Aust P. H. - Darwin 1942

Revised 1967

McKenzie and Edwards continued their conversation. Two minutes later they heard aeroplanes. For Edwards their arrival was significant and fortunate. He was already a substantial property owner.

"Thank God, the Yanks are here at last," he said. "We'll be all right now. If the Japs hear of this lot they'll think twice before attacking."

McKenzie said, "What are those silver-looking things they're dropping?"

Edwards said, "Good God! They're Japs. Go for your life!" Simultaneously a siren wailed.

Edwards ran one hundred yards to what he thought would be the best air raid shelter in town, a reinforced concrete cold-store behind Koolpinyah butchery, of which he was part-owner. Not only was it adequate against anything but a direct hit but had the advantage of also being climatically pleasant on a torrid day. He settled down there to sit out the raid in comfort. His only companion was a young iceworks employee, Alf Brown.

"This is a good spot, Alf," Edwards said.

"I don't think it is," Brown said, "and we'll have to get out of here. What if a bomb breaks an ammonia pipe? We'd be suffocated." He had remembered that the network of pipes around them contained ammonia gas.

While bombs crashed down Edwards and Brown ran fifty yards to the rear of Wing Cheong Sing's store in Bennett Street. One member of the Wing family had recently returned from a part of China which had been under Japanese attack and had urged them to build a shelter. It was the only one of its kind in Darwin — an underground room of reinforced concrete with an air intake pipe — but at that moment it seemed to be the haven of every second Chinese in town.

As Edwards and Brown ran down the steps they were told by an Oriental voice: "No-more come in here . . . too many . . . too many."

"We pushed ourselves in," Edwards recalls. "There wasn't room for anyone to fall over. The shelter was twenty feet by twenty-five feet and there must have been two hundred people inside. Somehow there seemed to be safety in numbers. Alf Brown was much happier with a big crowd than he'd been with me alone. One thing I discovered is that in an air raid racial prejudice disappears instantly. A human being who might die next moment isn't interested in whether his neighbour is

Adelaide: Rigby Publishers

European, Chinese or aboriginal. His heart beats heavily and he lives every beat because each might be his last."

Edwards was the only man in Darwin who owned a private aeroplane and therefore had no evacuation problem, or so he thought. For that reason his wife Ash, a former Matron of Darwin hospital, had stayed. During the raid she was alone at their home on The Esplanade except for an aboriginal factotum, George Mungalo. But when Edwards took his wife to the civil aerodrome to fly her to safety he found the plane riddled by machinegun bullets. They had to go on the evacuee train.

Two other Australian aviators were then ten thousand miles away in Washington, D.C. There the noted American poet and Librarian of Congress, Dr. Archibald MacLeish,[1] broke the news of the bombing to the wife of this country's first Minister to the U.S., Mrs. R. G. Casey.[2] He spoke to her of Australia as "your immaculate country." One assumes he used the adjective in its context of "never having been molested." It may have been the first time Australia was referred to in such terms. If so, it would certainly be the last.

Father William Henschke had come to Darwin in 1915 when Chinese merchants were using water buffaloes to haul carts along the unmade streets. He was Catholic parish priest and vicar-general.

On February 19 he rose at 5.30, observed his devotions, and at seven o'clock said a Mass in the modest wooden church in Smith Street. Henschke had been disturbed by reports of Japanese reconnaissance planes over Darwin but that morning his worry increased to alarm. He knew the lugger *St. Francis* was bringing nuns from a west coast mission at Port Keats but, worse still, the group of thirty-five part-aboriginal girls had arrived the night before from Garden Point, Melville Island. They were being cared for by Mother Adrian and four sisters.

After breakfast Father Henschke drove to the Post Office and spent half an hour on parish affairs. One of his self-imposed tasks was a daily visit to Jack Buscall, the crippled owner of Curio Cottage store. He arrived there at 9.45 to pick up Buscall's bank deposit, one of the kindnesses the priest did every week for the bedridden man. Buscall gave him a pay-in book and two hundred pounds in cash. Henschke left with the money at five

[1] *The Irresponsibles, A Time To Speak, A Time to Act, Freedom is the Right to Choose.*

[2] Later The Lady Maie Casey, wife of Lord Casey, Governor-General of Australia.

