



**Edition
January 2018**

Law Matters

Keeping you up to date
with the latest news
from the
Aboriginal Legal Service
of Western Australia
Limited

Law Matters

Looking Forward Looking Back Aboriginal Legal Service Enters New Era

History was made when the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia Limited (ALSWA) held its inaugural Annual General Meeting since transitioning from an incorporated body to a company limited.

This heralds exciting times ahead for ALSWA, which has a long proud history of providing a quality legal service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for over forty years.



ALSWA board members and employees at the Inaugural ALSWA Limited Annual General Meeting in November 2017



ALSWA Board Members Glen Colbung and Donald Abdullah



Unfortunately ALSWA Memberships held prior to this transition were unable to be carried across, therefore ALSWA encourages Community members to join up and share in the journey ahead.

Current ALSWA Board Members are Michael Blurton (Central) Glen Colbung (South West), Jim Lewis (East Kimberley), Kathy Watson (West Kimberley) Paul Baron (Murchison Gascoyne) Donald Abdullah (Goldfields) and Preston Thomas (Central Desert).

For Membership Enquiries or to obtain a copy of the ALSWA Annual Report, please contact the ALSWA Perth Head Office on 08 9265 6666.

Western Australia Under McGowan's Labor

March 2018 marks one year since WA Labor swept into power in what was hailed as Labor's greatest victory in Western Australia.

ALSWA remains firmly focused on advocating strongly for the rights of Aboriginal peoples in this state and will continue to lobby government about the issues which are a priority to our people.

New Police Commissioner

ALSWA wasted no time in meeting with Chris Dawson after his appointment as WA Commissioner of Police in August last year.

"Building strong partnerships is vital if this state is serious about making a real difference in the over-representation of our people in the criminal justice system" said ALSWA CEO Dennis Eggington.

Commissioner Dawson brings a fresh approach to policing in Western Australia and candidly discussed his role and challenges ahead on ALSWA's Law Matters radio program last month.

All Law Matters programs can be heard on www.als.org.au



Dennis Eggington and Chris Dawson

Stolen Generations Website for teachers and students



A new interactive website featuring personal stories from members of the Stolen Generations will help schoolchildren around the country understand the impact of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO hopes that the website will be a critical resource in classrooms around the country. "As we know, teaching Indigenous content in schools is particularly important, not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who need to see their culture respected and valued in the classroom; but equally for all children to learn the true history of this country.

"It is through telling these stories that our families might begin to heal, and that all Australians might begin to understand how our past is so intimately connected to our future," she said.

Commissioner Oscar paid tribute to members of the Stolen Generations and thanked them for their ongoing strength. "Our country needs to hear your stories and we will keep telling them," she said.

View the website at <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/>

Valued Employees

We welcome aboard new ALSWA employees who have joined the team recently and farewell others who have moved on to new positions in 2018. ALSWA is extremely proud of the calibre of employees who have dedicated their skills and commitment to advancing the human rights of our First Nations Peoples during our long and proud history spanning over forty years.



Tony Hager, Dennis Eggington, Wendy Hughes, Shelley Cerqui, Ben White, Margie Ugle, Paul Gazia, Peter Collins, Rob Owen

National NAIDOC Poster Competition and Awards

There's still time to get your entry in for the National NAIDOC Poster! This year's theme is 'Because of her, we can', celebrating the invaluable contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made, and continue to make, to our communities, our families, our rich history and to our nation.

Poster competition closes at 5.00 pm (AEDT) on Monday 5th February.

