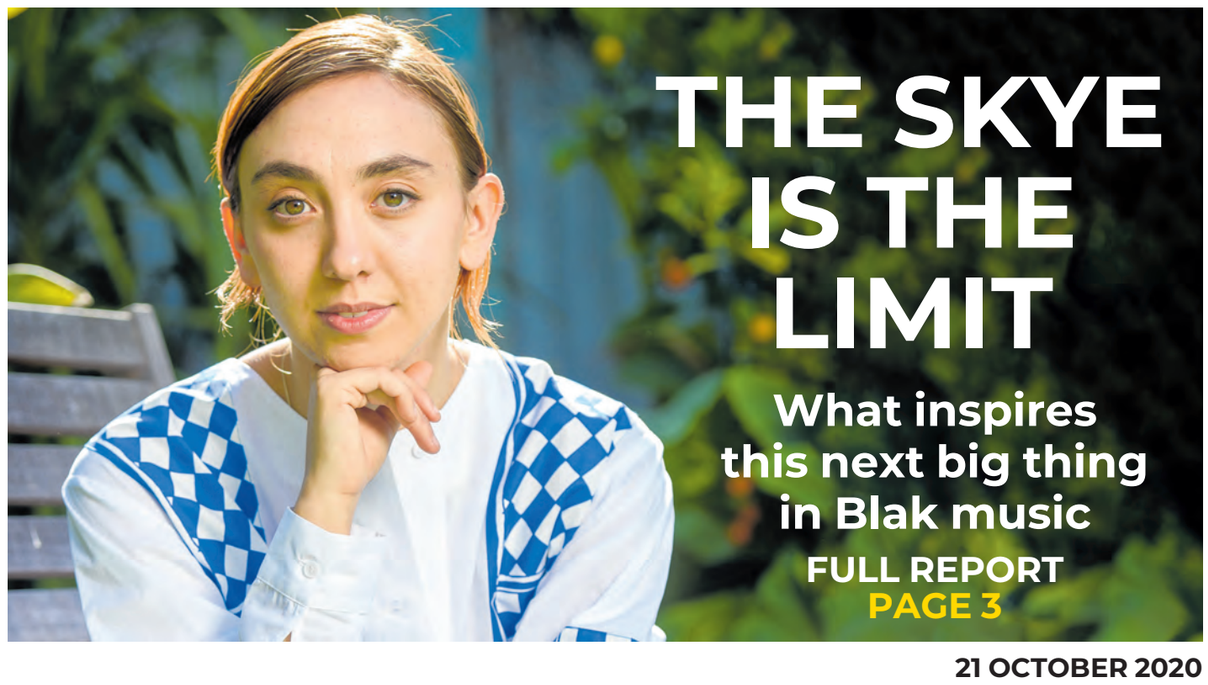
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21 OCTOBER 2020



THE SKYE IS THE LIMIT

What inspires this next big thing in Blak music

FULL REPORT PAGE 3

WALK THE TALKS

JAMES SMITH

In the 3½ years since the birth of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, support for its ambitions of First Nations constitutional recognition continues to grow.

In May 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people representing communities across Australia met at Uluru to endorse what grassroots dialogues had decided was the best way forward for constitutional recognition.

Seven years earlier, then prime minister Julia Gillard established the Expert Panel on the Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution.

Co-chaired by Patrick Dodson and Mark Leibler, the Expert Panel reported in 2012.

In 2013, prime minister Tony Abbott established a Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

It would be co-chaired by Senator Ken Wyatt and Senator Nova Peris.

This committee reported in June 2015.

Then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition leader Bill Shorten established a Referendum Council in December 2015.

Co-Chairs Pat Anderson AO and Mr Leibler stated in the June 2017 final report:

"We were required to consult specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on their views of meaningful recognition.

"The 12 First Nations Regional Dialogues, which culminated in the National Constitutional Convention at Uluru in May 2017, empowered First Peoples from across the country to form a consensus position on the form constitutional recognition should take".

First Nations people who took part in those regional dialogues and the national convention developed a reform framework of "Voice, Treaty, Truth".

In terms of constitutional change, First Nations people wanted input in Parliament on matters affecting them.

Instead of politicians making decisions about them and for them, they wanted to be consulted first and at least have the chance to offer their own suggestions.

And they wanted these conditions embedded within Australia's Constitution, not merely legislated, as they didn't want future governments striking a red pen through these hard-fought amendments at a whim.

This was real-life self-determination in action.



We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us ... for a better future.

Professor Megan Davis in 2017 reading the Uluru Statement from the Heart

The National Convention produced the Uluru Statement from the Heart to explain to ordinary Australians why change is needed.

It was aired in public for the first time through a reading by Professor Megan Davis, who tightly held a hastily printed-out copy of the statement in her hand while it flapped in the wind as the late-afternoon sun started to set.

"In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard," she said.

"We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country.

"We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."

In late 2017, prime minister Malcolm Turnbull set up a parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Referendum Council's report and the Uluru Statement.

The Dodson and Leeser report handed down in late 2018 found there was no other form of constitutional recognition that would receive support from Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The brilliant piece of artwork featuring the signatures of Uluru Convention delegates makes Beatles-like appearances at lectures and cultural events, but 3½ years after it was written, where do the statement's ambitions sit?

In the months and years since the Convention, Uluru delegates have been meeting most Friday nights. Then they are busy through the week and on weekends carrying out community engagement work — the bread and butter of law reform.

The Uluru Statement has also been translated into multiple languages, increasing its reach within the wider Australian community.

Two thousand Australians were surveyed in a nationally representative poll carried out in February by CT Group.

