son of Dennis and Patricia in Cherbourg in 1956.

He was Kullalli, Koa, Kabi Kabi and Wakka Wakka.

His parents worked on the railways and that meant Mop's schooling, which ended in year 6, took place from Cherbourg to Hughenden to Calliope.

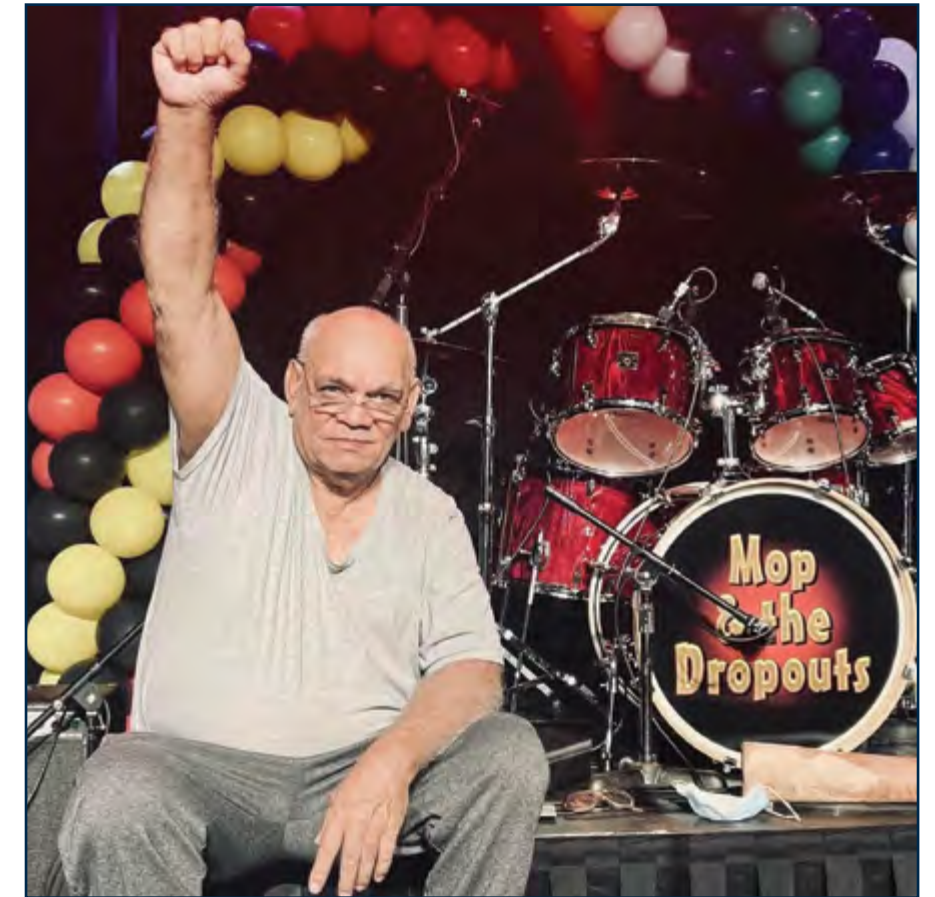
Mop was not just a musician and a bush mechanic, but had a number of different jobs in his lifetime, including in the army as a private, on the railways, ring-barking, wrecking and in the meat works at Murgon.

He became a teacher's aide at Sandgate Special School and studied early childhood at Kelvin Grove.

He also worked for the Brisbane Aboriginal Medical Service before he studied music at Kangaroo Point TAFE, but could not read music and failed.

One of Australia's most-loved musicians played his music by ear.

He was a staunch advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was happiest when he was on the road playing for audiences all over Australia.



So many of his songs were anthems for the community and unified people everywhere.

"Brisbane Blacks", "Racial Discrimination" and "Mother's Eye" were, and still are, regularly played in backyards and on radio stations all over Australia.

