

# STRAIGHT TALK 2011

## SELECTION OF MEDIA CLIPPINGS





**Australian**  
**22/09/2011**  
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**By: Lauren Wilson**  
**Section: General News**  
**Region: Australia Circulation: 128985**  
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**Frequency: MTWTF**

## Women tell it straight about trouble at home

LAUREN WILSON

LILLIAN Gray has spent decades working in her Queensland community of Cherbourg to curb systemic alcohol abuse and family breakdowns.

The 63-year-old support worker was yesterday one of 60 indigenous women who went to Canberra to tell Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin and 26 other female parliamentarians what she believes is killing her community.

The visit is part of Oxfam's Straight Talk Summit, which intends to give female community leaders across Australia's indigenous townships access to female MPs.

Addressing the summit yesterday morning, Ms Macklin applauded the women for trying to improve life in their communities. "You as Aboriginal and Tor-

res Strait Islander women are change-makers," she said.

"Change-makers in your families, in your communities, in your workplaces."

While the summit was female-oriented, Ms Gray — who runs a program that takes families away on holidays in an environment where there is no access to alcohol or drugs — said Aboriginal men desperately needed more support.

"I am a strong advocate for women and children but in the last few years I've seen the men struggling. They lack the resources," she said.

She criticised the strict alcohol restrictions in place within her community, saying she could not even keep the bottle of wine won by her father in a football championship in her home.

Joyce Dimer, a 57-year-old social worker from Bunbury in West Australia, said she hoped the female parliamentarians who

attend the two-day summit will do more to encourage grassroots leadership in indigenous communities. "We still have a long, long way to go," she said.

Ms Dimer said parliamentarians needed to make themselves more visible to remote communities that struggled to connect to the political system.

One of the younger delegates at the forum, 32-year-old Carla McGrath, who is business manager for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Sydney's inner-city Redfern, said she hoped the summit would encourage more positive conversations between political and community leaders.

"I hope the female politicians will have a positive interaction with an indigenous Australian woman and I hope having that will change their mind about what they think is possible for our communities," she said.



Lillian Gray, from Cherbourg, Qld, left, with Carla McGrath from Sydney and Joyce Dimer from Bunbury, WA, yesterday



**Cairns Post**  
 20/09/2011  
 Page: 7  
 Section: General News  
 Region: Cairns QLD Circulation: 24053  
 Type: Regional  
 Size: 37.00 sq.cms  
 Frequency: MTWTF--

## Straight talking at summit

ABORIGINAL and Torres Strait islander women from the Far North are in Canberra this week for some "straight talking" about how to improve the lives of indigenous people.

At Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit, being held at Parliament House until Friday, women will be able to take their concerns and ideas direct to the ears of politicians.

Oxfam's Straight Talk co-ordinator Karrina Nolan said the 62 participants were an inspiring group from all backgrounds, ages, education and employment histories, working across diverse issues.



**Area News**  
 16/09/2011  
 Page: 7  
 Section: General News  
 Region: Griffith NSW Circulation: 5496  
 Type: Regional  
 Size: 58.00 sq.cms  
 Frequency: M-W-F--

## Coleambally woman chosen for summit

AN INDIGENOUS Coleambally woman will represent the region at a national summit, starting this weekend.

Anne-Marie McIntosh will join Indigenous women from across the country at Parliament House in Canberra for Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit.

Women from remote communities, country towns and big cities will meet with women from all sides of politics, including the Minister for

Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues Senator Rachel Siewert, to find ways of working together to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Two areas that Ms McIntosh is committed to addressing are the delivery of services to Aboriginal people in the Riverina and extra services for girls in particular.



**Narrandera Argus**  
**15/09/2011**  
 Page: 2  
 Section: General News  
 Region: Narrandera NSW Circulation: 1950  
 Type: Regional  
 Size: 41.00 sq.cms  
 Frequency: -T-T--

## STRAIGHT TALK

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women of all ages and backgrounds from across the country will be at Parliament House in Canberra next week (September 18-23) for Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit.**

Women from remote communities, country towns and big cities will meet with women from all sides of politics, including the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin and Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop to find ways of working together to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The 62 participants will bring their commitment to stronger communities, improvements in Indigenous health, and concerns for young people to the ears of politicians.