D. Lockwood

Soldiers were killed in mime, ships sunk and aeroplanes shot down as they had seen on that first day. A didgeredoo was made to sound like a siren, like the drone of a bomber and the express of falling bombs.

And the Songmen chanted:

Ah-me, Ah-me, Nay-be, Nay-be!
Ah-me, Ah-me, Nay-be, Nay-be!
AIR PORCH! AIR PORCH!

Twelve men employed by the Army at Larrakeyah Barracks remained after the headquarters had moved to camps in the bush. A few days later they were found there by Patrol Officer Bill Harney. They had no corporals, sergeants or officers to instruct them in their duties so they played cards. Harney explained that other raids were likely and an invasion probable. He said he could arrange their repatriation.

"We wait till next Friday, Bill," one of them said. "Soldier come back then for pay day."

Nym Clark, an old retainer employed by a building contractor, Charlie Clark, was with his employer in a house near the police barracks when it was demolished by a near-miss. Covered with dust and bleeding from superficial wounds, Nym ran from the building to get help for Clark, believed to be buried in the wreckage. He was unconcerned about himself and lamented loudly, "My long-time boss bin finish."

But Clark had crawled under a table. When the roof collapsed the table prevented it falling on him, though he was temporarily buried. He was extricated and walked out of the room across the top of his roof, which was on the floor around him.

Air Force officers have testified that when airmen fled after the heavy raid on the aerodrome the aboriginal employees remained on duty until dismissed and told to go.

A group employed on sanitary duties had been near the wharf when it was hit. They sheltered in a gutter and emerged unscathed, but so dirty that one shed his shirt and trousers. He walked through the town wearing only a military cap, sox and boots. He was found thus by the Assistant Director of Native Affairs, Vincent White, who asked if he were all right.

"Yes, Vin, our mob okay," he said. "That's because we speak English. But them myall Liverpool River fellers, they're frightened, they can't understand, they don't speak English."[1]

No aborigines were killed in Darwin that day, although Leo

[1] They were primitive bushmen who had walked 250 miles to "see the lights" in Darwin.

Goodman, as we have seen, had a narrow escape at Government House when the Administrator's office was demolished. Leo's foot was pinned by a slab of concrete and had to be extricated by the Administrator.

"It was just a little-bit accident," he says now. "When that half-caste girl, Daisy Martin, was killed I thought I would die, too, but I pulled through all right."

George Mungalo of the Larakia tribe recalls: "I was working in the pearl shed for my boss, Roy Edwards. I was packing shell. Japanese divers got it for us. I heard this whistle and I looked up topside and I said, 'Hello, Japan-man, he come.' He come all right. I run into the house to my missus, Ash Edwards, and I say, 'Look out missus, bombs coming now.' Roy's not there, see; he's up the town. I grabbed Ash and I took her to the trench and we got in it together. Bombs come close all right. I can see that Japan-man in aeroplane, he looked down and he's laughing. Oh yes, I'm frightened all right, but I'm not frightened for myself, only for my missus. I been with the Edwards family since me little-bit-kid. I born there on Lameroo Beach, right in front of our house, and I don't want that house to be finish or my missus to be finish. I properly frightened for her. After Japan-man fly away I run up town and find my boss, Roy, and I tell him Japan-man bin come. He knows all right. I filled up car with petrol and they going away. I'm sending them away. 'Don't worry about me, missus, boss,' I say. 'Me stop here and look out for house.' That night all Larakia people come together. Tommy Imabul there. Peter Edwards there. Billy Shepherd there, Chook-Chook too. Bob Secretary there, Bob Secretary he owns Darwin, he the big boss of all this land, it belong to his father before, and that one's father before, before the white man come. We go down to Lameroo Beach, that where I born, for council meeting. 'Don't move. We stay here,' I say. We got plenty sugar, plenty tea, plenty bread, plenty flour. I take them from my house. We sleep there on beach. Two nights we sleep there. Then Bill Harney, that old feller belonga Native Affairs, he come. He talk: 'More better you go along Delissaville.' We got no boat. We got no truck. But we got foot all right. We like that old feller, old Billarni, so we do like he says, we walk to Delissaville. Oh yeah, plenty long way all right. Three days, three nights we walk. But we got flour, tea, sugar, we make damper, we all right, we get there bye-'m-bye."