These songs were quickly embraced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of South East Queensland and became the soundtrack of the social and political struggles gripping the region at the time.

He was widely regarded as the 'King of Murri Country'.

"Brisbane Blacks", possibly

the most recognisable song for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, continues to be a beacon of power for the community.

An annual Dennis 'Mop' Conlon Scholarship has been offered by QMusic as an opportunity for an emerging Indigenous Queensland musician or band to develop and record a song or series of songs, to support and develop their ongoing career in the music industry.

The Scholarship is in recognition of the enormous contribution Uncle Mop made to the so-called Queensland and so-called Australian music industries and will be awarded annually at the Queensland Music Awards.

Mop's other greatest passion was being a father.

He loved his family and community and had a unique ability to make everyone feel they were the most important person in the room.

He was a leader and a fighter for Indigenous rights, his music will live on forever.



2022 Events - Apology Day



Our 2022 Apology Day event was held at QPAC on Monday 14 February to mark the anniversary of the Australian Government's formal apology to the Stolen Generations – as we do every year.

We were privileged to be welcomed to the event by Ken Jacobs on didgeridoo and Yuggera Elder Aunty Sheryl Thompson. We were fortunate to enjoy a keynote speech from one of our most inspiring leaders, Aunty Dr Ruth Hegarty, along with National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO) CEO Patricia Turner AM.

We also enjoyed speeches from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Minister Craig Crawford and Federal MP for Griffith Terri Butler.

Rochelle Pitt Watson was, as ever, an incredible and uplifting addition to our entertainment.



2022 Events – Sorry Day, Brisbane

The Link-Up (Qld) event for Sorry Day in 2022 was held at Cranbrook Place on Friday 27 May.

Dion Tatow was our MC who was proud to introduce our keynote speaker, Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, and our program included the West End State School's Deadly Kids Club, the Wakka Wakka Dance Group, Ben Barker, a poem by Pauline Hannam and the Songshine Choir. The wreath was laid by Jeriah Power and Varda Murray.



2022 Events – Sorry Day, Yarrabah



2023 TRIBUTE – Alf Neal (Snr)

Alf Neal (Snr) died peacefully in Yarrabah last year, surrounded by family and friends.

Alf Neal (Snr) OAM – known to many as The Bush Lawyer, Pop Neal or Popeye – led a life of dedicated service to Yarrabah and the broader Aboriginal community.

He lived to be more than 100-years-old, as was celebrated in October 2022.

His wife of over 60 years, Jessie, pre-deceased him but he was survived by his 10 children.

When he was about two-years-old Alf was removed from his mother at Mt Mulligan and taken to the boy's dormitory at the Yarrabah mission, as close as can be figured, in the mid-1920s.

He lived in those dormitories until he was 14-years-old before being sent out to work.

Despite a difficult start in life, Alf always advocated for Aboriginal rights – from land rights through to equal wages, self-determination, and, particularly, economic development for Aboriginal people.

He was a member of the Aboriginal Advancement League in its early days, and right through to the formation of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI).

In 1958 when Aboriginal workers in Yarrabah went on strike for equal wages and better living conditions on the Reserve, it was Alf those workers went to for help and a meeting was organised.

The Anglican supervisor at the time, Captain Cole, found out about the meeting and arrested all of them, the result of which was the expulsion of several families, including his own, from the community.

They went to live at nearby Bessie Point and it was many years before they were allowed to return.

The Yarrabah Co-operative Society,



to develop business and encourage self-sustainability for Aboriginal people, was established by Alf, as was the Yarrabah bakery in 1972 – something the community had wanted for a long time.

He managed to secure a lease of land at Djenghi from the DAIA, also in the 1970s, for farming purposes where he planted seven acres of bananas, mangoes, lychees and small crops such as cassava and taros.

