

# Mia Mia

ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

MESSAGE STICK NEWSLETTER | JUNE 2015



## "What NAIDOC Week means to us"

Our Leadership Team  
share their thoughts  
with you

FULL STORY  
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Kyle Vander Kuyp  
and AHV CEO,  
Jenny Samms, at  
last year's NAIDOC  
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# Report Racism initiative launched

IN RESPONSE TO ONGOING daily experiences of racism experienced by Aboriginal people in the general community, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) has devised the Report Racism initiative, which was launched in Shepparton earlier this year.

This project was developed by the Commission in conjunction with Victoria Police and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

VEOHRC Commissioner, Kate Jenkins said that, "many Aboriginal people face racism on a daily basis, in shops, on the street or at sporting matches ... people don't report these incidents because they think nothing will be done about it or they fear victimisation."

Report Racism aims to break down these barriers by providing a confidential way for our people to share their experiences with racism. It specifically targets street-based harassment or vilification; refusal of, or bad service in a shop because of race; discrimination at work; and complaints about treatment by the police.

Report Racism is also being piloted in the City of Yarra, Darebin and Whittlesea.

At the launch, local Yorta Yorta Elder, Shane Charles provided the welcome to country. In attendance were Ms Jenkins, Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner, Lucinda Nolan, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Acting Chief Executive, Meena Singh and AHV's Hume Housing Officer, John Martin. Speaking at the event in the capacity of chair of the Hume Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, John said that, "there is no place for racism and we must work with people to put processes in place to ensure it doesn't happen again".

Reports can be made either on line at: [www.reportracism.com.au](http://www.reportracism.com.au) or in person at your closest Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Office or Neighbourhood Justice Centre. To find out more you can also visit the project's Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/rrveorhc](http://www.facebook.com/rrveorhc)

We encourage our tenants and extended families to support and utilise this valuable initiative.

**"Say No to Racism".**  
Reproduced courtesy of Aboriginal artist, Josh Muir.



## Like and share our new Facebook Page

YES, IT'S FINALLY UP AND RUNNING! AHV is pleased to say we are now on Facebook with our own page.

An important ingredient to any good communication policy is a strong presence in the digital world, therefore we've been reviewing our activity in that area and are now taking the first steps to expand that presence.

While our aim is to provide our tenants and their families with important information they need to know about our services, we also want to promote the latest events, networking and other activities that AHV is involved with.

So get on board by tracking us down at: [www.facebook.com/pages/Aboriginal-Housing-Victoria/751525064966762](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aboriginal-Housing-Victoria/751525064966762) and don't forget to hit the "Like" button and "Share" our page with your other Facebook friends.



# "What NAIDOC Week means to us"

This time of the year our thoughts are naturally drawn to our culture, our family, our struggle and the achievements of our people. Everyone has their own personal experience of celebration and commemoration. Following, we bring you some reflections from our Leadership Team at AHV.

## **Tim Chatfield, Chairperson, AHV Board**



As Chairperson of AHV I'm proud to be able to continue the NAIDOC Week event we put on year after year. It's part of our ongoing support - making sure we provide opportunities for our Aboriginal communities to

participate. The event at the Collingwood Children's Farm also brings reconciliation into it, as it includes the broader community. All walks of life participate in this event. We share our heritage and importantly get our kids to understand things from the other side - our agricultural heritage.

What we are wanting to achieve with our Family Day event, is to bring everyone together to celebrate through the NAIDOC Week activities - to congregate as a people, to share, learn and understand one another. And importantly - to have fun.

I think this year's NAIDOC theme, "We all Stand on Sacred Ground", resonates strongly in our Community. Sacred ground is very important as a traditional owner. It gives us an identity. Right across the state and anywhere in the country, land is very critical to us - whether it's a sacred site or a song-line or a trade line - it's a place of significance. It's your existence, it's who you are. I also think it's important for all people to understand we do exist, that there is Aboriginal culture in Victoria.

To AHV as an organisation, the NAIDOC legacy is about giving recognition to, and giving something back to Aboriginal communities. It's also about our staff members and our

personnel engaging with the community and promoting the services we provide.

At the end of the day, NAIDOC Week is our moment and our time to celebrate and acknowledge - to reflect and come together and have a conversation - whatever that may be about. How we celebrate is not dictated to us by the bureaucratic system. It's a time to heal and reflect, learn, understand listen and communicate, for Elders to get together with children in song and dance - as a people without any interference or barriers. And its about the good things that are happening - the achievements of individuals.

I say to our Community, be proud of who we are and more importantly enjoy the celebrations because it's a time for all Aboriginal people in the country to be acknowledged and say we do exist on country.

