

# Law Matters



## Close the Gap Goals Not Reached

While there is still unfinished business to deal with, Closing the Gap will continue to fail, according to Dennis Eggington, CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull tabled the 8th Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report in Parliament in February, but the Report showed that many of the goals were not being reached, including Aboriginal life expectancy, employment and

reading and writing. “Unless there is meaningful engagement with our people the disadvantage facing Aboriginal people will continue. We have survived for over forty thousand years, yet we still have to stand our ground on key issues facing the progress of this nation, such as self-determination, Constitutional Recognition and Sovereignty” said Mr. Eggington. ALSWA said more funding needed to

be allocated in the right areas to ensure that ongoing disadvantage was addressed and it was unacceptable that the over-representation of our people in the justice system remained at crisis point.

One of the reports’ Recommendations was that each political party, prior to the 2016 Federal Election, commit to an additional COAG Closing the Gap Target to reduce imprisonment rates and increase community safety.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

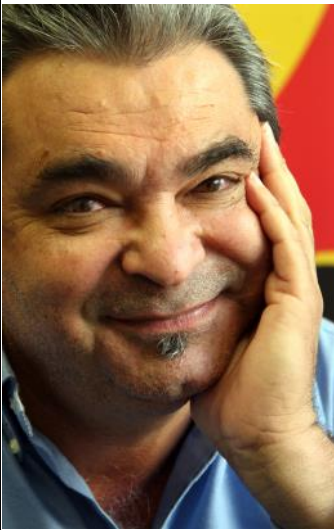
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Robert 'Bono' Bonson received high praise and gratitude from ALSWA staff and Perth Magistrates when he retired from work late last year.

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## Message from ALSWA CEO



Welcome to our first Law Matters newsletter for 2016, It's our aim to keep you up to date with our own work within WA's justice system and provide information about how we can best service our community members by providing a quality and Culturally appropriate legal service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I am extremely proud that 2016

marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year that I have been the Chief Executive of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (ALSWA). Prior to this I was involved in ALSWA's Executive Committee so my commitment to our ongoing work spans over half of the organisations' 41 years. Incarceration rates for our people are at an all time high and we are seeing a disturbing increase in the amount of women and young people being locked up.

I remain committed to maintaining a strong voice for our people to ensure that the needs of some of our most disadvantaged peoples are heard and that all people maintain access to justice.

To our Community members and supporters, we look forward to our continued work with you, which is made possible through funding from the Commonwealth Department of the Attorney General.

## WA Worst for Indigenous Over-representation

WA has the nations highest level of Indigenous over-representation in the justice system.

Around 6% of young people in WA are Aboriginal, but they make up almost 80% of people within the state's prison system.

Aboriginal kids in WA are 53 times more likely to be

jailed than their non-Indigenous peers.

WA is the only state that imposes mandatory terms on young offenders

Juveniles who collect 3 separate convictions for aggravated burglary (for example) are automatically

sentenced to 12 months jail or detention



Source  
*A Brighter Future: Keeping Indigenous Kids in the Community and out of Detention in Australia*  
(2015 Amnesty International Report)

**Nationally, Indigenous representation in the justice system is the highest in Western Australia**

## Respected ALSWA Court Officer Retires

Having spent almost 26 years working with the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, Robert 'Bono' Bonson retired from work towards the end of 2015.

Bono, aged 75, was a wonderful mentor to our staff members and greatly respected by the many young people,

families, magistrates and court staff that he worked alongside during his years as an ALSWA Court Officer.

Most of Bono's work was done at the Children's Court in Perth, and while he was originally from the Northern Territory, he worked with ALSWA from

1986 to 2001 and 2005 to 2015 which included being CEO during 1989/90. Bono leaves ALSWA with our very best wishes for retirement and the future, with our thanks and appreciation for his work with our people and organisation over so many years.



*ALSWA staff, Magistrates, friends and family came along to ALSWA to share in the Retirement farewell for Robert 'Bono' Bonson*

**GNME**  
Noongar Media Enterprises  
100.9fm

**INSIDE OUT**  
PRISON REQUEST SHOW  
SMS 0448 821 186  
Sundays 5pm  
Hosted by Big Girl

## WA Crime Prevention Initiative Expanded

A series of Open Days will take place in WA over the coming months in what the State Government describes as an expansion of their Indigenous Crime Prevention initiative. 194 Open Days have been held since 2011, bringing government agencies centrally together to deliver services to local Aboriginal communities. These agencies will

assist people with obtaining identity documents such as a birth certificate, sitting practical and theory driving tests, accessing community support services and exploring employment options.