In the late 1970s, he was elected to the National Aboriginal Conference for the Cairns and district area and, somewhat famously, insisted his office should be in Yarrabah, not Cairns, prompting the former long-term Director of Aboriginal Affairs Pat Killoran to say: "we need to be very careful about removing Alf Neal's office to Cairns as we don't want to make a martyr of him".

He was awarded an OAM in 2019 for his instrumental role in bringing about the successful 1967 Referendum.

Alf always sought allies to support Aboriginal causes, particularly trade unions such as the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Australian Labor Party.

He always sought land for

Aboriginal people and applied under every scheme he could find to get land for Yarrabah and individual community members.

Although removed from his Country as a child, Alf was always proud to be Djungan.

In his later years, he liked nothing better than to get up to his property on his traditional lands where he built his own yumbagurri (camp).

Beyond a lifetime of hard work, Alf enjoyed spending time with his family and relations, as well as an occasional beer and punt on the races.

He loved telling stories of the old days to his descendants, and when it came to talking politics he could not be beaten.

He was always concerned about his people in the future and instilled in them a desire to make a better future for themselves.

Alf believed in the value of hard work, but was very humble.

He was kind to everyone and had a wicked sense of humour.

He was a statesman in the truest sense of the word.

He was buried in his Country.

2023 Reunions – Graham Lockyer

Graham Lockyer looked for information about his father's mother for years before he finally started to meet the missing members of his family.

My name is Graham Lockyer, I was born in 1940 in Brisbane, always lived in the Camp Hill-Carina area.

I attended Camp Hill school, and then Cavendish Road High School.

My elder sister Jean passed away in her 50s and my young sister Bette lives up on Mount Tamborine.

I met my wife Trish when she was 15-years-old, we've been together for 65 years.

We have three children, Scott, Warren and Sue.

I started work as a carpenter, same as my father, and had various jobs – I owned a Amoco Servo on Boundary Road, Camp Hill for five and a half years, and was then a production supervisor at BHP Lysart for 16 years at Acacia Ridge.

For years we looked for information about my father's mother Ada, but could not find anything.

They lived in Longreach, in Queensland, but we had never met.



Around my 80th birthday my son Warren and his wife Debra researched Ancestry DN, finding my Aboriginal heritage and my grandmother Ada Gray, who was born in Wellington, New South Wales.

Through our DNA and Link-Up (Qld), we found our first cousin Carol Lewis and cousins Roy Gray and Alfred from Yarrabah, and also the Warrie family from Cairns.

These were wonderful and emotional meetings.

We met Roy and Alfred at Link-Up (Qld) in Brisbane, and they invited us to their grandmother Agnes Gray's graveside at Toowong Cemetery for her memorial.

I think our families became closer on this day.

Through Debra's research we also found

my grandma's unmarked grave in Innisfail cemetery.

Roy made a wooden cross and with my family, Roy and Colleen, and Carol, we held a memorial service to mark her place of rest.

I would like to thank Ruth Loli and her research team for the information about my father, his



2023 Reunions – Cheryl Green

Cheryl Green grew up in Brisbane and was happy to meet her cousins for the first time in her hometown, thanks to Link-Up (Qld).

I grew up in Brisbane with a non-indigenous family who were extremely supportive and still are, Cheryl Green writes ...

I have worked in various jobs, including insurance and hospitality.

I head about Link-Up (Qld) through a mutual friend, who knew I was interested in finding out about my Indigenous heritage.

The reunion I had was with meeting



with my first cousins for a dinner at South Bank in Brisbane.

Leading up to the reunion I was a bit scared about how it would eventuate, and whether we would feel comfortable with each other.

My daughter-in-law Georgia was my support person.

What did I hope to achieve through the reunion?

To be able to keep in contact with each other and grow the connection further.

For my children and their families to have some connection with them also.



mother and my ancestors, which led to my journey back to country in Dubbo and Wellington, both in New South Wales.

My wife's health nearly stopped the trip, but she improved and with Link-Up (Qld)'s help we decided to go ahead.