"Forty-nine per cent said they would vote in favour of a constitutional change to underpin an Indigenous Voice advising the Parliament," media reported.

On the back of those positive numbers in early October, advocacy group From The Heart took to social media to highlight that support for the Uluru Statement has never been stronger.

"Research undertaken by From The Heart in June showed that 56 per cent of Australians support changing the Australian Constitution to provide for a Voice to Parliament — a seven per cent increase in four months," the said.

Critically, the office of Ken Wyatt, now the Minister for Indigenous Australians, has recently stated that no option for a Voice is off the table.

In this year's annual Closing the Gap speech, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would be looking into what form a referendum on constitutional recognition would take after the Voice co-design process concludes.

Another reason for optimism is that funding allocated for the Voice referendum in 2018 is still recognised as an unlegislated Budget measure, with a current value of $188 million.

It has been seven years since Ms Gillard established the expert panel on the constitution.

Seven years and five prime ministers.

The good news is that many, many Australians are walking with Aboriginal communities in this movement — even though it can still feel like the nation is stuck at base camp.

Closing celebrations after the National Convention in May 2017. Picture: Jimmy Widders Hunt

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BYLINE

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'I will work my guts out'

HANNAH CROSS

A community advocate picked by Labor to replace outgoing Kimberley MP Josie Farrer says she will "work my guts out" to make Indigenous West Australians have a "strong representative voice in Parliament".

Proud Yawuru and Nimanburru woman, Divina D'Anna was preselected last month to stand for WA Labor after the retirement of Ms Farrer.

"Kimberley people must have a leadership role in determining the future of our region," she told the National Indigenous Times.

"I've said it many times and I'll say it again, failure to try is failure in itself, and I'm going to work my guts out to make sure we have the strong representative voice in Parliament advocating for all Kimberley people."

FULL REPORT PAGE 6

Playing the money ball

RACHEL STRINGFELLOW

Indigenous businesses are sponsoring sporting teams so they can have a positive influence from within on national leagues that hold so much cultural sway on the Australian public.

Adam Williams — the chief executive of Indigenous-owned procurement company Supply Aus, which is now a major sponsor of the Brisbane Bullets basketball team in the NBL — said there was no doubt being a financial partner meant the company could push "clubs to do more".

"Sport plays a big part for our mob across the board," he said.

"Having these guys coming to us and say, 'What should we do? What do you think?', (means) we can change the narrative."

FULL REPORT SPORT

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Get the jobs done



Cundaline Resources managing director Brenden Taylor. Picture: Kelsey Reid

RACHAEL KNOWLES

An Indigenous contracting group in partnerships with miners including Fortescue and BHP is calling for more major companies to give Aboriginal workers a go, saying they're meeting their business targets and milestones "faster than expected".

Cundaline Resources is owned by Njamal/Tjiwarl man Brenden Taylor. Mr Taylor is also the company's executive managing director and the son of successful mining businessman Barry Taylor.

Born in Port Hedland, Mr Taylor was was raised in the Pilbara's Jinparinya Aboriginal Community.

He finished school at Port Hedland Senior High School in Year 11, but completed a four-year mechanical engineering apprenticeship with BHP Billiton Iron Ore.

After slugging it out as a tradesman in the punishing Pilbara heat, Mr Taylor said he was shown the ropes of business by his father.

"I got into business in 2010 after I finished on the tools," he told the National Indigenous Times.

"It was a good learning experience over the years. I always knew in the back of my mind that one day I wanted to run my own business."

Six years after he entered the business world, Cundaline Resources was born.

The company started doing labour hire, working out of Taylor's garage.

"Labour hire is really hard work, and it was dictated by the client who said who we could employ and who we couldn't," Mr Taylor said.

In March, Cundaline Resources gained their contractor status, which would enable Mr Taylor to have freedom over employment and contract terms.

"The major thing that I want to see is Indigenous people in jobs," Mr Taylor said.

"We're running 80 per cent Indigenous employment (and) for a while there we were running 100 per cent Indigenous employment.

"Cundaline Resources is about giving opportunities to people who don't get opportunities."

With a strong connection to community, Mr Taylor finds a lot of fulfilment in empowering mob. "It feels so great when resumes come over from Ashburton (Aboriginal Corporation), the employment agency in Port Hedland. The feeling when you know you have another person that will never get this opportunity … getting them through that process is just such a great feeling," he said.

"We are a family and we stick together."

Taylor is one half of Cundaline Resources' top team.

Its chief executive, Fred Spring, has been with the company since the garage days.

Mr Spring said the growth had been "overwhelming".

"When you're seen to be the 'go to' Indigenous business — every man and his dog wants a bite of you. As you grow it is overwhelming, in terms of the commitment and time spent on jobs and getting the right people to work with in business," he said. "We control what we do here. That's the key." One of Cundaline Resources' biggest supporters is Fortescue Metals Group, who awarded Cundaline Resources the contract for their West Canning Basin earthworks at the Iron Bridge Magnetite Project in May this year.

"It's sort of happening faster than we expected. We are meeting our targets and milestones — we just keep pushing along and delivering and we'll see where we go from there," Mr Taylor said.

Mr Taylor is humbled by the immense support, including that of FMG, BHP and their Tier 1 contractor clients.

"I am so proud of what we have achieved so far here at Cundaline and I can't wait to see what the future holds for us," Mr Taylor said.



Aunty Pat Anderson.
Picture: Jimmy Widders Hunt

AN AUNTY'S FIGHT

JAMES SMITH

The Uluru Statement from the Heart firmly put Indigenous issues across Australia on the national agenda.