Within a fortnight all male aborigines had been cleared from Darwin and headquarters of the Native Affairs Branch was

shifted to Mataranka, two hundred and eighty miles to the south. It was the only branch of Northern Territory Administration remaining in the northern area; all others, apart from isolated policemen, had moved to Alice Springs.

White, Harney, Gordon Sweeney and Fred Morris established five control camps at Koolpinyah, Adelaide River, Pine Creek, Katherine and Mataranka. The Mataranka camp alone had a population of six hundred and fifty people from dozens of tribes.

The camps were created specifically to control aborigines removed from their tribal country and hundreds of others who wandered into areas of military occupation seeking food and tobacco. With the closing down of all business premises north of Newcastle Waters tobacco became unavailable to thousands of men and women addicted to it. A small but significant number of derelicts were also deprived of alcohol and opium dross. Opium had been obtainable by subterfuge from some of the dingy dens of Darwin's Chinatown. As he walked past, an aboriginal known as an addict threw a two-shillings piece through a window or door and continued walking. On his way back he retrieved, often between his toes, a small packet of dross then lying on the footpath. In that way it was difficult for police to apprehend suppliers. These derelicts were habitual prisoners in Fannie Bay gaol, but deprivation which came with the evacuation led to their eventual rehabilitation. The opium trade in Darwin has never been resumed.

Soon after the bombing heavy reinforcements began pouring into the Darwin area for the Army, the R.A.A.F. and U.S. establishments. Bomber and fighter strips were built in dispersed localities and supply installations grew along the road to Mataranka. Within a few months more than one hundred thousand men were in camps on this northern perimeter of two hundred and eighty miles. In addition the Main Roads authorities from three states moved in with men and equipment to construct the all-weather lifelines that became the Stuart and Barkly Highways to Alice Springs and Mt. Isa.

Inevitably, as in all such situations, the question of sex and fraternisation with aboriginal women was raised. Experience in Europe and the Middle East in two wars would have been enough to convince the Army medical authorities of the need for precautions to prevent infection and the resulting dissipation of its fighting strength. But the medical history of the aborigines contained supplementary physical elements which were not only potentially dangerous to servicemen but could

easily have precipitated a national scandal. While the incidence of venereal disease among the aborigines was low, it was notorious that leprosy and tuberculosis had spread alarmingly throughout the tribes.

Any doubt of that was dispelled when word was circulated that Gordon Sweeney had recovered a group of escapees from Channel Island leprosarium and had them shipped back to Darwin in the railway department's specially reserved "leper van". Nor were the doctors comforted by the knowledge that among the worst leprosy areas in the Northern Territory was the Pine Creek-Katherine-Mataranka-Roper River line where the majority of base troops would be stationed. To have soldiers infected by venereal disease was bad enough, both for the service and the victim. But to have them exposed to the danger of leprosy with its history of banishment from society was unthinkable.

The Army acted quickly and strenuously, unimpressed by the medical theory that for leprosy to spread from one human being to another required long and intimate association in conditions under which it could flourish. It decreed that no aboriginal might camp within five miles of any military establishment. If an Army camp was required within five miles of an existing aborigines' camp it was the latter which had to be moved. This made necessary the series of control camps, and in each case they were remote from Army camps. Any aboriginal found wandering in forbidden areas, no matter that it might have been sacred ground in his tribal country, was removed at once to a control camp.

Within a few weeks nearly two thousand aborigines were under control. The men were needed and welcomed as laborers. They were given work as timber cutters, sawmillers, camp scavengers, storemen, drivers, sanitary workers and, surprisingly, even as slaughtermen and kitchen hands. They were paid five shillings *a week*. But the Army saw to it that they were transported to and from the control camps each day in its own vehicles.

Moreover, no aboriginal female was allowed to leave the vicinity of the control camp in which she resided. Vincent White now says: "The consequence of this edict was that most aboriginal women and girls spent more than three years of enforced exile in these camps."