Our feelings were mixed – nervous, excited, but Kerry and Tahj had everything under control.

We held a welcoming ceremony with three of my relatives and an emotional viewing of the graves of John Stanley and the Bell Family.

Uncle Joe, Aunt Barbara and Jay took us to the ancestor's common land where all the various families lived.

We stood in the derelict old church, touched the soil and the water of the Macquarie River, which was their special place. Great memories.

Patricia and I, with our carers Warren and Debra, would like to thank the Link-Up (Qld) team for making this journey possible and our sincerest thanks to Kerry and Tahj for their care and support.



2023 Reunions – Andrew Beitzel

Andrew Beitzel always knew his family was Aboriginal but he never knew who they actually were until he came to Link-Up (Qld) for help finding them.



My name is Andrew Beitzel and I am a proud 28-year-old Noongar man from Meanjin/Brisbane.

I have worked at the University of Queensland and have a history of engaging in community organising and progressive political rallies since 2015.

I have always known my family were Aboriginal – our Uncle Barry and Auntie Phyllis used to visit us, and we knew our family came from, and still lived at the Mogumber Mission in Western Australia.

My Mum, my sisters and my Grandma all went back to Mogumber to visit the mission prior to me.

However, we never knew who our mob was, and who our Nana and Papa were.

I came into contact with Link-Up (Qld) through knowing Uncle Sam Watson at rallies, and also through relatives in Western Australia, who

accessed Yorgum in Perth and found our Papa Toms and his family in Derby, in the north of Western Australia.

I wanted to know who my Nana was for my family, and especially for my Grandma and Auntie Phyllis before they pass on.

I have wanted to know my mob, my community and my family for the longest time, and I've only ever wanted to be proud of who I am and to belong to something.

My Nana was Nellie Cuttibur and my Papa was Peter Toms – they were both stolen from their families as children and taken to Moore River Native Settlement in Mogumber, Western Australia.

My feelings leaving for the reunion were excitement – having supported and fought for the Yuggera and Turbul people in Meanjin, including fighting for the Deebing Creek Mission in 2019, I

was ecstatic to be going back to my Country and to see where my Nana and all our Ancestors were from.

While I was nervous, looking over my Country on the plane flight over was an incredible feeling, but also one of hurt seeing how much had been cleared on the Wheat Belt in WA.

I took my sister, Tamara, for support as she had a connection with my Nana when she was still alive, and was also proud of her Aboriginality. I wanted to share our Country with all my family, and as my sister has two children, I wanted her to go and be able to eventually take her children back to Country as well.

More than anything, I hoped to meet our family during the reunion – I knew from the research Link-Up (Qld) had done that our Nana's sister Ellen Smith/nee Cuttibur had 14 children.

I was sure there had to be people still alive through Ellen Smith's descendants.

We planned a Return to Country based on our common ancestor – Paddy Cuttibur – my Nana's father – who was born in Cranbrook and died in Borden, all just north of Albany in Western Australia.

Based on the death certificates Link-Up (Qld) found for us, many of our family had lived in this wide area between Cranbrook and Albany, and up to Kojunup north of Cranbrook.

I knew our family had to still be there.

On the day of arrival, we went up to Borden and saw where our Nana's father died.

I video-called my Grandma, Nellie's daughter, and my mum Dawn, and showed them both all their Country and the town where Paddy once lived in.

We also visited Gnowangerup, just north of Borden, and visited the cemetery, Aboriginal centre and springs in the area.

I wondered if our family had been there, but I felt upset on the way back that we had nobody to show us.

However Link-Up (Qld) had contacted Yorgum, a service in WA for reconnecting Stolen Generation survivors, who knew

the grandchildren of Ellen Smith.

That afternoon, Yorgum organised us to meet Philip Eades, who was Ellen Smith's grandson by her daughter Leah.

After we shared our family trees and saw how we were all related, Uncle Philip called his sister Auntie Annette Eades and her daughter Donna.