But in a 24/7 media cycle, the sad reality is that headlines come and go.

Thankfully long after the TV cameras turned their lenses in 2017 to cover the statement, there remains a woman determined to fight every day until her people — the First Nations peoples of Australia — are respectfully recognised in the Constitution.

Aunty Pat Anderson is a household name in Aboriginal homes around the country.

It's a name likely to grow in recognition as the push for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament continues.

Ms Anderson has served in the Aboriginal health sector for more than half a century.

In the 1960s, she had a radical message for government — that Aboriginal people needed their own health service.

They don't like going to mainstream clinics.

People stare.

Racism is rife.

It was Ms Anderson's push, along with others, that created Australia's first Aboriginal Medical Service.

"I think the concept of justice and what's fair and not fair, I learnt very early at Parap Camp, where I grew up in Darwin alongside a whole lot of other Aboriginal families," she told the National Indigenous Times.

"I can remember my mother taking in her child endowment book — a precursor to family allowance.

"They had to explain to the superintendent of native welfare how she was going to use her endowment money. He would ultimately decide whether she could have the whole lot or a portion."

> **"This is the latest battle in a much longer battle for our advocacy which has lasted generations**
>
> **Aunty Pat Anderson**

Co-Chair of the Referendum Council and Lowitja Institute chair, Ms Anderson has her sights set on achieving significant constitutional change.

It won't be easy. Prime Minister Scott Morrison is on record with concerns about a Voice to Parliament becoming a burdensome "third chamber" of politics.

And Ken Wyatt, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, has said he would prefer setting up a body like the Productivity Commission to weigh in on Aboriginal policy matters.

"This is the latest battle in a much longer battle for our advocacy which has lasted generations," Ms Anderson said.

"The fight now, for constitutional enshrinement of a Voice, is a continuation of everything else that we've done. In fact, (Aboriginal activist) William Cooper was talking about this back in the 1920s.

"I think that's what keeps us going; that continuation of the struggle that everybody before us went through. I think that's what drives a lot of us.

"We are the next generation. This is our turn to have a go. Those of us over 18, Blak and white, we have an opportunity here … We are not there yet, but maybe we have a chance this time."

As head of the Lowitja Institute, a prestigious research centre originally set up to train health workers, Ms Anderson is bursting with pride that an authorised biography has just been released about the facility's namesake, Lowitja O'Donoghue.

Dr O'Donoghue was the inaugural chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, where there was a very broad agenda for constitutional change and recognition.

The creation of ATSIC and the concept of a parliamentary body, even in the early 1990s, was something people were campaigning for.

Much of the work of people like Anderson, UNSW Pro-vice Chancellor Indigenous Professor Megan Davis and Cape York Institute founder Noel Pearson has been inspired by Dr O'Donoghue.

"People like Lowitja have that steely determination," Ms Anderson said.

"They seem to almost thrive against all the odds. They have that ruthless desire for change and to provide a better life for those around us.

"In Lowitja's case, and I think in our case as well, we have tried to give a voice to our mob, many of whom are voiceless."

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Musician Alice Skye at her Flemington home in Victoria.
Picture: Jay Town

REACH FOR THE SKYE

RACHAEL KNOWLES

Alice Skye was raised on the sounds of crackling vinyl in a town that bends with Victoria's Wimmera River

"We had a piano in the house my sister would play, and Mum would play Joan Armatrading records when I'd come home from school. There was always music somewhere," the Wergaia and Wemba Wemba woman told the National Indigenous Times.

"I started playing piano when I was around five, I became so obsessed with singers who played piano — people like Missy Higgins, Regina Spektor and The Cranberries."

Skye was raised in the western Victorian town of Horsham.

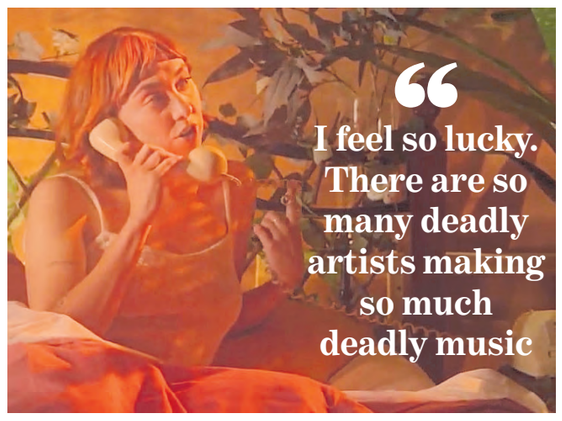
It's about 300km away from Melbourne and Skye said it was a world of its own.

"It was definitely challenging to have lived in a predominantly white place … the only Blackfellas I knew were my direct family," she said. "I always made a really big deal about it in primary school. I'd always let people know I was a Blackfella.

"But, it changes when you're in high school, that shame kicks in when you get older."

Moving to Fitzroy and making her way as an artist, Skye now sits proudly among many other emerging First Nations musicians.

"It's something that I dreamed of but not what I thought I would do, particularly growing up in a small town I thought I would never be a singer—as a job, that seemed crazy," she said.



"I still think it is crazy.

"I feel so lucky. There are so many deadly artists making so much deadly music."

Skye said she sees her role as an Indigenous artist to write songs that talk to "people who are in similar situations".

"That's why I think representation across all the intersections is so important," she said.

"Like Thelma Plum's song Homecoming Queen, that song hits me. I think about if I had listened to that song when I was young … It is so important for young people to see themselves.

"Even Cathy Freeman, just seeing her, a Blak woman, on the TV run with the Aboriginal flag … people celebrating her. I wanted to be an Olympian because she was."