The program will be expanded into Armadale, Swan, Rockingham and Stirling in Perth with regional trips also planned. ALSWA welcomes any

initiative that aims to empower and reduce the over-representation of our people within the criminal justice system, however, CEO Dennis Eggington says that there needs to be far more done, in consultation with Community and while these Open Days will assist some people, it also highlighted the general lack of services available for our people.

**Date:** 12 February 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 9am to 3pm)

**Location:** Swan Children and Family Centre, Lot 574, Cockman Cross

**Suburb:** **Stratton/Perth**

**Date:** 22 February 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 12:30pm to 4pm)

**Location:** Nguirin-Pilbara Cultural Centre

**Suburb:** **Roebourne**

**Date:** 23 February 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 8:30am to 4pm)

**Location:** Nguirin-Pilbara Cultural Centre

**Suburb:** **Roebourne**

**Date:** 24 February 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 12:30pm to 4pm)

**Location:** Onslow Sports Club

**Suburb:** **Onslow**

**Date:** 25 February 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 8:30am to 4pm)

**Location:** Onslow Sports Club

**Suburb:** **Onslow**

**Date:** 4 March 2016 (**Opening Hours:** 9am to 3pm)

**Location:** TBC (**Suburb:** **Balga**)

## Report Finds Racial Prejudice and Discrimination Still Prominent

The recently released *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report, found that while the nation has developed a strong foundation for reconciliation, there are still significant challenges that remain. Launched by Reconciliation Australia, the report measures the progress towards reconciliation in race

relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance. Native Title, Closing the Gap, the National Apology and the progress towards constitutional recognition of First Australians were cited as significant milestones. However, while it displayed that 86%

believed the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was important, it also found that Indigenous people still experience high levels of racial prejudice and discrimination, and that the trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians remains unacceptably low.



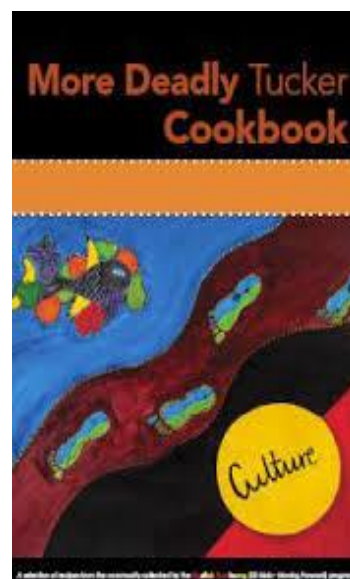
**READ FULL REPORT ON THE STATE OF RECONCILIATION  
IN AUSTRALIA AT [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)**

## Deadly Tucker Cookbook

The 'More Deadly Tucker Cookbook' was created following feedback from over 100 Aboriginal people in Perth, with most of the recipes provided by local community members.

The book, produced through the Department of Health features great recipes and highlights

convenience, cost and nutritional information. All recipes conform with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the book is available for \$7.70, although the cost may be waived on request for not-for-profit organisations in WA.



For more information phone 08 9301 9222 or email [deadlytucker@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:deadlytucker@health.wa.gov.au)



## ALSWA Lawyer in Rottnest Swim for Breast Cancer Network of Australia

ALSWA lawyer Tony Hager will be joined by three friends as they attempt to swim 20km to Rottnest Island on February 27th.

Their efforts aim to raise much needed funds for the Breast Cancer Network of Australia (BCNA).

ALSWA staff were heartbroken when Nikki Dwyer-Hager lost her battle with breast cancer in 2015. Nikki was a

talented, beautiful and kind woman who worked with ALSWA as a Lawyer in the Civil and Human Rights Unit.

She was greatly respected for her tireless work in international human rights, and closer to home, where she played a key role in the landmark Stolen Generations Test Case in WA.

Nikki and Tony married in

Melbourne in May last year, however Nikki, aged 32, succumbed to the cancer soon after, just nine days after the first birthday of their son Humphrey.

All donations will enable the BCNA to continue to ensure that Australians affected by breast cancer receive the very best support, information, treatment and care appropriate to their individual needs.