## **Des Rogers, Director of Operations, AHV**



In my professional career I have always worked in the 'intercultural space' I have been respectful in articulating who I am as a First Australian and not demanding respect but gaining respect

from those who I work with and meet. This approach has made me the person I am today - and that is for the rest of the world to judge. I am a Southern Arrernte Aboriginal man from Central Australia and of the Pertame Clan. My Great Grand Mother was born at a place

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## “What NAIDOC Week means to us”: *continued*

called Utju, or main camp, which is a semi-permanent waterhole in the iconic Finke River (Larapinta) the oldest river in the world. Born in Alice Springs I have lived a very privileged life in that I know my culture, my language and my ancestral place. I have lived on community (Wallace Rockhole), I know my dance, my song and my totem. NAIDOC week for me is a time of reflection of our history in this continent and our strong connection to country.

The theme this year to me, to all of us, is very significant. Our connection to land is the epitome of our being. Land, or country, is the one thing that connects us as the First Australians, it protects us and it's where we come from and where we go to. I remember going to the 'handback' of Uluru in 1985 with a close friend of mine who has since passed. We drove from Alice Springs in my old van, camped in the bush on the way down and back, observed the very moving celebrations and met family and friends. This year is the 30th anniversary.

I have only been in Melbourne, Victoria, for one year. As an Aboriginal Man, not from this country, I step softly and respectfully on this country in the footprints of the respected Elders and ancestors in this beautiful part of the nation.

We as the First Australians are all 'connected'. Our oral tradition and spiritual values are based upon land and a belief in Tjukurpa. The Tjukurpa is considered to be both the ancient time of creation and the present day reality. Across the nation there are many different tribes, clans and groups, each with their own individual culture, belief structures and language. These cultures often overlapped and have evolved over time.

The rainbow Serpent is a major ancestral being for many Aboriginal people across Australia. Dingo Dreaming is a significant ancestor in the desert regions as the Dingo formed the song-lines that cross the continent from north to south and east to west. There are of course other ancestral beings.

## Darren Smith, Director Executive Coordination, AHV



Celebrating NAIDOC has been very important in my career as it is one of the most important ways of sharing Aboriginal culture with the broader community. It is also a key way to educate

workplaces and the broader community about Aboriginal culture and values, and the contribution made by Aboriginal people. For some non-Aboriginal people it may be the only contact they have all year with our people.

I think this year's theme is incredibly important as it reminds us that our connection to country is central to who we are as Aboriginal people. My family is Palawa Trowerna and our country is in north-eastern Tasmania. While distance limits the amount of time I can go home, our country holds a special significance to me and I return as often as I am able.

"We all stand on sacred ground" is also a salient reminder to all Australian people that wherever they are, the land has cultural significance and meaning and an Aboriginal story. It is a reminder that all Australians should take the time to learn those stories and to acknowledge and respect the land and people - and to share in and celebrate the culture of the Aboriginal peoples, where they live and work.

Last year was my first Family Day at the Collingwood Children's Farm and I was very proud of being part of a community event that gave AHV the opportunity to celebrate and share Aboriginal culture with our tenants, their families and the broader community. It was a great family day with a very relaxed atmosphere. It was inspirational to have Aboriginal role models like Kyle Vander Kuyp to share his story and Aboriginal dancers to share their culture. I think the kids had a ball with lots of activities and things to do and

# Come and celebrate NAIDOC Week at our Family Day

AHV WILL ONCE AGAIN celebrate our NAIDOC Family Day (our 16th) in partnership with the Collingwood Children's Farm and the City Of Yarra - on Wednesday the 8th of July 2015, from 10.00 am until 2.00 pm.

Please spread the word and join us for a fun family day of story telling, traditional dance performances, interactive dancing, boomerang and face painting - and much more.

For the second year we welcome the Wayapa Wuurk Dance Group who last year proved to be very popular.

Entry is free so why not bring the whole family? There will also be a free lunch provided on the day.

If you wish to volunteer on the day, please contact AHV on 03 9403 2100 - we'd love you to help us in making our day successful!

## 2015 NAIDOC Theme

NAIDOC Week is a time to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage, culture and achievements. A time to acknowledge our Indigenous artists, scholars, sports people, elders, community members and more.

This year the National NAIDOC theme is "We all Stand on Sacred Ground: Learn, Respect and Celebrate". This theme highlights Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples' strong spiritual and cultural connection to land and sea. It was also chosen specifically to celebrate the anniversary of the 'Handback' of the sacred site of Uluru to its traditional owners, 30 years ago on 26 October, 1985.



**We all Stand on  
Sacred Ground:**

Learn, Respect & Celebrate

5 - 12 JULY 2015

**To find other major events during  
NAIDOC Week you can visit:**

[www.naidoc.org.au/events-calendar](http://www.naidoc.org.au/events-calendar)

## Mia Mia ADVERTISING RATES

Looking to advertise in Mia Mia?  
We have a choice of two options:

\$150 for a 1/8 page advertisement  
(82mm x 62mm approx.)