Skye said her natural knack for storytelling was carved out of a lifetime of journaling.

"I have all my old diaries — some of them are too painful to read," she said.

"I didn't grow up in an environment where you communicated your feelings and I don't think a lot of people did. It is very hard and challenging to articulate how you feel. Or to even first understand how you feel to then communicate it.

"Writing music has taught me that and so much, all those little life things. Like learning to be patient and non-judgmental of yourself."

With Victoria bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, Skye said she has had to adapt to online life.

"In the beginning the live stuff was really nice as it was a chance to connect with people. I find real-life live performing so anxiety-inducing. But, it's also so cathartic. I miss that feeling of being in a room with other people and just playing music," she said.

"It's hard for me as someone who spends a lot of time in my own head, being on stage is the chance to get out of your body.

"I don't think there is a substitute, but I think it is really important for people to have these platforms to perform and for people at home to listen."

Skye's last album, Friends with Feelings, was released in 2018.

Fans will get their hands on her next album next year.

"This album was recorded with my two friends that I play live shows with. This was our first time recording, I've known them my whole life," she said.

"It was such beautiful process to have people in the room who care about you when you're creating."

Delving into the creation process again, Skye said she has an up-and-down relationship with every song she writes.

"Usually I love the song the most when I've just written it and it's just come together," she said.

"Then you play it so much you hate it … then you release it and you love it again."

Skye said the biggest lesson she has learnt since her last album was learning how to let things go and let things be.

"Sometimes the permanency of creating music or releasing something is scary because it's not perfect, or it could be this or that. Trying not to get caught up on the permanency of things has been one of the biggest lessons," she said.

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STORIES FULL OF HEART & SPIRIT

HANNAH CROSS

Four strong Indigenous women are behind much of the work that has gone into making sure WA Museum Boola Bardip presents a truly integrated Indigenous story.

Representing about 60 of 100 different language groups across the State, the museum staff ensured the facility was developed in a culturally safe way and with traditional owner permissions.

While the entire museum hosts eight different galleries, visitors will experience "Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirn: Our Heart, Country, Spirit" upon entry.

Curated by Yindjibarndi woman Michelle Broun, the exhibition celebrates the diversity of WA's Aboriginal people.

"Right from the start . . . we never intended to have an exhibition where all the Kimberley mobs were in this corner and this was the South West mob and the Pilbara mob on that side," she said.

"We created a visitor journey, beginning with the Welcome to Country, which is for the whole of the museum.

"The overall messaging through Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirn is about connection. Connection to country, but also connecting to each other as people, and ultimately, looking inwards and connecting to yourself."

Mununjali woman Barbara Paulson is the museum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement officer responsible for the extensive consultation with mob across the State.

Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives are woven throughout the museum — not just in Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirn.

Ms Paulson said a huge part of speaking to communities was remembering Aboriginal people would be visitors — not just subjects of the museum.

"We wanted to be able to represent . . . in a more meaningful way," she said.

"We made sure that we had representation from across the multiple regions of WA.

"One of the big things, of course, was making sure that every cultural group understood how they were being represented. They had the opportunity to decide how much involvement they wanted and in the way in which representation was developed."

Ms Paulson found a key issue for communities Statewide was ensuring WA's colonial past was educational without being burdensome.

"One of the things we were very wary of right from the start was to make sure that this generation were informed of this history, not burdened by it," she said.

"It was something that our elders were personally telling us."

While WA Museum Boola Bardip doesn't shy away or sanitise the State's history of colonial violence, Ms Broun was mindful of its confronting nature.

That's why one section of Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirn is partially closed off, with a caution to visitors that the area contains confronting imagery.

Yamatji/Noongar woman Deanne Fitzgerald — WA Museum's senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adviser — said much of her role was supporting Ms Paulson, Ms Broun and curatorial assistant Marani Greatorex in their efforts.

"I was kind of in the background supporting them, helping out across all of the museum and making sure those stories (from across WA) were reflected," she said.

A young Jabirr Jabirr/Nyikina woman, Ms Greatorex was responsible for procuring all the images used throughout the museum.

A first contact story and one of Ms Broun's favourites, in Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirn the museum will tell the story of Pitjantjatjara man Fred Ward's encounter with the white man. "His first contact was with a . . . helicopter in the western desert with him and his uncle," she said.

"They had never seen a whitefella before, they had never seen a helicopter, and they were trying to spear this helicopter."

The story has since been revitalised by the local school, with a sculptor coming in to re-create the helicopter, or "dust-up", for the museum.

Hanging high in the ceiling space, the helicopter will have spears aimed upwards in the chopper's direction.

"They call them dust-ups because when they come up from the ground there's dust everywhere," Ms Broun said.

"And Fred, when he first saw it, it was a Mamu, or devils from the sky."

Another aspect is every Indigenous piece in the museum is documented or attributed in some way — a rare occurrence in museums across Australia. Ms Paulson said many traditional owners came in to view items for the museum and would identify items their parents or grandparents had made.

"You had to give the time and space for that, to walk through that emotional response, then ask questions and then document that," she said.

"We, through this engagement process, have been lucky enough to document a lot of our materiality that didn't have it previously."



Barbara Paulson, Michelle Broun, Marani Greatorex and Deanne Fitzgerald at the new WA Museum Boola Bardip, left, and, right, from above. Picture: Kelsey Reid



2.8m square kilometres in good hands

SARAH SMIT

A corporate philanthropic initiative is putting traditional owners from 2.8 million square kilometres of desert at the forefront of caring for country and passing on cultural knowledge.