**AAP Newswire**  
**21/09/2011**  
**By: AAP**  
**Section: National**  
**Region: Australia**  
**Frequency: Newswire**

### FED:Indigenous women are 'change makers'

By Lisa Martin

CANBERRA, Sept 21 AAP - Indigenous women are the change makers who will help close the gap of disadvantage confronting Aboriginal people, a leadership forum has heard.

The annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit has brought 60 indigenous women from across Australia, from cities, the outback and the Torres Strait, for a week-long leadership program.

The participants will share their stories with female politicians and increase their understanding of how the political system works.

Australia's first indigenous federal MP Ken Wyatt told the women he hoped to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run for parliament and dreamed of one day seeing an indigenous prime minister.

"One day I hope one of the faces in this room is sitting somewhere in one of the chambers of parliament," he said at Parliament House in Canberra on Wednesday.

The MP paid tribute to his mother and the indigenous women who had helped him on his journey.

"Never hold back, speak the truth that is your truth, speak what's in your heart with a combination of passion and logic," he said.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin told the women they were "change makers" in their families, communities and workplaces.

Deputy opposition leader Julie Bishop said her favourite part of the program was chatting in her office with a group of participants "laughing and crying" over shared experiences.

"Whatever challenges our nation faces, empowering women must be critical to the solution," she said.

Australian Greens senator Rachel Siewert told the women to follow the lead of big business and learn to make the political system work for them.

"You need to learn how this place works so you know what buttons to press to get the decisions that you need," she said.

Senator Siewert said politicians and indigenous women could learn from each other.

"There's awful long way to go ... we're a long way from joining the dots, so we need you here to tell us how to do it," she said.

"It's important to have you here telling your stories to people in this place, (because) many people in this place do not get out and hear the issues."

AAP [pm/r/j]



**North West Star**  
**22/09/2011**  
**Page: 5**  
**Section: General News**  
**Region: Mount Isa QLD Circulation: 2936**  
**Type: Regional**  
**Size: 28.00 sq.cms**  
**Frequency: MTWTF--**

### Women to close gap

CANBERRA - Indigenous women are the change makers who will help close the gap of disadvantage confronting Aboriginal people, a leadership forum has heard. The annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit has brought 60 indigenous women from across Australian cities, the Outback and the Torres Strait, for a week-long leadership program. Australia's first indigenous federal MP Ken Wyatt told the women he hoped to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run for parliament and dreamed of one day seeing an Indigenous prime minister.



Camden Advertiser  
21/09/2011  
Page: 21  
By: Megan Gorrey  
Section: General News  
Region: Sydney Circulation: 17282  
Type: Suburban  
Size: 202.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: -T—

## Ready for some tough talk

By Megan Gorrey

DANIELLE Teo won't be afraid to ask some curly questions of our nation's female politicians at this week's Straight Talk Summit in Canberra.

The Narellan Vale mother-of-five has joined 61 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from across the country at Parliament House for the third annual summit, run by Oxfam.

It aims to provide women from all sides of politics with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing indig-

enous people in the community, and to find ways to make a positive difference in their lives.

Mrs Teo said she wanted to raise matters such as injustices in the mental health system, particularly for carers, and how the constitution could be changed to better reflect Aboriginal people.

"I just feel it's really important for my generation to stand up — it shouldn't be Generation Y, it should be Generation Why Not?," Mrs Teo said.

"There's that sense of hope-

lessness that's been passed down through generations and I'm trying to combat that and tell people our life is about choices and life's full of opportunities."

Mrs Teo gained a bachelor's degree in community welfare at university and also took part in the Macarthur Indigenous Women Leadership program in 2009.

She now balances family life with her work with indigenous people at Campbelltown Mental Health Service.

"I've been heavily involved in my local Aboriginal community for a long time."



**Generation why not:** Danielle Teo is passionate about closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Picture: Luke Fudi



# Getting into straight talk

JOHN STOKES  
stokesj@mg.newstld.com.au

**EMMA Sumner** feels she has been guided by her ancestors during her career working for the Aboriginal community.

The Ngarrindjeri-Kaurna mother of seven, 51, has worked in Aboriginal education, accommodation and child protection, and now works as an Aboriginal community development officer at Northern Carers Network.