"Exile" might be regarded as a poor description of their circumstances. Some would prefer to say that they were prisoners

broadness of Australian culture which at that time, in 1987, was hidden and not visible in mainstream culture.

The play also unravelled another untold story, that of the serpent in the Adam and Eve myth. Thematically it was the image which bound the women together in the play. I had heard the story in Sunday School as a child, and its power was still embedded in my psyche—the evil serpent and the disempowered Eve. By exploring the myth and its origins, the play retells the story as it once was, with Eve as the Goddess and the serpent as the benevolent keeper of the tree. The retelling of this story debunked a childhood myth—that the Adam and Eve story was *not* the original creation myth at all. There was so much more under the surface and so much more not discussed.

In our next play, *Walking On Sticks*, we once again told stories that are not usually told. This time we moved outside Australia to a country very different from ours, to Nicaragua. I stayed there for three months and once again I talked to the women who lived around me. All the interviews were recorded and the women told me of their life under a military dictatorship, their years in the urban resistance, grandmothers who did military training in preparation for the possibility of a United States attack. They talked of the years fighting against the contra (which was still happening at the time I was there in 1989), of kidnaps, skirmishes, ambushes and nights in the mountain in an effort to see their children.

Living for a time in Nicaragua and hearing these everyday stories was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. It was like making absolutely real the newspaper articles that I so often skimmed over. And the Nicaraguan women said to me, 'We tell you our story so you will go home and tell other people what is really happening here. Because people don't know. They are not told. And the sooner the world knows what is really happening, the sooner the pressure will be put on the United States to end this terrible repression'.

Consequently the aim of *Walking On Sticks* was to tell the other side of the newspaper stories, the things that go unreported, by simply telling the stories of the women in their own words. As in *The Serpent's Fall*, I was in the play, this time as an Australian traveller, so the other characters were once again seen through my eyes. The Australian character also gave a way into this foreign world for the audiences, and provided a contrast to the quite different world of Nicaragua.

The great thing about theatre is that we can explore all those things that are not usually discussed, to speak of things that are so often hidden and tell the stories that need to be told.

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June Mills

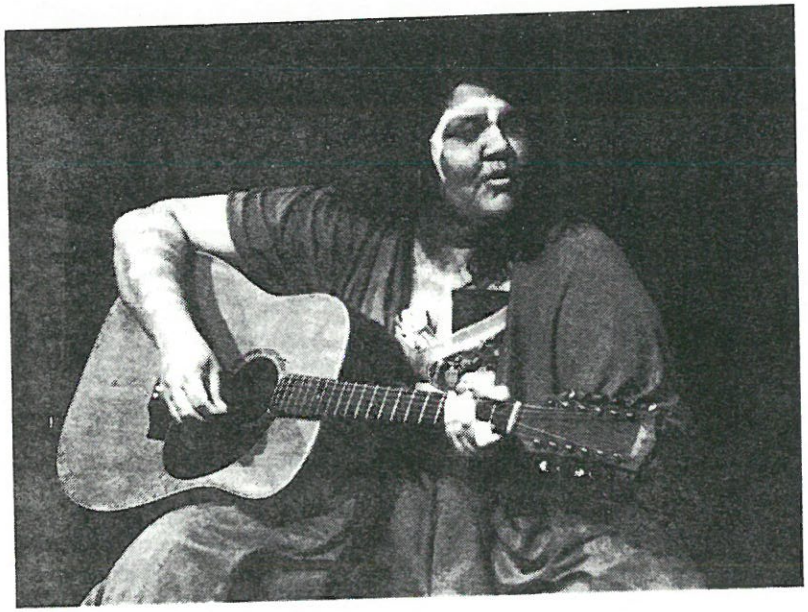
June Mills (Gudbiling Gunlickii Nimul Nanagu) was born and grew up in Darwin. She is of mixed Aboriginal background, her peoples being from Larrakia, Kunganakan, Gurindji, Jawoyn and Yangman. Her traditional totems are the eagle, crocodile and king brown snake. Her personal dreaming is tzut-tzutka *(praying mantis). Mills is a musician, songwriter, poet, actor and graphic artist. She is President of the Larrakia Association and a member of The Mills Sisters singing group. Her theatre work includes* The Larrakia Lounge Claim, Mupullbah *and* The Sex Pack.