The $20.9 million Ten Deserts Project is the biggest funded by the BHP Foundation and encompasses the Great Sandy, Little Sandy, Gibson, Tanami, Great Victoria, Pedirka, Tirari, Strzelecki, and Sturt Stony and Simpson deserts.

First pitched in 2016, the project started supporting traditional owners to care for their lands in 2018.

"Eighty per cent of the world's remaining high-value biodiversity under threat is on or adjacent to the lands of Indigenous people," BHP Foundation head James Ensor said.

"So, solutions to that challenge have to centre around the rights of Indigenous peoples to have what we call, 'Voice and Choice'; their ability to determine their own futures through how they choose to manage their land."

The project is led by Desert Support Services and partners with the Central Land Council, Kimberley Land Council, Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation, Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board and the Indigenous Desert Alliance.

DSS facilitates the networks that are the heart of the project, linking up land councils, State government agencies and non-government organisations.

"Fire, invasive species, camels, water quality control and climate issues — these things are interconnected, they know no boundaries, they know no borders," DSS general manager Phil Sparrow said.

One of the strengths of the project is the flexibility of the funding.

KLC's Land and Sea Management Unit manager William Durack said the project highlighted just how special the desert was.

"The Australian desert has historically been something that, in my experience, has been incredibly under-represented and undervalued; both physical aspects of it and also the cultural complexity and cultural capacity of traditional owners," he said.

"The project has provided funds that have enabled things that are almost impossible through traditional funding avenues.

"It's been well aligned with traditional owner needs and aspirations."

Mr Durack also told the National Indigenous Times that the project had also helped "solidarity" and a "sense of community" among Indigenous rangers that care for the desert regions.



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Why Divina's in poll position

HANNAH CROSS

A dedicated community advocate and proud Yawuru and Nimanburr woman, Divina D'Anna has put her hand up for the State seat of Kimberley to replace outgoing incumbent Josie Farrer.

With more than 20 years of work with peak Aboriginal organisations under her belt, Ms D'Anna was preselected last month to stand for WA Labor following the retirement of Ms Farrer, pictured below right.

Having spent her whole life in the Kimberley, she has built and maintained strong connections throughout the region. Ms D'Anna's family live across the Dampier Peninsula and Broome, while her husband's family have connections across the West and East Kimberley from Derby to Wyndham, and Kununurra along the Gibb River Road.

Her entire professional life has been devoted to advocating and empowering Kimberley communities, with a focus on native title, self-empowerment and suicide prevention.

Ms D'Anna said working with diverse communities, government agencies and advocacy groups across the Kimberley, an area twice the size of Victoria, has "required the diplomacy and patience that comes from being the eldest of eight kids as well as the eldest grandchild on both sides".

She believes the role Kimberley people play in their own future is critical. "Kimberley people must have a leadership role in determining the future of our region," she told the National Indigenous Times.

Ms D'Anna hopes to take her advocacy and knowledge to the next level by representing her community in State Parliament. "I've said it many times and I'll say it again, failure to try is failure in itself, and I'm going to work my guts out to make sure we have the strong representative voice in parliament advocating for all Kimberley people," she told the National Indigenous Times.

In 2017, the Jawun Emerging Leaders program, a program supporting the development of up-and-coming Indigenous leaders, took Ms D'Anna to Canberra.

The trip broadened her insights into how she can work not only regionally, but nationally to influence policies and make positive changes for the Kimberley.

Ms D'Anna believes an important avenue for positive change must come through the creation of jobs and training opportunities which empower the community. This is something she experienced firsthand during her time at business foundation and native title service provider KRED Enterprises and Kimberley regional body Aarnja Limited.

While advocating for her present community is Ms D'Anna's priority, the future is her main motivator.

"I think I'm driven most by wanting my children, grandchildren and others' children to be safe, supported and have the opportunities that they deserve," she said.



Nimanburr woman Divina D'Anna in Canarvon.
Picture: Supplied

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Time for 'backbone' on Voice mission

It has been more than three years since the iconic Uluru Statement From the Heart and Australia is yet to see any version of the elusive Voice to Parliament.

And it's been seven years since the Expert Panel on the Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution was commissioned. To put that into context, over that period the country has had five prime ministers: Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison.

When Ken Wyatt became the first Aboriginal to be the nation's Minister for Indigenous Australians, he made a point of not outright endorsing the Statement.

Carefully toeing the party line in his first months in the role, Mr Wyatt tuned out the haters on both sides to set about establishing advisory groups. But who else has he tuned out since?

And is he listening at all?

Worries about adding a cumbersome "third chamber" to our political system appear to have been embraced by some in Canberra and the Voice to Parliament looks more likely to become a Voice to Government. This has caused Indigenous leaders to speak out. Coalition of Peaks head Pat Turner AM recently turned her focus to Mr Morrison when addressing the National Press Club.

"We'll need to see a bit of backbone here and a bit of real commitment," she said.

"That's what you need. Ken (Wyatt) can't do it by himself."

Yet isn't that why he set up the Senior Advisory Group, the National Co-Design Group and the Local & Regional Advisory Group?

Mr Wyatt and Mr Morrison have a wealth of diverse Indigenous knowledge at their disposal. The time is now to step up and deliver a Voice to Parliament that the First Nations peoples of Australia deserve.

As Aunty Pat Anderson is quoted as saying in today's National Indigenous Times, right now is the chance to do something that's been talked about as far back as the 1920.

"The fight now, for constitutional enshrinement of a Voice, is a continuation of everything else that we've done," she said.