"I feel like I've been steered by the ancestors through my career path," Ms Sumner says.

At Northern Carers she supports carers in the community and has been working with elders to establish a healing centre to offer natural, traditional remedies and practices to the community.

Ms Sumner, from Smithfield Plains, will travel to Canberra this week to be part of the third annual Straight Talk summit.

The summit will see 62 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women meet with female political figures to discuss how to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ms Sumner says she is honoured to be chosen out of hundreds of applicants and says training provided at the summit will assist her in overcoming her shy nature.

"I thought if I went it would help give me confidence in speaking and also give me knowledge of who are the right people to speak to help our community.

"There are so many powerful women going that it scares me a bit but it's very inspiring as well."

She says the summit will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women the chance to form a unified voice.

"I feel that everybody's got their own issues that are happening in their own community but, at the end of the day, I think that we're similar in what our issues are and what needs addressing."

**I feel like I've been steered by the ancestors through my career path**

Emma Sumner



NATIONAL SUMMIT: Aboriginal community development officer Emma Sumner is off to Canberra. Picture: Noelle Bobrige H0160215



**Newcastle Star**  
**21/09/2011**  
**Page: 16**  
**Section: General News**  
**Region: Newcastle NSW Circulation: 114768**  
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# Support for women

IMPROVING the lives of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders is the goal at Oxfam's annual Talk Straight summit.

To be held for the third time this September 18 to 23, the Canberra summit will include indigenous and Torres Strait Islander women of varied ages, backgrounds and locations.

One such woman is Hamilton East resident Michelle Fodeades.

Ms Fodeades was one of 62 women chosen out of hundreds.

"I'm definitely excited – my passion is to support young people but in particular, being Aboriginal myself, to support Aboriginal young people," she said.

Ms Fodeades will have the opportunity to share her insight with for Indigenous Affairs minister Jenny Macklin, deputy opposition leader Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues senator

Rachel Siewert. With a history of empowering young people, Ms Fodeades is certainly an apt candidate.

The former Whitebridge High School teacher now works as the program officer for Healthy Schools, Healthy Future, a project that aims to reduce smoking, drinking and drug-use among teenagers.

Targeting 24 schools in the Hunter and New England region, it aims to foster well-being and sound decision-making by building resilience in young people.

For the past six months Ms Fodeades has trialled the program in high schools across the region.

"Enhancing the experience of young Indigenous people is definitely a priority," she said.

"I hope to ensure the programs put in place in schools are culturally appropriate and that Aboriginal students needs are met."



National Indigenous Times  
15/09/2011  
Page: 18  
Section: General News  
Region: Malua Bay NSW Circulation: 10075  
Type: Regional  
Size: 171.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: Fortnightly

## 62 women heading to Canberra for some straight talk with politicians

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women of all ages and backgrounds from across the country will be at Parliament House in Canberra from September 18 to 23 for Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit.**

Women from remote communities, country towns and big cities will meet with women from all sides of politics, including the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader, Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues, Senator Rachel Siewert, to find ways of working together to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The 62 participants will bring their commitment to stronger communities, improvements in Indigenous health and concerns for young people to the ears of politicians whom they hope will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing Indigenous people.

Oxfam's Straight Talk co-ordinator, Karrina Nolan said the Straight Talk participants were an inspiring group of women working across a diverse range of issues, using different ways to change their communities for the better.

"From hundreds of applicants we've selected an outstanding group of women who will sit down with the politicians whose decisions impact their lives," Ms Nolan said.

"These women are already striving for and achieving change in their communities."

Thirty-two-year old participant, Carla McGrath is a Torres Strait Islander living in Sydney's inner-west, whose work has included increasing the number of Indigenous students completing high school and entering university.

"For too long, the conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has been dominated by the language of disadvantage and marginalisation," Ms McGrath said. "We need to tell the stories of excellence, success and resilience that are prevalent within our communities."

Meanwhile, 56-year-old Elaine Kropinyeri of Mount Gambier in South Australia, whose great-great uncle, David Unaipon, appears on the Australian \$50 note, supports Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system through her role as Elder in the local Nunga Court and has broken down barriers between police and youths in her area.