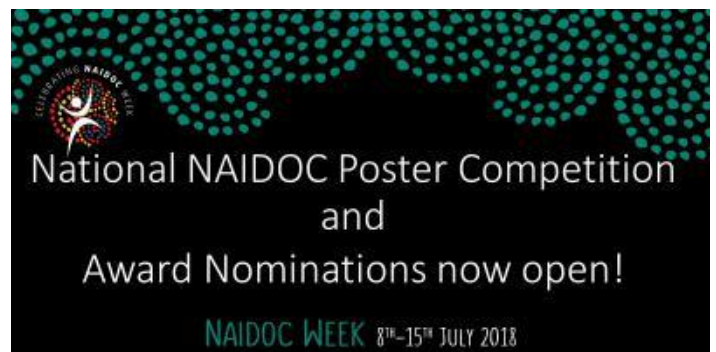
Award Nominations for Apprentice, Artist, Caring for Country, Elder (female and male), Lifetime Achievements, Person, Scholar, Sportsperson and Youth of the Year are open. **Award Nominations close at 5.00 pm (AEDT) on Monday 26 March 2018.**

Winners will be announced in Sydney in July.



BECAUSE OF HER, WE CAN!

8-15 JULY 2018



Full details at www.naidoc.org.au

Amnesty Calls for Closure of Banksia Hill ISU

Amnesty International has called for the Intensive Support Unit at Western Australia's Banksia Hill Youth Detention Centre to be immediately closed pending investigation, following serious allegations of abuse of young people which may amount to torture.

Amnesty International visited Banksia Hill this month and interviewed two young people who have allegedly been subjected to solitary confinement and other ill-treatment.

"These are very serious allegations, which if confirmed would put the practices at the Banksia Hill Detention Centre in clear breach of international law and standards, and may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," said Tammy Solonec, Amnesty International's Indigenous Rights Manager (pictured above).



"What I was told at Banksia Hill by these two young people was deeply disturbing. "Being held for weeks on end in a cell as small as a car parking space, with as little as 10 minutes out of the cell each day. When they did leave the cell, being handcuffed. Sometimes being denied access to basic services like a shower. Being fed through a grill in the door. And despite the serious mental harm of this type of isolation, limited access to a psychologist."

According to several sources, three young people were held for periods of solitary confinement in the Intensive Support Unit, previously called the Harding Unit, for at least two weeks at a time between May and August last year. Two remain in the Unit after one was moved to an adult facility in December.

Further concerns about the ill-treatment of the young people in the Unit include the deprivation of family contact and education, lack of adequate medical treatment, excessive use of force, disproportionate use of restraints, degrading treatment including daily stripping of bed materials, no or limited exercise and no access to programs or services.

One of the young men told Amnesty International he "felt like a dog".

"It is critical that the West Australian government instigate a full and thorough independent investigation into the situation for these boys, and into the operations of the Intensive Support Unit. Pending that it must be closed immediately," said Tammy Solonec.

For more information about the national and international work of Amnesty check out their website: www.amnesty.org.au

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Mr. Ward – 10 Years On



January 27th marks ten years since the tragic passing of respected Ngaanyatjarra Elder, Mr. Ward.

The WA Coroner said that his death after being transported in the back of a prison van was a “wholly unnecessary and avoidable death”. Our thoughts remain with the family and community members of Mr. Ward. His passing touched the hearts of people throughout the world.

Awards to Honour Community Achievements

Outstanding individuals and organisations in Western Australia's community services sector will be recognised at this year's Community Services Excellence Awards.

Two new individual categories have been introduced for 2018. 'Above and Beyond' recognises an individual surpassing expectations through their work in the community services sector, while 'Excellence in Leadership' acknowledges an innovative leader. Other categories acknowledge outstanding small, medium, large, regional and Aboriginal organisations. An organisation providing outstanding collaborative, place-based services or solutions will also be recognised.

Nominations are now open and will close on February 26, 2018. The awards will take place on May 2 at the 2018 WACOSS conference. Previous winners include Zonta House Refuge Association, which in 2016 was recognised for its 'Positive Pathways to Safety for Women and Children' program. The program provides support services to women and families who have experienced family and domestic violence.

For more information about the awards, visit <http://www.cseawards.org.au>

Insider Art

An exhibition of the creative achievements of some of Western Australia's incarcerated prisoners is currently on display in Fremantle.