I am the eldest surviving child of David and Kathy Mills, my father is known as Oodlooloo which means Black Snake, and my mother as Mooroodoop which means porcupine. I am a new storyteller, a very old storyteller and a second-hand storyteller. I began storytelling way back—all women do when they are mothers.

One of the first stories I told was a satirical look at a land claim—*The Larrakia Lounge Claim*. It asked a lot of questions about who should have land rights, who are the real Aboriginals, who is entitled to what? I found this old couch down at the dump which I was going to renovate. It was stuck out on my verandah because I could not get it through the front door. It was sitting there for ages and the longer I looked at it, the more I laughed, because I thought: yes, it looks as bad as the Larrakia land claim. We look just as bedraggled, we have been fighting for a piece of our land for 20 years and we never get anything because we are not seen as real, not real Aboriginals, not real Larrakia.

I use my storytelling to educate, clarify, and to heal not only my people, but also myself. Our young fellows are being brain-washed day by day by media, and the education system still dispossesses us. It all began with the dispossession of our land, then our culture, then our art, our dreaming stories, our visual arts, everything. Now they want to dispossess our minds by telling us that this is a land of immigrants, that we all came from somewhere else.

I was very frustrated living as a single mother, up there in the Northern Territory, in a little government house with a handful of kids and not having a voice, getting angry reading all the stuff coming through the newspapers and television. I am jumping up and down in my living room, feeling like bashing walls down and going horrors. So I started to perform, I began singing about twelve years ago with my sisters and we did a lot of country and western. I still do it. I still love it. But I needed another vehicle for other things that were important to me as a mother and a woman. I got into theatre and, just recently, I have started writing my own songs.



June Mills performing *The Sex Pack*

The first song I ever wrote was called: 'When I Die'. This song was kicked off by my dad. He used to come home to my place and start crying: what is going to happen to you kids when I am finished; what is going to happen to you kids when mum and me are gone; what is going to happen, baby. He would get me crying and I would be depressed for days on end. After six months, I thought, I can't handle this any more. I'm depressed already. My man left me because I would not stop singing, I'm overweight and getting to forty, I got a hundred kids, and I don't need this! But I thought, I cannot drown my father, I love my father—so the next time he came home and started the same old thing, 'Edgar'—he calls me Edgarjunice—'Edgar, what is going to happen to you and the kids?' I said, 'Don't worry, I've got it all worked out'.

'The minute it happens', I said, 'I am going to bring you and put you here. I have got the table. I am going to put you in the living room. Them boys, you know, my brothers, my little brothers, they will fix you up. If they do not want to fix you up, I will get my cousins. If they do not want to, I will do it myself'.

I do screen print T-shirts, so I said, 'I'll put my best Larrakia T-shirt on you'. He said, 'Yes, all right, Larrakia salt-water people on it, okay, no worries'. I said, 'What else?' He said, 'My black trousers'. He is really getting into it now, so I said, 'I am going to send out an international press release: *Father of famous Mills Sisters just passed away, you are all welcome to come.* We will hire the best band; we will try and get Yothu Yindi'. Dad is getting real happy now. 'No, Dad, we are not going to let them white fellows take you out and do a service over you. We will do it all and I will make sure all the right things are said'.

We worked it all out, but in the process I started thinking about myself and death and dying. In Darwin, all our people do it the white way. They hire the undertakers, they have the black limousine, they have the French polished brass nobs coffin—which I hate. So I said to my children, my family, my parents, 'When I am finished do not take me to the church. Do not cart me in a limousine. I have never been in a limousine in my life. I do not want to be in one when I am dead. I cannot afford a $500 wardrobe and I do not want you to buy me a $1,500 French polished coffin. Put me in a sheet, blanket, anything. Get the blanket off my bed. Wrap me in it and put me in the ground. If you want to talk about me, just tell stories. But I know this is going to be a hard thing to do in this white society'.