She currently works with Aboriginal families in crisis for Anglicare. "I passionately feel that prejudice is only ignorance and that by good information and education, barriers can be overcome and bridges built towards mutual respect and understanding," she said.

Straight Talk participants represent all backgrounds, education levels and employment histories.

Ms Nolan said the women would undertake an intensive program in Canberra before their meetings with politicians, extending skills, knowledge and confidence to engage with the political system to bring about change.

## 9 NEWS:

# Indigenous women are 'change makers'

13:47 AEST Wed Sep 21 2011

## **Indigenous women are the change makers who will help close the gap of disadvantage confronting Aboriginal people, a leadership forum has heard.**

The annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit has brought 60 indigenous women from across Australia, from cities, the outback and the Torres Strait, for a week-long leadership program.

The participants will share their stories with female politicians and increase their understanding of how the political system works.

Australia's first indigenous federal MP Ken Wyatt told the women he hoped to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run for parliament and dreamed of one day seeing an indigenous prime minister.

"One day I hope one of the faces in this room is sitting somewhere in one of the chambers of parliament," he said at Parliament House in Canberra on Wednesday.

The MP paid tribute to his mother and the indigenous women who had helped him on his journey.

"Never hold back, speak the truth that is your truth, speak what's in your heart with a combination of passion and logic," he said.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin told the women they were "change makers" in their families, communities and workplaces.

Deputy opposition leader Julie Bishop said her favourite part of the program was chatting in her office with a group of participants "laughing and crying" over shared experiences.

"Whatever challenges our nation faces, empowering women must be critical to the solution," she said.

Australian Greens senator Rachel Siewert told the women to follow the lead of big business and learn to make the political system work for them.

"You need to learn how this place works so you know what buttons to press to get the decisions that you need," she said.

Senator Siewert said politicians and indigenous women could learn from each other.

"There's awful long way to go ... we're a long way from joining the dots, so we need you here to tell us how to do it," she said.

"It's important to have you here telling your stories to people in this place, (because) many people in this place do not get out and hear the issues."



Campbelltown-Macarthur Advertiser  
 21/09/2011  
 Page: 10  
 By: Megan Gorrey  
 Section: General News  
 Region: Sydney Circulation: 50671  
 Type: Suburban  
 Size: 174.00 sq.cms  
 Frequency: --W---

## Life's about choices says fearless mum

By Megan Gorrey

DANIELLE Teo won't be afraid to ask some curly questions of our nation's female politicians at this week's Straight Talk Summit in Canberra.

The local mother-of-five has joined 61 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from across the country at Parliament House for the third annual summit, which is run by Oxfam.

It aims to provide women from all sides of politics with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing indigenous people and ways to make a positive difference.

Mrs Teo said she wanted to raise matters such as injustices in the mental-health system, particularly for carers, and how the Constitution could be changed to better reflect Aboriginal people.

"I just feel it's really important for my generation to stand up — it

shouldn't be Generation Y, it should be Generation Why Not?" Mrs Teo said. "There's that sense of hopelessness that's been passed down through generations and I'm trying to combat that and tell people our life is about choices and life's full of opportunities."

Mrs Teo gained a degree in community welfare at university and took part in the Macarthur Indigenous Women Leadership program in 2009.

She now balances family life with her work with indigenous people at Campbelltown Mental Health Service and is looking to complete a masters degree. "I've been heavily involved in my local Aboriginal community for a long time and my family have been involved in the community here for more than 50 years," she said. "My mum always told me it was important to empower our youth."



**Straight talker:** Danielle Teo is passionate about closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Picture: Luke Fuda



Torres News  
21/09/2011  
Page: 13  
Section: General News  
Region: Thursday Island QLD Circulation: 3000  
Type: Regional  
Size: 218.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: -W-

## Torres Strait Islander women talk straight at Parliament House

CARLA McGrath, a Torres Strait Islander living in Sydney's inner-west, won't take second-best for an answer when it comes to realising the full potential of Indigenous people.

The 32-year-old is working to increase the number of Indigenous students completing high school and entering university.

"For too long, the conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has been dominated by the language of disadvantage and marginalisation," Ms McGrath said.