Responsibility for the editorial comment is taken by NIT editor Hannah Cross

Illustration: Rhys Paddick



This is why I spell the word Blak not Black

RANGI HIRINI

There's a number of derogatory slurs that have been used against Indigenous Australians but finally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reclaiming a word that was once used against us and bringing a newfound sense of pride and empowerment.

Historically, the word black has been used to denote something negative and disempowering for the people who have been at the receiving end of race-based insults.

In Australia, there were signs that read "Blacks Only" or "No Blacks Allowed".

These signs were directed towards Indigenous Australians.

Don't get it twisted, this country had its own era of segregation and, truth be told, it wasn't that long ago that Indigenous Australians were the victim of these discriminatory rules.

But more recently, there has been a movement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to reclaim a word that was once used to put us down.

The word "black" has been reclaimed by the community with a new spin — the "c" has been dropped and "Blak" is being used for self-identification.

First used by Erub/Mer and K'ua K'ua woman Destiny Deacon in 1991, the term "Blak" was defined by the artist in her exhibition entitled *Blak lik mi.*

Deacon defines "Blak" as a term used by some Aboriginal people to reclaim historical, representational, symbolical, stereotypical and romanticised notions of Black or Blackness.

Blak is often used as ammunition or inspiration.

The Indigenous artist said she was taking on the "colonisers' language" and flipping it on its head.

Over the past 29 years, "Blak" has been used by many Indigenous Australians and even has become a small movement within itself.

In the arts industry there has been a Blak arts movement, the term was used by ARIA nominee Thelma Plum for her debut album "Better in Blak", and there is the Blak Dot Gallery, Blak Markets and Blak Cabaret.

Following this year's "Black Lives Matter" protest, some media outlets began to use the term when talking about the Indigenous community.

Blak is an expression of taking back power and control within a society that doesn't encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's opportunities for self-determination as individuals and communities.

As an Aboriginal woman, it felt great to see the media pick up this new style. I felt as if I was being seen and heard for the first time.

It's similar to seeing media organisations capitalise the A in Aboriginal or I in Indigenous — there is a sense of respect that I feel.

And although, right now you may not find "Blak" in the dictionary — just remember, Jedi was only added to the Oxford English Dictionary last year.

Indigenous Australians are a part of the world's oldest living cultures with evidence of our existence dating back more than 65,000 years ago.

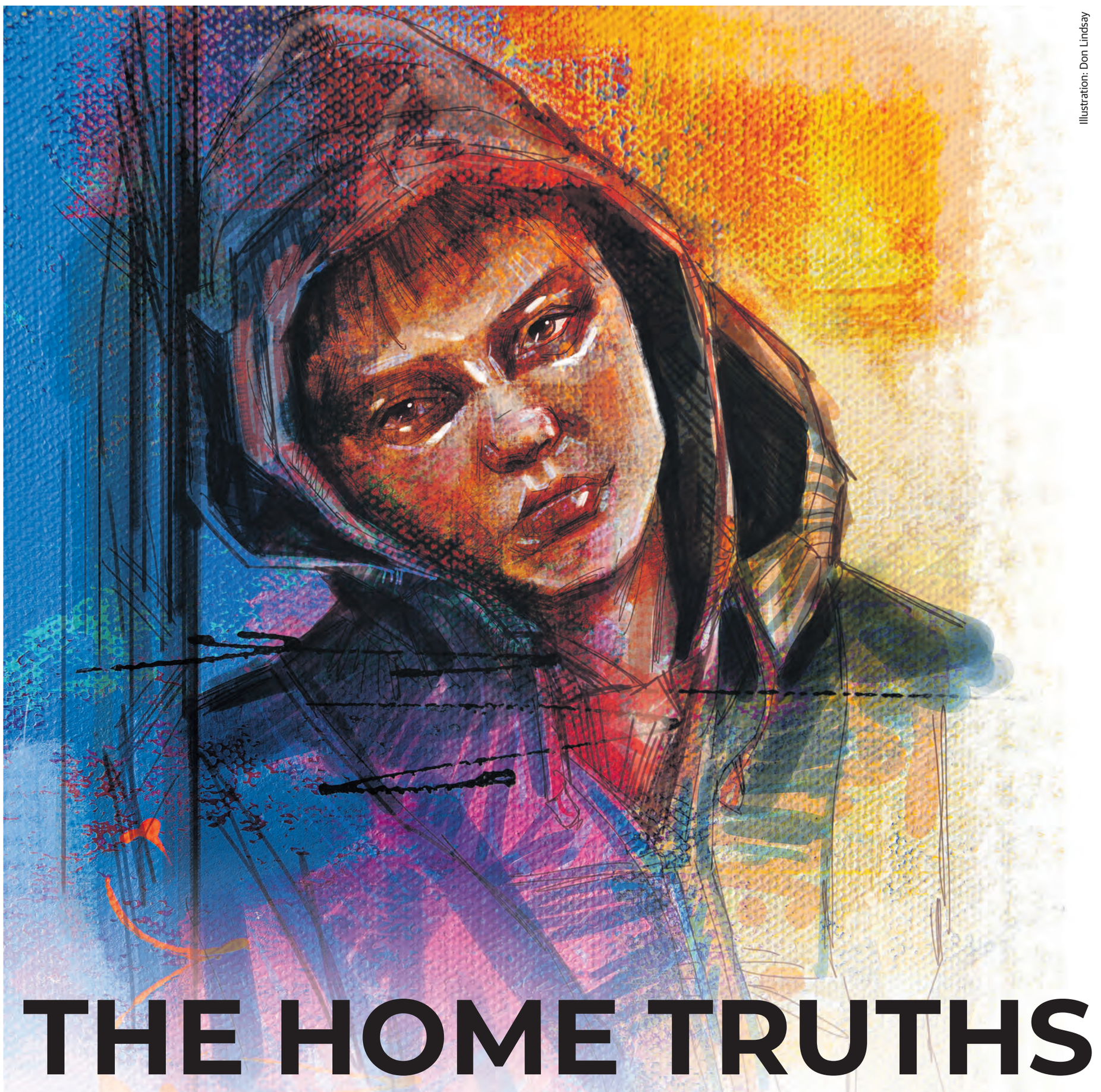
Our blackness was something that was once ridiculed, degraded, and mocked but now our Blakness is celebrated, treasured and something we have learnt to become proud of.