\$275 for a 1/4 page advertisement  
(please note: 1/4 page may be landscape  
[170mm x 62mm approx.] or portrait  
[82mm x 62mm approx.] whichever suits  
our publication layout).

So, if your community group, organisation or business is needing exposure to the wider Aboriginal Community, or if you need to advertise your services, hire indigenous employees or promote your next event, please contact **Steph McStay** at AHV on **9403 2100** or email: [stephanie.mcstay@ahvic.org.au](mailto:stephanie.mcstay@ahvic.org.au) to discuss your requirements and make a booking.



OUR MAINTENANCE TEAM SHARE WITH YOU  
SOME TIMELY "HANDY HINTS" TO TRY OUT  
BEFORE YOU CALL FOR ASSISTANCE.

### **NO ELECTRICITY AT YOUR PROPERTY?**

Check these things first:

1. Usually the cause of the electricity cutting out is due to a faulty appliance, which is triggering the electrical safety switch. Check the electrical switchboard which should be near the front door of your property to see if any of the switches have been triggered.
2. The most common place that an appliance might be shorting out is in the kitchen or the laundry of the property.



## Our Housing Officer leads by example

AHV HOUSING OFFICER, MARIA SCERRI, has received significant acknowledgement for her high standards of care and collaborative work with the Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative, a social services provider to the Aboriginal Community.

Aboriginal Tenancies at Risk Worker, Liza Vanspell, praised Maria for her community-minded spirit, her empathy and her collaborative attitude to enable the best possible results for Tenants. "My role has been made easier and more successful because Maria is dedicated to ensuring the Community have the best chance of saving their tenancies," Liza said.

Outlining situations where Maria has collaborated with Ngwala Willumbong, Liza explained, "Maria patiently explains to Tenants their rights, obligations and how their rent is assessed. At VCAT, Maria has spent the time to patiently go over information with Tenants so that they understand and feel confident that their housing is safe. What stands out to me the most is that Maria makes sure that she

refers Tenants to support workers at the first sign of any issues".

"I also remember one occasion when she salvaged some valuable Aboriginal artifacts a tenant had left behind and stored them at AHV until they were able to be retrieved by their owner.

"In my region, I am very confident with what is provided to the Community by AHV. I feel confident working with Maria because I know that her goals and mine are the same. We don't want anyone to become homeless.

"She also makes allowances for situations when clients are facing personal issues and cannot meet their obligations in a timely manner.

"I realise that I'm a fortunate support worker to have an AHV representative who is Community focussed and who understands our Tenants and their families", Liza added.

Maria Scerri



## Tracey Winmar explores HomeGround



HOMEGROUND SERVICES is a housing services provider for the homeless based in Melbourne. They also provide extensive support services, development of innovative housing models, advocacy of systems change and research into the causes and solutions to homelessness.

Our Tenancy Team

Leader, Tracey Winmar, recently participated in HomeGround's worker shadowing program, to explore their methods and to share information and ideas between our organisations.

A key innovation that Tracey noted was a Real Estate leasing program HomeGround have launched, which targets renters who may be having difficulties gaining private rental. HomeGround Real Estate Agency

provides property and tenancy management services for home owners for a percentage of their rental income - to provide affordable rental to low income tenants. Tracey said that this HomeGround innovation "might be an idea worth considering for AHV as we do have applicants that are over the income limit but face problems when trying to gain private rental through a real estate agent."

During her one week shadowing visit, Tracey also engaged in fact-finding and networking events held by HomeGround's key partners. She attended an event as part of the City of Yarra's Aboriginal Partnership Plan which outlines their commitment to the values of reconciliation, social justice and respect. This four-year plan supports the local Aboriginal community's physical and cultural wellbeing. With the support of other inner-city community agencies the event "was a fantastic opportunity



Tracey at HomeGround

# Remembering Aunty Walda Blow

IT IS WITH DEEP SADNESS that we acknowledge the loss of Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba Elder and former Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (AHBV) Member, Aunty Walda Blow in April this year. Aunty served on our Board from 1993-96 and again in 1998-99.

A strong Aboriginal woman, Aunty Walda was born in 1941 and grew up on the Cummeragunja Mission along the Murray River, being raised by her grandparents. Later she moved to Brisbane where she met her husband to be, Reg Blow (1939-2012), with whom she shared a passion in social justice for her people. Aunty Walda was recently still active on the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation's Council of Elders and the Margaret Tucker Hostel, caring for at-risk Aboriginal girls. Aunty was highly commended at the Robin Clark Memorial Awards and inducted on to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2012. Last year she was inducted on to the Victorian

Indigenous Honour Roll, while husband Uncle Reg was honoured in 2012.