It is funny how things happen, because not long after this an old granny died and for a long time no-one came to get her. I was the president of the Larrakia Association and I could not get to the bottom of where her family was, so I had to take care of the business. I found out that you could pick up a person from the hospital in any vehicle, transport them in a body bag, and put them down naked. It is legally possible to do it.

Th traditional way we looked after our people was to wrap them in paper bark and put them up in the trees. My heart is sick because all our beautiful rituals have broken down; I feel desperate to bring those rituals back, to be able to handle our flesh and blood, to wash them, wrap them, put them away.

I wrote this song and I sing it everywhere. It is called: 'When I Die'.

When I die, do not take me to the church whatever you do,
and when I die do not place me in a man-made coffin,
and when I die do not say the prayers of a white man's

curse on my head,
and when I die care for my children.

When I die let my sisters wash me in a cool, fresh water creek,
and when I die wrap my naked body in a paper bark sheet,
and when I die lay me to rest high in the Millwood tree,
and when I die care for my children.

When I die tell my story underneath the clear blue skies,
and when I die carry on the ways of the old ancient ways,
and when I die teach my children well so they will survive,
and when I die care for my children.

When I die do not take me to the church whatever you do,
and when I die do not place me in a man-made coffin,
and when I die do not say the prayers of a white man's curse on my head,
and when I die care for my children.

When I die.

Our storytelling is not an art form, it is much more than that. When we paint something, dance something or storytell something, we are calling that thing up, we are calling up that spirit. It is very, very, very important what you say, because you can call that thing up and it will happen. On the one hand you have got to be careful that you do not curse somebody or say something wrong; on the other hand, what we sing up can be very beautiful and powerful. That is why I sing this song all the time, not because I want to die, but to create that consciousness and call that spirit up. I sing and I paint the most beautiful things to bring up the spirit to heal and make our people strong again.

If I come up against white bureaucrats, I am seen as a mongrel breed. I do not live out in the bush, I do not run around naked with a spear eating goannas every day, so I am not a real Aboriginal. But to my people I am a real Aboriginal. I come from four tribal backgrounds. All my grannies were different. My father was a Larrakia man. His mother was a Jawoyn Yangman. My mother was a Kungarakanj, her father was a Kungarakanj and her mother was a Gurindgi woman. Each one of those tribal people have named me. There is no racism in our ways.

Spiderwoman

Spiderwoman Theater from the United States is the oldest continually running women's theatre company in North America. The group of three Kuna/Rappahannock (native American Indian) sisters—Lisa Mayo, Gloria Miguel and Muriel Miguel—take their name from Spiderwoman, the Hopi goddess, who taught people to weave. 'You must make a mistake in every tapestry so that my spirit may come and go at will', she said. The goddess is believed to have prophetic powers, speak all languages and be ever present to give and to guide. The women call their theatre technique 'storyweaving' because they create designs and weave stories with words and movement. Spiderwoman Theater has performed on reservations and in mainstream American society, dealing with issues such as race relations, ethnicity, sexuality and community.

Muriel Miguel: Oral tradition, oral history was a very important part of our family, a very important way of knowing where you came from, who you are, who you were, and where you are going. Many times we were ashamed of it—I was ashamed—I cannot speak for my sisters—I was ashamed of it. I remember one time when I first started to tell stories and I did something on radio. I talked about my father jumping ship and coming into the States in Central America and my uncles were really upset and said, 'He did not jump ship'. I said, 'What did he do?' They said, 'He walked off'. You have to be very careful when you are telling a story!

My sisters and I have discovered ways of working together, working apart and coming together and telling maybe four stories—starting a story in the middle and going off from there.

Gloria Miguel: *Rever-ber-berations* is built up from these juxtapositions, it is about a circle and how we repeat things. It is a sort of researching into our innate and universal spirituality, but also into our unique family spirituality and how we take it for granted. Yet we are aware of what is going on underneath our bodies and how it affects our lives.

(Gloria Miguel and Lisa Mayo describe and perform two sections from *Rever-ber-berations*.)