So to the mob reading this, be proud of your Blakness.

Our struggles didn't break us, our struggles made us.



Illustration: Don Lindsay



THE HOME TRUTHS

MEGAN KRAKOUER & GERRY GEORGATOS

From the year of the Bringing Them Home report to now, there has been a catastrophic increase in the number of First Nations children removed from their homes by child protection authorities.

It is a seemingly permanent national tragedy, which is worst in WA, the country's biggest remover of First Nations children.

Currently, 56 per cent of children in out-of-home care in WA are First Nations. These children are 18 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children.

Australia has by all reasonable accounts the world's highest rate of children coming to the attention of child protection authorities at one-in-32. For First Nations children, it's one-in-six. This is a national crime. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, as of June 30 last year about 44,900 Australian children were in out-of-home care.

Nearly half were First Nations children.

In each of the past five years there has been an incremental decrease of non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care, but significant increases in First Nations children removed.

The AIHW also tells us that as of June 30 last year, 21,900 First Nations children were on care and protection orders. It is estimated there are 24,000 First Nations children in out-of-home care.

Let us be careful with statistics. They can mask and skew.

The decrease in Australian children deemed as being in out-of-home care between 2017 and 2019 has come about as State and Territory jurisdictions have aligned with a new national definition of out-of-home care which excludes third-party parental responsibility orders.

Children on these orders are not considered as being in out-of-home care.

If the third-party orders are included, the rates and total numbers of children not living with parents for child protection reasons, for both non-Indigenous and First Nations, would be higher.

This is important to understand, and few do, in terms of the number of children removed from their biological parents or family-of-origin.

The system has degenerated into an institution focused on child removals.

A royal commission could shine the light on such an oppressive institutional regime. Nationally, funding to child protection authorities exceeds $6 billion, but overall, it is estimated State and Territory governments spend only 17 per cent of this funding on family support services.

Governments must take responsibility for the catastrophic failure of the child protection system, for it is our governments that have legislated the child removal and placement powers, one after another, since the late 1990s, all the while reducing social services.

Systemic repair is long overdue.

The WA Government has also gone the way of legislative amendments to strengthen placements away from the family-of-origin.

Many of these placements will not be recorded as out-of-home care and child removals. It is a broken child-protection system.

If we do not speak up about a crisis that has outstripped past generations, the future will condemn our generation as we condemn the past.

It was 23 years ago that the Bringing Them Home report was released. And yet still more than two-thirds of Australia's First Nations people who are incarcerated are individuals who were removed into out-of-home care as children.

WA is the mother of all jailers of First Nations people, with one in 12 First Nations adult males being presently incarcerated.

WA's only juvenile detention facility, Banksia Hill, is thematic of the crisis.

Of First Nations children in this kid's prison, four-fifths have been removed from their family-of-origin by child protection authorities.

We need to be truthful if we are to do better and fix systems that are not working, before it is too late for the children who depend on these systems.

SPORT

Changing clubs from within

RACHEL STRINGFELLOW

Indigenous businesses are sponsoring sporting teams so they can have a positive influence from within on leagues that hold so much cultural sway on the Australian public.

One example is Indigenous-owned procurement company Supply Aus, who are now the major sponsor of the Brisbane Bullets basketball team in the NBL.

One of the first major Indigenous partners of an NBL team, Wiradjuri man and Supply Aus chief executive Adam Williams said sponsoring a sporting team gave them a chance to speak directly to the community.

"Sport plays a big part for our mob across the board," he said. "We are all sports freaks … if you can bounce it, kick it, throw it (then) we'll probably play, right?"

Mr Williams said being a financial partner in a sporting team meant the company could push "sporting clubs to do more" from within. "Having these guys coming to us and say, 'What should we do? What do you think?', (means) we can change the narrative," he said. "We're forward in telling them that stinks (or) asking what's going on. One thing we can't have is another netball incident."

Netball Australia recently came under fire for not giving any court time to the league's only Indigenous player, Waka Waka woman and Queensland Firebird Jemma Mi Mi, during the Suncorp Super Netball Indigenous Round.

High-profile media commentator and ex-Wallabies player Peter FitzSimons slammed the incident as an "incomprehensible error".

"Not only would we like to see Indigenous people on the park but I want to see more when we go to those (head) offices," Mr Williams said.

While many companies have had to undergo major restructuring during the COVID-19 pandemic and others have been forced to close, Supply Aus has come through relatively unscathed.

"I think as a group of (Indigenous) people we're very entrepreneurial by default," Mr Williams said.

"That skill set is pretty hard to find in a kind of black and white corporate world, where everybody's so eager to do what they're told and so boring. I think a bit of … colour never hurt nobody. I think that would inspire a lot of businesses … so the change with COVID where normal practices and principles went out the window — that kind of helped our business, because we were hustling every day for an order anyway.

The Brisbane Bullets partnership will give Supply Aus, and Indigenous business more broadly, national exposure.