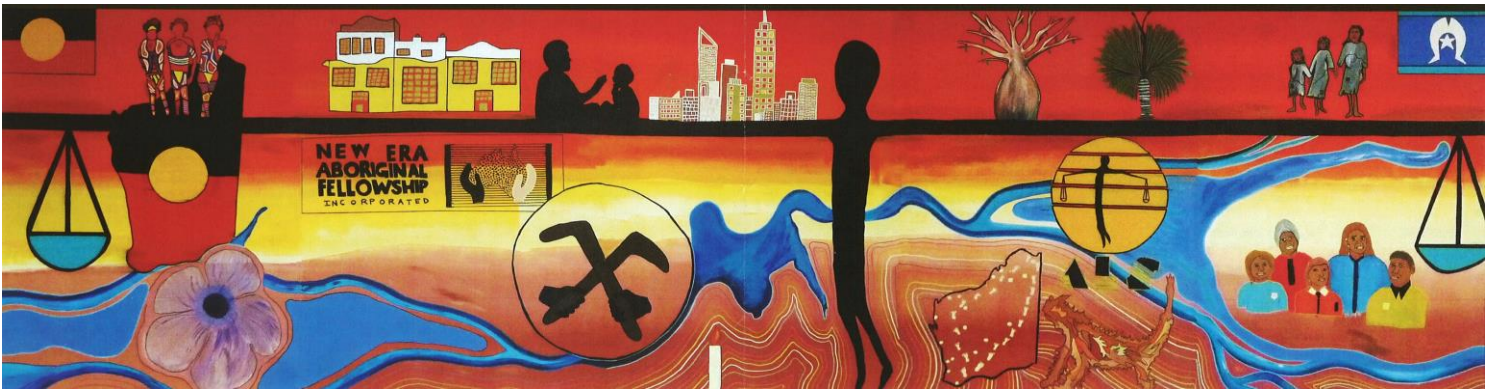
This is a joint initiative of the Department of Justice and Fremantle Prison and the artworks can be viewed until 25th February at the old Print Shop (Fremantle Prison Gallery). **Entry is free and many of the works are available to purchase.**

Let's Have a Yarn

Perth Aboriginal Legal Service of WA head office has now held two *Let's Have a Yarn* sessions in recent months. These group sessions provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples to gain an insight into working with the Aboriginal Legal Service in various roles through ALSWA's Casual employment pool.

Let's Have a Yarn has been a great success to date, with many people gaining employment and training with ALSWA. As all positions are classified as Section 50(d) (genuine qualification as per the Equal Opportunity Act 1984) only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are invited to attend *Let's Have a Yarn* sessions.

Dates for future sessions will be posted on the ALSWA website and Facebook Page and more information is also available by emailing recruitment@als.org.au



Meningococcal Disease Vaccinations Announcement

In an Australian first, the WA McGowan Government has announced that all Western Australian children aged one to four years will have access to a new meningococcal ACWY vaccine.

Meningococcal disease is an uncommon, but sometimes life threatening illness. At any one time, about 10 per cent of healthy people carry meningococcal bacteria harmlessly in their nose or throat and do not become ill. Rarely, however, a small proportion of people will develop serious invasive infections of the blood and/or the membranes that line the spinal cord and brain.

Last year WA had 46 cases of meningococcal disease, six of which were fatal. The highest attack rate occurred among children younger than five years of age. To reduce the incidence of meningococcal disease among this vulnerable age group, a free vaccine will be available throughout 2018. Parents should contact their local GP or Child Health Clinic to schedule an appointment.

The State is currently funding two other meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs, one for teenagers in Year 10 in 2018 and one for Aboriginal communities within regional Western Australia.

More information on all available vaccines is online at
<http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/immunisation>

ALSWA Staff Training



Over one hundred ALSWA employees gathered in Perth recently to participate in Cultural and training workshops. The workshops took place at the office of the former WA Chief Protector AO Neville located at 57 Murray Street in Perth. This building has been reclaimed as the city based Curtin Law School, whilst also housing Yokai, which provides a holistic approach in ensuring that Aboriginal people get the support they need to heal from past wrongdoings. **ALSWA is extremely grateful to the Curtin Law School for their support and use of this building.**



From top: Training location at 57 Murray Street Perth (office of former WA Chief Protector AO Neville), ALSWA CEO Dennis Eggington with Dr. Richard Walley OAM, Jim Morrison from Yokai, and ALSWA employees



Left: Members of Kanyirrinpa Jukurrpa (KJ) spoke with ALSWA employees about their role working with Martu to build strong and sustainable communities. KJ are focused on supporting Martu to look after culture and country, building a viable economy in Martu communities and building pathways for young Martu to a healthy future.