**DONATE**

**TO TONY'S TEAM**

**“HUMPA’s HEROES” at**

[rotnestswim2016.everydayhero.com/au](http://rotnestswim2016.everydayhero.com/au)



## New Chairperson for NATSILS

Wayne Muir, a Yorta Yorta/Barkinji man, is the new Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS).

CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service for the past five years, Wayne takes on the role from former

Chairperson Shane Duffy.

The NATSILS advocate at a national level for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the justice system and work to ensure that our peoples have equitable access to justice.



03-10  
JULY  
2016

Songlines:

The living narrative  
of our nation

## Move On Time for Kalgoorlie Lawyer

After 3 years as ALSWA's Kalgoorlie Managing Solicitor Greg Wildie will move back to Queensland at the end of February. Greg will be sorely missed by us all, but particularly by his

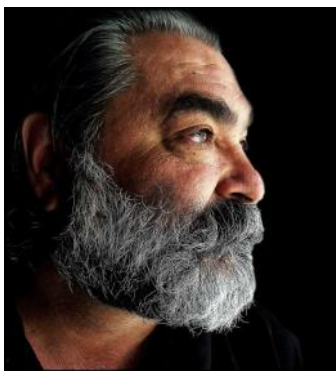
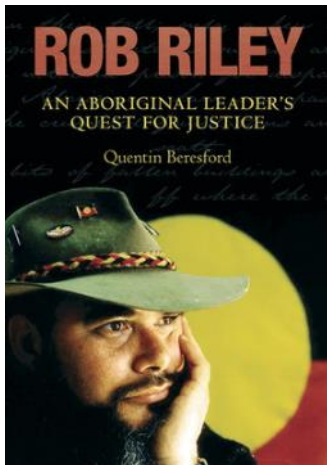
colleagues in the Kalgoorlie office and local community members. We wish Greg the very best for the future and thank him for his work with ALSWA.



## PROFILE: Dennis Eggington 20 Years as ALSWA CEO



**Dennis Eggington  
took on the role of  
ALSWA CEO  
following the passing  
of his respected  
friend, the late  
Rob Riley  
ALSWA CEO  
1990 to 1995**



Nyungar man Dennis Eggington is widely acknowledged as a fierce advocate for advancing the rights of Aboriginal people in WA and beyond. His contributions to the justice system and human rights now also include the notable achievement that 24 January 2016 marked his 20<sup>th</sup> year as CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, the state's peak legal body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is no mean feat given WA's alarming over-representation of Aboriginal men, women and children within the court and prison systems and the ongoing tragedy of deaths in custody, dysfunction and oppression.

Managing over 100 staff across the state, Dennis says that the work is compelling, demanding and vital, and without ALSWA, the state's justice system would grind to a halt. "Our staff are motivated by their commitment to

social justice and making real change in the lives of so many people who are doing it tougher than most. When you're born Aboriginal, the challenges start on day one, but our resilience as a people shines through time after time. We have, and will continue to survive".

Born in Perth in 1955, the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest of four children, Dennis is one of the Hayward Clan and spent his pre-teen years in the beachside suburb of Scarborough. Perth had a population of 357,000 at this time, and while it was an exciting sun-drenched existence for many, it was also entrenched in racism, discrimination and exclusion for Aboriginal people. That population has now grown to two million in the nations' fastest growing capital city, but sadly, much racism and inequality remains today. "When I was

ten, my father accepted an Army transfer to QLD so we spent several years there before moving to Sydney where I finished my primary/secondary schooling.

"I remember being active in the anti-nuclear movement at high school and some of my friends and I organised protests against the testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific with slogans like *"Ban the Bomb"*. I guess this was one of my earlier experiences that set the scene for a lifetime of activism". After completing school Dennis went to Teachers College in Armidale NSW before taking up his first teaching position in the remote Northern Territory Aboriginal community of Ngukurr. "As a young Aboriginal man I'd experienced direct racism many times, but it was here when I was immersed in Yolngu Culture during the 1970's, that I was hit in the face with blatant systemic



racism on a massive scale. While I was in the Community to teach, I was privileged to learn so much from local Community members and students and it's an experience I'll never forget". This, coupled with Dennis' second teaching position in the NSW outback town of Bourke, proved to be life changing and another chapter in his journey and commitment to social justice. "I was shocked to see that Bourke was as confronting as the NT with its segregated cinemas, clubs and bars. Racism was raw and in your face and this is when I made my personal pledge to take a stand and forever fight for the rights of