Muriel Miguel: The piece I am going to perform is also from *Rever-ber-berations*. I was in Canada staying with my niece and for some reason we were talking about family business. I was visited—and my niece helped me control it—but I could never explain it. I wanted to put it into *Rever-ber-berations* because it is so hard to explain how you are visited by someone.

1997 Indigenous Law Bulletin 4(2): 22-23

Stirrings

news and views

Larrakia native title: the long march

by Cathy Carey and Amanda Collinge

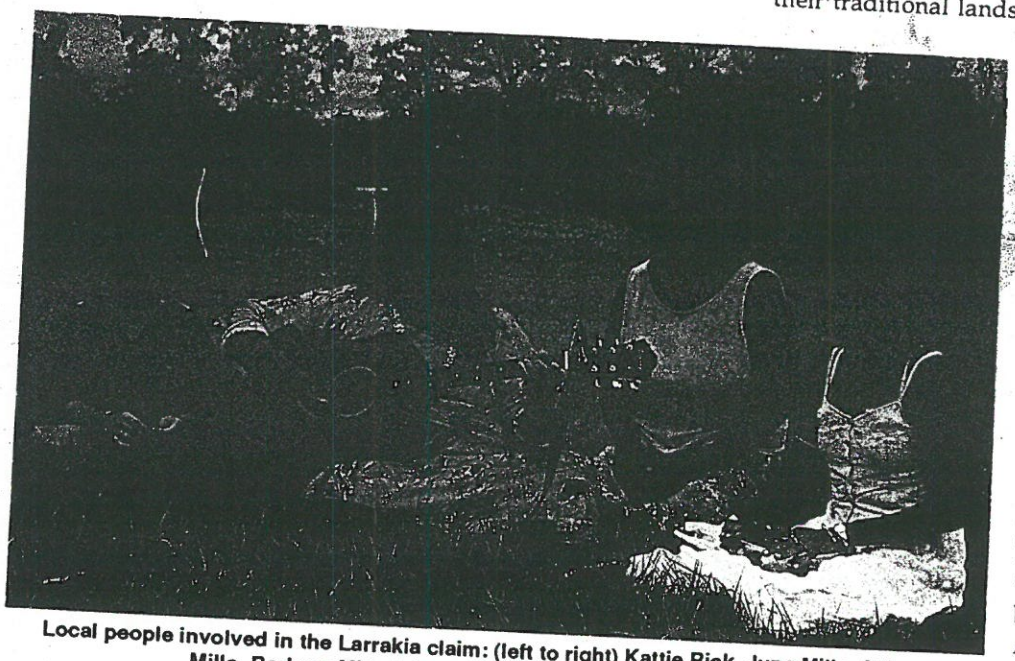
The announcement of the Larrakia native title claim over areas in and around the city of Darwin was made in December 1996. Official reaction came fast and furiously. John Howard, the Prime Minister of Australia, made a grim and threatening comment in Parliament, stating that, while he was aware that the Larrakia had gone to pains to point out that their claim would not change public access to beaches or reserve areas (and indeed could not do so under native title legislation), he regarded it as 'an extravagant ambit claim', and one the pursuit of which would serve Aboriginal interests badly. Shane Stone, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory ('the NT'), demanded a ban on native title claims on capital cities. Mike Reed, the Deputy Chief Minister of the NT, wasted no time in raising fears about threats to backyards and beaches. The Mayor of Darwin, George Brown, continues to regard the claim gloomily, as a threat to investment and a cause of future division in the community.

In contrast, Gerry Wood, the Mayor of the neighbouring Shire of Litchfield, in which some 80% of the land claimed is located, has taken a more positive approach. Concerned at racist backlash against the Larrakia, he has liaised with the Larrakia and the National Native Title Tribunal to organise information sessions to better inform Councillors and the public about the claim. For this approach, the Deputy Chief Minister of the NT, Mike Reed, branded him a traitor to his constituents.

In fact, most of Darwin is held under freehold title, residential and commercial leasehold, which, under t *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), automatically extinguish native title, making the land unavailable for claim. As measure of good will, the Larrakia have relinquish their rights to claim some areas, including the valuab Larrakia Barracks area. They have, however, claime native title rights to Crown land on the city foreshor and reserves which they regard as traditional huntin and living areas. They have also claimed compensatio over three areas of land which have been develope since 1975 after the commencement of the *Racia Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth).