Contact Us



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Aboriginal Legal Service
of WA Limited

Website

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ALSWA Country Offices

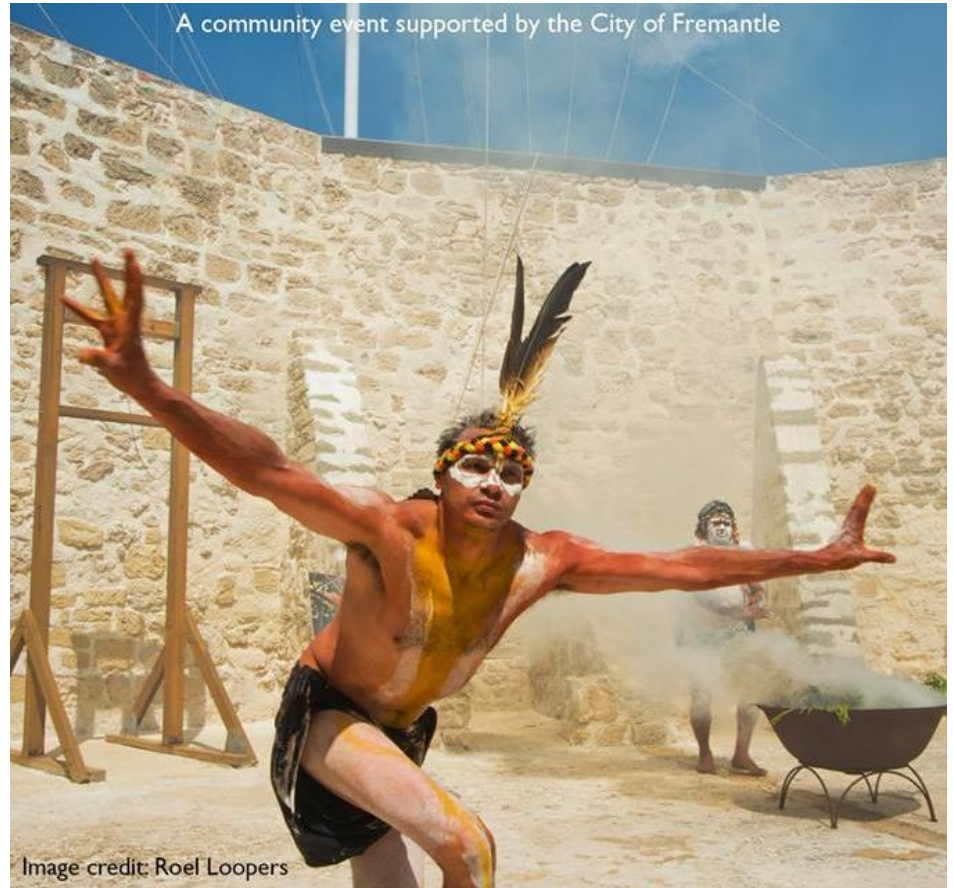
Albany, Broome, Bunbury,
Carnarvon, Fitzroy Crossing,
Geraldton, Halls Creek,
Kalgoorlie, Kununurra,
Meekatharra, Northam,
South Hedland

Bathers Beach Smoking Ceremony

28th January 2018

7.00 am until 9.00 am

Bathers Beach Fremantle



One Day in Fremantle begins with a Smoking Ceremony at Bathers Beach, a traditionally inspired Nyoongar ceremony to make peace and cleanse the area, people and spirit ancestors.

Led by Neville Collard, last year's event drew hundreds of people to the Fremantle Round House and was a moving experience for all.

This is a free community run event supported by the City of Fremantle, open to all comers.

More information at <https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/>