As the wind howled on the coast, for the first time in 100 years, our lines of the family finally reunited, hugged, and smiled together once again.

The next night, we met up again for dinner and got to know one another and shared in our histories and memories of our Nana and families.

I video-called my Grandma and my Mum and got them to meet one another – so she got to meet her cousins for the first time in her life!

Our Auntie Annette said that she'll take us up to Kojunup where she was born and show us what she can up there – I'm so honoured and thankful of the love and acceptance our family showed us after having been apart for so long.

I've never felt happier, more secure in myself, and purposeful in my life.

I feel like a big piece missing in our family has finally been put back together.

I've been looking for work, been learning to drive and been trying my hardest to get back to my Country again, because I want to be part of my community and to be proudly Noongar on my Country for my Ancestors.

I plan to go back this year, and have been sending all our research to the Smiths and Eades, as Link-Up (Qld) also uncovered documents on their Granny Ellen that I want to share.

I want to thank Link-Up (Qld) for their incredible work, and the history and assistance they've given us.

I want to thank Yorgum for helping us reconnect with our family in Western Australia, and for being so generous.

I want to thank our Smith and Eades family for being so beautiful and welcoming – I keep the picture of us all together again in my room and it always makes me happy when I look at it.

I want to thank my family, my sister for coming along and my Mum and Grandma for being so open to meet our mob.

Finally, I want to thank our Nana Nellie for everything she passed down and taught us – I hope I've made you proud watching over us.



2023 Reunions – Milton Murray

Milton Murray was excited about going home but overwhelmed and sad to finally see where his grandparents were buried.

I am truly grateful and express much appreciation to Link Up (Qld) for all their support in taking me home to my birthplace, Stradbroke Island, Milton Charles Murray writes ...

North Stradbroke Island is the second largest sand island in the world, traditionally known as Minjerribah.

The Quandamooka people are the traditional owners of the island and waters. Taking me back home was very sad and overwhelming for me.

The first day commenced by meeting Link-Up (Qld) staff at the Cleveland ferry terminal to travel to the island.

This was exciting knowing I was going home to connect with past elders and to visit their burial sites.

Once we arrived, we settled into our accommodation, proceeded to have a nice lunch and discussed our next day itinerary and had many yarns.

On day two, we all met with our cultural elder from the island, Bernice Fisher at the Dunwich Cemetery.

I was shown where my grandparents were laid to rest.

This was very emotional, but I felt their presence surrounding me.

Link Up (Qld) took photos and presented me with a beautiful native flower arrangement. After having a seafood lunch, we proceeded to Myora Cemetery where I connected to my great grandmother's burial site.

We spent a considerable amount of time there as there was so much history to be told.

Link Up (Qld) gave me a beautiful wreath again to lay on my family resting place and took many photos for me.

This was very emotional for me, but I felt so connected there reflecting and having time with my past ancestors.



We journeyed onto Myora sitting down place (Moongalba) being the old mission.

Our cultural guide spoke about the history of the place which was very interesting and presented me with a book written by her and assisted by Rose Borey and Estelle Bertossi.

I was truly grateful to receive this book with so much history and information about my homeland.

Day three was our departure and we spent the morning walking at Point Lookout headland, driving to different areas around Dunwich and having a nice lunch by the water.

I spoke about my mum, Gloria Ryan and my grandmother who lived at Mitchell Crescent, Dunwich and we visited my Nana's land as I told stories I remember.

I also had time to visit my Uncle Ian Delaney at One Mile.

Uncle was so happy to see me, and he yarned to me about so much past history and mob.

I sincerely thank Link Up (Qld) and their staff and Bernice Fisher for giving me this opportunity to connect back to my people.



You all showed so much care and compassion to me; this has given me healing to move forward and knowing where I belong.

Thank you.