Aunty Walda also founded the Women's Interfaith Network Foundation and contributed to other organisations including the Aborigines Advancement League, Elizabeth Hoffman House and the Victorian and National Councils of Churches.

Aunty will be remembered as a tireless and determined leader of our people through times of great struggle and injustice.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria extends our heartfelt condolences to Aunty Walda's extended family and friends.



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for all participants ... to get together for a good yarn", Tracey added. She was particularly impressed by the new City of Yarra Mayor, Cr Phillip Vlahogiannis, who took the time to "converse with the Aboriginal Community and workers and spoke to most of the people at the event".

Tracy also had the chance to sit in on HomeGround intakes and assessments over the week to get a handle on their sensitive approach to new housing clients. Attending home visits with HomeGround's Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) team, she experienced a firsthand account of their approach to clients experiencing financial and personal difficulties.

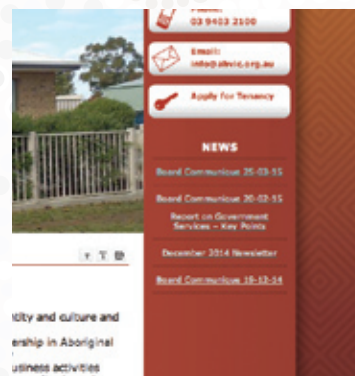
AHV also has the opportunity to reciprocate this worker shadowing process to offer the best of our processes and systems to other community agencies. Tracey sums up her experience by saying, "we are all here for the same reason and that is to provide the best possible service to our Community and ... have those connections with other organisations to refer our tenants or applicants to - so that they can receive the best outcome possible."

## AHV Board messages now available on our website

TO FURTHER ENHANCE OUR communication with tenants, we are now formally publishing a post-Board meeting communicate to our website.

These communiques will outline business attended to at these meetings, along with action outcomes. Business may cover property or service issues, business plan progress, Community acknowledgements and Board appointments or vacancies.

You can view our most recent communicate from the March Board Meeting by clicking the link on the right-hand "NEWS" panel at <http://ahvic.org.au/>





## “What NAIDOC Week means to us”: *continued*

see. I enjoyed the day and hope that this year we can get even more of our tenants and their families along to share the experience. My message to everyone is to join in and celebrate!

**Tracey Winmar, Tenancy Team Leader, AHV**



For me, the most important aspect about celebrating NAIDOC Week is that it allows me to be part of sharing our culture with the Community - by linking in with other organisations, keeping connections

with our Elders and the community. NAIDOC week brings everyone together to showcase the best of Aboriginal culture, but also highlights the significant issues as each year has a different theme.

This year's theme, “We all Stand on Sacred Ground” is an essential piece of our culture. As an Aboriginal mother I would like my kids to know the importance of looking after the land for not only their generation but for generations to come.

NAIDOC week is not only extremely important for me, but it's also an exciting time here at Aboriginal Housing. It is now coming up to my 10th year of being involved in AHV's NAIDOC Family Day celebration at the Collingwood Children's Farm. I love getting involved in the day as you get to see a lot of community members with their children enjoying a day out as a family and being immersed in Aboriginal culture.

This week is a great opportunity for Aboriginal people to reflect on Aboriginal issues and achievements throughout the year. While it is important to recognise and celebrate the successes, we also need to think about the current issues facing our Community.



**TENANT**  
*Yarn*



## What is “Temporary Absence”?

Temporary Absence may be approved under special circumstances for a **maximum of 6 months**. AHV will consider special circumstances for sole tenants such as the need to enter a **nursing home, respite care or rehabilitation**.

If your absence, due to special circumstances, incurs further accommodation costs, you may be eligible for a reduced rent charge.

You **must** direct your request for all Temporary Absence to the **AHV Tenant Manager** through your **Aboriginal Housing Officer**.

You can view further details of our policy on Temporary Absence from our website at:

<http://ahvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/AHV-Chapter-6-Temporary-Absence5.pdf>

For all your repairs and maintenance needs please call one of the following AHV Maintenance Lines:

**General metro: (03) 9403 2166**

**Regional: 1300 664 392 (cost of local call)**

**Emergency after hours: (03) 9403 2171**



**Hours of Business:** Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm. **Address:** Narrandjeri House, 125-127 Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy, VIC 3068. **Telephone:** (03) 9403 2100.

**Fax:** (03) 9403 2122. **Email:** [info@ahvic.org.au](mailto:info@ahvic.org.au) **Aboriginal Housing Victoria** is a not-for-profit organisation that works to deliver accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing to meet the social, cultural and economic aspirations of the Victorian Aboriginal Community.