Aboriginal people and confront racism head on. I saw this injustice in Perth as a young child and while much has changed, there is still far too much injustice in 2016". It was in Bourke that Dennis met his wife Louella (*pictured on right*), and the two are proud parents and grandparents and the journey continues. Having already dedicated a third of his life to his work with WA's Aboriginal Legal Service, Dennis remains firmly focused on the ongoing work of this integral organisation which was awarded a National Human Rights Award under his leadership. "We've come such a long way since ALSWA's inception in the late sixties

and early seventies when committed Aboriginal and legal fraternity members recognised the crucial need for an Aboriginal legal service. I'm so proud of our strong history and know that our ongoing efforts continue to make a valuable contribution to WA's justice system. The success of our history and ongoing work can be attributed to the thousands of people who have contributed to this journey.



Above: Dennis with wife Louella, and Associate Professor Ted Wilkes and Professor Fiona Stanley



L-R the late Terry Whitby with Colleen Hayward, Terry O'Shane, Dennis, Preston Thomas, Mick Gooda, Sir Ronald Wilson



**If you're considering sending money and are unsure if it is a scam or if you are concerned about someone you believe is being scammed, contact the SCAMWATCH ACCC Info Centre on 1300 795 995**

## Beware of Scams

Scammers target everyone so it's important to know how to protect yourself as scams are becoming more sophisticated.

Here's some tips to reduce your chances of falling victim to a scam:

1. Be alert to the fact that scams exist.
2. Know who you're dealing with.
3. Don't open suspicious texts, pop up windows or emails - delete them.
4. Keep your

personal details secure.

5. Keep your mobile devices and computers secure.
6. Choose your passwords carefully.
7. Beware of any requests for your details or money.
8. Be careful when shopping online.

**REMEMBER** that scams succeed because they look like the real thing. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. There are many types of scams which could include

offers of money, fake charities, dating and romance and unexpected winnings.

The ACCC website reports that scams in December 2015 were delivered by the following methods:

Phone	34.2%
Email	26.2%
Not provided	14.5%
Internet	9.4%
Text message	5.1%
Mail	4.5%
Social networking	3.8%
In person	1.4%
Mobile applications	0.9%
Fax	0.1%

**Source:**  
[www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)

## ALSWA Job Vacancies

Do you want to be part of a dynamic organisation striving for justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

If so, the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA currently has the following vacancies, which are all based at ALSWA's head Office in Perth.

**CRIMINAL UNIT**  
Lawyer and/or Senior Lawyer

**FAMILY LAW UNIT**  
Lawyer and/or Senior Lawyer

ALSWA jobs are advertised on [www.als.org.au](http://www.als.org.au) and [seek.com.au](http://seek.com.au) but if they no longer appear on these websites, applications for jobs are closed.



## Happy 60th Donald Abdullah!

Our best wishes go to ALSWA Executive Committee member Donald Abdullah who recently celebrated his 60th birthday.

Donald is a Wongi/Nyungar man from Esperance whose knowledge is greatly welcomed on the

Committee, where he represents the Goldfields Region. Committed to supporting our people, Donald feels strongly about keeping our young people out of prison and being supportive of women who face domestic

violence.

Elected onto the Committee during 2015, he shares his own skills in the advancement of ALSWA and ensures that the needs of his local community are being heard in a statewide capacity.



*Donald Abdullah at front, pictured with Jim Lewis, Glen Colbung, Michael Blurton and Preston Thomas from ALSWA's Executive Committee, and Dennis Eggington and John Bedford, ALSWA Senior Management.*

## Law Matters back on Airwaves in 2016



Now in it's 6th year, ALSWA's Law Matters radio program is back on air for another year. You can hear the first 2016 show live on Noongar Radio

on Wednesday 17th February between 11am and 12 noon. This fortnightly program is an informative and entertaining program produced and

presented by ALSWA to keep listeners up to date with the latest news and information about WA's justice system and the people working in it.

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After Hours  
08 9265 6644  
Urgent criminal matters

#### ALSWA Offices in

- Albany
- Broome
- Bunbury
- Carnarvon
- Fitzroy Crossing
- Geraldton
- Halls Creek
- Kalgoorlie
- Kununurra
- Meekatharra
- Northam
- Perth
- South Hedland



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or the websites of  
our supporting  
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