2023 Events – Apology Day



2023 – Apology Day

2023 marked the 15th year since the Australian Government's formal apology to the Stolen Generations and once again our Link-Up (Qld) event was held at QPAC and MC'd by Ben Mitchell.

Our keynote speaker was Australian Rugby coach and former professional rugby league player Mal Meninga AM, sharing his story of finding his family.

We were also privileged to hear from ABSTARR Clinical Psychologist and Wellbeing Director Tanja Hirvonen and former Prime Minister The Hon Dr Kevin Rudd AC spoke to the audience via video, giving insight into the significance of the Apology he gave in the Parliament on 13th February 2008.

The Rochedale South State School Choir performed the National Anthem in language, which was wonderful to see and hear.

The music and words of Troy Cassar-Daly and popular local talent Edgar Conlon also helped to make this very special event one to remember.



2023 – Sorry Day



Board members Wilfred Prince and Len Utz played key roles in our 2023 Sorry Day event at Orleigh Park in West End, with performances from Hymba Yumba Independent School, Edgar Conlon and the Songshine Choir. The event was proudly presented in partnership with Micah Projects and Life Without Barriers, and supported by the Australian and Queensland Governments, as well as the Brisbane City Council.





2023 – Workshops



2023 was the year the Voice to Parliament Referendum was held with great hope and expectation that the long process to get to that point would be supported by mainstream Australians. It was not to be. The effect of the 'No' vote on our mob was devastating, especially for those of us who had invested time and hope into achieving the positive result we all wanted. It was a direct hit and it felt very personal to many – it impacted all of us.

Link-Up (Qld) felt those impacts and wanted to make sure our clients and staff were safe. Our Counsellors are always on hand to support our clients. We offered a variety of activities for our clients to participate in to support them through this time in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. Professor Gracelyn Smallwood (above) provided yarning circles to talk about mental health issues and how to manage them. She also did massages over a couple of days which were welcomed by clients to help release the tensions they had been carrying. Client morning teas with guest speakers and therapeutic activities were also held, providing further opportunities for sharing positive stories and reunions.

Staff also attended the Marumali Healing Training program with Aunty Lorraine Peeters (below). This program is designed to equip counsellors with the skills they need to support Aboriginal people who are suffering from grief and trauma as a result of separation.



Link-Up (Qld) delegates attend Healing Our Spirit Worldwide

On the unceded and ancestral territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) nations, Healing our Spirit Worldwide, The Ninth Gathering took place at the Vancouver Convention Centre, British Columbia, Canada from 11-15 September 2023.

Bringing together Indigenous leaders, community representatives and health professionals from around the world, the Gathering shared and celebrated traditional Indigenous knowledges, cultures and healing.

The Gathering attracted approximately 5000 delegates predominantly from Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Hawaii, the United States of America, and Canada and five representatives from Link-Up (Qld) attended: Patricia Thompson (CEO), Faye Carr (Board member/past client), Leonard Utz (Board member/past client), Ruth Loli (Research Manager) and Josh Thompson (Caseworker).

‘Celebrating resiliency’ marked the theme of The Ninth Gathering in recognition of Indigenous teachings, wellness, governance and self-determination.

The conference program was packed with Indigenous-led presentations, plenary panels, break out workshops, cultural ceremonies and activities centred around advancing traditional knowledge and healing practices that ran day and night over the five days.

Link-Up (Qld) delivered a poster presentation to increase awareness about Australia’s Stolen Generations history and Link-Up’s services.

Portraits of Auntie Faye Carr and Uncle Len Utz were showcased on large fabric posters, and we were fortunate to have them on-site to speak to Gathering participants in a form of Q&A about their journeys as Stolen Generations survivors and their experiences as Link-Up (Qld) clients, each having completed a reunion.

Link-Up (Qld) staff were on hand to support them.

Healing Our Spirit Worldwide is held quadrennially and in 2018, Link-Up (Qld) participated at the Eighth Gathering in Sydney where we presented Jennifer and Steven Hart’s story in video and on stage with them both present at the conference.