Larrakia have attempted to allay public concern fron the outset. Contrary to claims of the NT Government they deny that they are opposed to development, anc point to the Mount Todd agreement with the Jawoyr people as a fruitful collaboration between Aboriginal people and developers. They have insisted that their only aspiration with regard to beaches and reserves is to be involved in their management. They may also be open to relinquishing native title rights in return for compensation, which might take the form of jobs, training or equity in future developments of the land instead of, or as well as, cash. Similar settlements have been negotiated elsewhere.

This is not the first time Larrakia have met such government opposition to their attempts to regain rights to their traditional lands. In 1978, the NT Government similarly obstructed a Larrakia claim under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* (Cth) to land in the Cox Peninsula area adjacent to Darwin. This claim, known as the Kenbi Claim, saw the redrawing of the boundaries of the City of Darwin until this city of 80,000 people extended over an area three times larger than that of Greater London. Still unresolved, this is now the country's longest running land rights claim.



Local people involved in the Larrakia claim: (left to right) Kattie Risk, June Mills, Allison Mills, Barbera Mills (photo by Liz Willis, Batchelor College)

Another obstacle to both claims revolves around questions concerning the 'authenticity' of Larrakia identities. Some of those who identify as Larrakia have been accused of denying their Aboriginality. Consideration of the impacts of colonial policies

which the Larrakia were forced to accommodate—such as restrictions on civil liberties (including denial of the right to vote)—would show that at least historically, Aboriginality was an unattractive proposition. Past government policies of removing the children of mixed descent from their Aboriginal mothers, which have affected most, if not all, Larrakia families, have also dramatically disrupted Larrakia ties to land and caused some Larrakia to be uncertain of their identities.

Nevertheless, whilst cosmopolitan Darwin has impacted greatly on Larrakia lifestyles, the Larrakia have retained traditional hunting and fishing connections and still gather bush tucker in the reserve areas under claim. These facts will be used to prove ongoing association with their land.

The exigencies of establishing identity in the long drawn out Kenbi claim process have also exacerbated differences in the Larrakia community, giving rise to division among the Larrakia as to who are rightful claimants. Under the native title legislation, it is possible for more than one claimant group to claim the same area of land. Competing claims from different Larrakia families have been submitted over at least one such area.

Currently, the claim is within the two month period of public notification in the National Native Title Tribunal. Mediation among appropriate parties will then begin and may continue for months or even years. In the meantime, the breakdown in relations between the Larrakia and the NT Government is putting a brake on development in the claimed area. Darwin cynics suggest that the government may be more amenable to negotiation after the forthcoming election, in the leadup to which they may well be tempted to play the racist card for political gain once more. Meanwhile, the rest of the country awaits with interest the outcome of the Larrakia claim, set to become a test case for future urban claims.

Palm Island wage case settled

by Jackie Morris

In April, the Queensland government settled a Federal Court action in which six Palm Island Elders alleged that the government had unlawfully discriminated against them by failing to pay them award wages between 1975 and 1984. The government published an apology expressing 'its regret for the personal hurt suffered by each of the complainants as a result of the discrimination'. The Elders were also paid $7,000 each.

The Elders originally lodged complaints with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 1985. Eleven years later, a HREOC inquiry conducted by Commissioner Bill Carter found that the government had 'intentionally, deliberately and knowingly discriminated against' the complainants.

The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Mr Kev Lingard MLA, initially refused to abide by Commissioner Carter's recommendations that the government apologise to the complainants and compensate them. The complainants, with the assistance of the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), took their case to the Federal Court. The Minister reconsidered his position after Justice Doug Drummond recommended the parties pursue further mediation.

FAIRA has estimated that thousands of Aboriginal people who were Queensland government employees suffered similar discrimination even after the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) made this discrimination unlawful. The Queensland government has not admitted that its actions were unlawful, and argues that similar claims will be prevented by statute of limitations laws.

Local people involved in the Larrakia claim: (left to right) Bill Risk, Kootji Raymond, Rodney Fijo (photo by Liz Willis, Batchelor College)