Delayed due to COVID-19, the NBL 2020-21 season is set to kick off in January.



Supply Aus chief executive Adam Williams. Picture: Richard Walker

Barty party for Tigers?

The World No.1 tennis player Ash Barty will present the premiership cup if Richmond wins the grand final on Saturday night.

Barty, a proud Ngaragu woman from southern NSW and north-eastern Victoria, is a massive Tigers' fan.

The 24-year-old was the club's first inaugural women's member.

And as a Queenslander she has been seen at many Richmond games this year.

"I wish the boys all the best for Saturday and very much hope I have the chance to be out there when the siren goes, celebrating another Richmond premiership," she said.

"I am a long-time fan of the Tigers and so proud to be associated with the club.

"I have a huge admiration and respect for the club on and off the field, what they have achieved over the last decade is incredible."



It's right on for Wighton

DARBY INGRAM

Wiradjuri man Jack Wighton is the first Canberra Raiders player to win the NRL's Dally M Medal for the league's best player in 25 years.

In accepting the award on Monday night, Wighton spoke of the pride he felt as a young First Nations man.

"I always try to be a leader and role model to all the younger kids and just show them and set the example that whatever they put their best foot forward to, they can try and achieve," he said. But Wighton's win didn't come as a surprise. The outcome was leaked by Sydney newspaper The Daily Telegraph when its website published the results online before the ceremony.

Wighton however, was unaware of the leak, having his phone taken from him previous to filming. The Daily Telegraph's sports editor-at-large, Phil Rothfield, apologised for the leak on Twitter. "The Daily Telegraph website accidentally published the winner of the Dally M award before the official announcement tonight," he said.

"We apologise sincerely for the mistake."

Nic Nat's top honour

MITCHELL WOODCOCK

West Coast Eagles 2020 Club Champion Nic Naitanui credited the sacrifices made by everyone at the club in the coronavirus-affected season.

The athletic ruckman, who has Fijian heritage and has been outspoken about the need to address racism in the AFL, received his first John Worsfold medal at Crown on Monday night. "It's a massive honour and a massive privilege to receive this," he said.

"The guys who've come before me and won it have been some of the legends and some of the household names of the footy club, so it's a massive honour to receive this.

"With everything that's happened this year, I think this medal belongs to a lot more than me, it belongs to the footy club and I truly mean that. Everyone who's helped out has meant something to myself and the boys — in particular this year but also throughout our careers, so thank you for all of your sacrifices."

Naitanui finished two votes clear of running machine Andrew Gaff, with Brad Sheppard finishing third.



Former AFL footballer Des Headland. Picture: Danella Bevis

AFL'S AFTERLIFE

HANNAH CROSS

The day you're drafted into the AFL is the day you should be preparing for your life after footy.

It's harsh, but sage advice.

And it's advice that Indigenous Players Alliance chair Des Headland wants Aboriginal players to take on board more than anyone else.

"I've been told for a very long time the day you're drafted is the day you should be preparing yourself to transition out of footy later in life," he told the National Indigenous Times.

"You're transitioning from the day you walk in the club."

He said while the AFL, AFL Players Association and clubs themselves offered programs and services to assist players with that transition, it was not translating to the league's Indigenous players.

"The issue is how can we, IPA members and Indigenous past players, create the opportunity to get these programs delivered to Indigenous players … hence why the IPA was set up," the 39-year-old, who won a premiership with the Brisbane Lions, said.

Headland said outreach to Indigenous players was the key thing missing.

"We don't want to reinvent the wheel," he said.

"We want to work collaboratively with the AFL and the AFLPA to be that outreach service. To say, look we've been through the system we know the system; our members haven't accessed what's available to them."



Des Headland wins a premiership in 2002 and, right, in his Fremantle Dockers playing days.



While Headland said there had been success stories that should be celebrated, it was important players who might be missing out on programs were reached.

"With every success story there's a lot more unfortunate failures in terms of after football life. Football only lasts a certain amount of your life," he said.

"It's about how we can be that outreach service that's gone through the system."

He said the IPA will act as an advocate group to ensure Indigenous players are using the programs and services available to them as well as ensuring their clubs and the AFLPA are supporting players as best they can.

As the chief executive of Indigenous occupational health service Spartan First, Headland has found his career post-AFL.

But he admits it took time.

"I personally just took opportunity after opportunity and never really said no for an answer," he said.

Headland dabbled in a number of industries to figure out his passion, one of which put him in the Canberra bubble.

He spent 12 months as a policy adviser to former WA senator Zhenya "Dio" Wang of Clive Palmer's Palmer United Party. "I would never have thought in a million years I'd be working in Canberra, as an adviser to a politician.

"But that happened," he laughed.

"It just opened my eyes to Australian politics and the way we govern as a country … that really pushed me to try and set up business.

"So, that's kind of why I do what I do now."

In his role as IPA chair, Headland said part of the way forward was increasing Indigenous representation in the AFL industry.

"Why are there only two Indigenous AFL coaches? Why is there no one in administrative roles and in senior level roles in the AFL?" he said.

"We need to look at how 14 per cent make up the game on the field but less than 1 per cent make up the industry in employment."

As the AFL rethinks ties with Rio Tinto after the fallout from the mining company's Juukan Gorge blasts, it's looking like prospective Indigenous players are losing out the most.

Losing Rio Tinto as a partner may also mean the AFL loses a $1.5 million Indigenous program that it sponsored.

Headland believes this move would push the industry back even further.

"I'm hoping the AFL have something else up their sleeve to counteract that because if that's lost, we've just gone back 20-30 years," he said.