Steven sang a song dedicated to their missing daughter Sasha and this was a powerful moment.

We found it interesting to learn more about the sixties scoop and residential schools in Canada where Indigenous children also experienced removal from their families due to Canadian government policies, and the local programs in place to facilitate individual and community healing.

With shared post-colonial experiences and challenges, there is a strength and solidarity found in coming together with other First Nations people internationally, and an inspiration to continue the fight towards renewal, reclamation, and healing!



SEWB Counsellor Tahj Minniecon was born in Cairns, North Queensland and grew up all over Australia – but mostly in Brisbane. “I started working with Link-Up (Qld) in April 2022 after a short stint at Gallang Place as a Mental Health worker,” he said. “Before that I was a professional football – soccer - player for more than 13 years, for a team called *Davao Aguilas* in the Philippines before the COVID pandemic hit. “So I was back in Australia and I felt I was ready for the next chapter of my life. “Even though other opportunities in the sporting sphere emerged, I decided to follow my passion in working with my people.” He said his own family had its history in Blackbirding and Stolen Generations. “I wanted to get into the mental health space and give back to Indigenous communities,” he said. “As a caseworker at Link-Up (Qld) I find helping people is inspiring and it’s rewarding to know you’re helping people through what they are going through. “I hope to continue to help my people reconnect with their roots, their family and

their history. “Auntie Pat does an amazing job at steering this ship and to have the opportunity to work under her guidance and learn from her and my colleagues around me has been awesome.

“I want to continue supporting our mob and to keep learning and growing from each experience is my biggest goal during my time here.”

Tahj is studying for a Diploma in Social and Human Services at the Sunshine Coast University and hopes to continue on to a degree in psychology or social work. “I am proud of my sporting achievements,” he said. “And looking back on that, one of my career highlights was playing against my boyhood idol, Italian international Alessandro Del Piero – even in his late 30’s his change of pace was insane, you could never pick what he was going to do. “Even though my sporting career has taken me around the world, I am loving where I am right now.”



Link-Up (Qld) caseworker Latia Schefe is based in our Brisbane office and was born and raised in Gladstone.

She moved to Brisbane at the age of six and spent much of her childhood in and out of hospital, continuing her education at Brisbane’s Royal Children’s Hospital School. Despite her hardships, Latia successfully completed high school and participated in leadership and teamwork activities preparing her for life after school. Her determination to succeed saw her honoured with many awards, including the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Leadership and Teamwork Award and the Jane Prentice Award for

Indigenous Student of the Year. Latia has done a range of work including youth mentoring, administration and medical reception, and childcare. In 2017 she won the National NAIDOC Youth of the Year Award. ““I came to the Awards with no thought of winning anything, so it was such an amazing, unexpected moment when I heard my name called out,” she said. “I never thought about being a role model but now I’m honoured to think that others will look up to me. “It’s a big responsibility.” Latia loves her work at Link-Up (Qld), and we love having her here. “I hope to help to strengthen and heal our clients, and educate others on the work we do,” she said.



About Link-Up (Qld)

Our Mission

Link-Up (Qld) Aboriginal Corporation supports the healing journeys of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people who have been separated from their families and cultures through forced removal, fostering, adoption and/or institutionalisation. We deliver professional, culturally sensitive and confidential research, reunion and cultural wellbeing services.

Link-Up (Qld) Aboriginal Corporation caseworkers and counsellors are experienced individuals who can assist in reuniting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families.

We also provide a referral service to appropriate organisations or Government departments.

Quick Facts

- Link-Up (Qld) is a free service.
- We offer support before, during and after your family reunion.
- We respect your privacy and treat all information confidentially.
- Link-Up (Qld) runs a range of healing activities, camps, support groups, art, craft and music workshops.
- We offer cultural renewal activities and support return to country.

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