"We need to tell the stories of excellence, success and resilience that are prevalent within our communities."

Ms McGrath is just one of 62 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women of all ages and backgrounds who are meeting at Parliament House in Canberra this week for Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit.

Women from remote communities, regional centres and cities will meet with women from all sides of politics, including Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues Senator Rachel Siewert, to find ways of working together to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The participants will bring their commitment to stronger communities, improvements in Indigenous health, and concerns for young people to the ears of politicians whom they hope will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges

facing Indigenous people.

Oxfam's Straight Talk coordinator Karrina Nolan said the Straight Talk participants were an inspiring group of women who used different ways to change their communities for the better.

"From hundreds of applicants we've selected an outstanding group of women who will sit down with the politicians whose decisions impact their lives," Ms Nolan said.

"These women are already striving for and achieving change in their communities."

Elaine Kropinyeri of Mount Gambier in South Australia, whose great-great uncle, David Unaipon, appears on the Australian \$50 note, supports Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system through her role as Elder in the local Nunga Court, and has broken down barriers between police and youths in her area.

The 56-year-old currently works with Anglicare helping Aboriginal families in crisis.

"I passionately feel that prejudice is only ignorance, and that by good information and education, barriers can be overcome and bridges built towards mutual respect and understanding," Ms Kropinyeri said.

Ms Nolan said the women would undertake an intensive program before their meetings with politicians, extending skills, knowledge and confidence to engage with the political system to bring about change.

The Oxfam summit runs from September 18-23 at Parliament House, Canberra.

## OUR WORLD TODAY:

Change in the air for Indigenous  
Published on 26/9/2011 by [Suzanne Devonshire](#)

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**In a step towards closing the gap, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women last week met with female politicians at Parliament house to strengthen the bond between women keen to change communities for the better.**

Hosted by Oxfam, the annual Straight Talk Summit brought together 62 Indigenous women of different ages and backgrounds to share with politicians the issues affecting Indigenous communities.

Torres Strait Islander Carla McGrath, who works for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, saw her participation in the summit as an opportunity to talk about the “culture of low-expectation” she tries to combat in her work.

“It’s become a way that we treat our kids, but we have to make them see that they can do whatever they want to do,” said Ms McGrath.

“They have the same capabilities as anyone else. In fact, they bring with them, as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, a uniqueness.”

“I wanted to talk to the parliamentarians about what their role might be in assisting us to do that for our young people.”

Straight Talk Coordinator Karrina Nolan said the summit’s participants were an inspiring group of women working across a diverse range of issues.

“From hundreds of applicants we’ve selected an outstanding group of women who will sit down with the politicians whose decisions impact their lives,” said Ms Nolan.

“These women are already striving for and achieving change in their communities.”

Ms Nolan said the participants would gain the confidence to engage with the political system by talking to politicians, including Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Issues Senator Rachel Stewart.

Ms McGrath agreed that conversations with politicians had “demystified” the political system.

“We’ve had the opportunity to meet with parliamentarians and talk to them about their own lives, and find out things that are not part of their portfolio but just about them as women... and just make that personal connection with another human being.”

“At the end of the day, they took their job for the same reason we took ours, to make change.”

She said talking to fellow Indigenous women and building up a network of people with similar aspirations had also been beneficial.

“It’s been fantastic to sit down with other [Indigenous] women who share the same feelings I do about making positive change in our communities,” she said.

“We have a varying range of experience so I’ve been able to learn a whole lot from the women around me.”

Ms McGrath said the participants would benefit from seeing the work being done by fellow Indigenous people in creating change.

“In coming together and talking about all the stuff we’ve done and achieved, there’s a sense of pride in seeing that we are capable and we are making a difference.”



# Down to straight talk

## Women connect to discuss big issues

□ DANIELLE LOWE

CHERBOURG elder Lillian Gray has worked hard to curb alcohol abuse and domestic violence in her community and last week she attended a summit in Canberra to reach out to female politicians.

Ms Gray attended the third annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit in which Indigenous women from around the country share their stories and bridge the gap between Indigenous communities and politicians.

"Even at my age I'm still learning," Ms Gray said.

"It was so wonderful to see so many young, strong Indigenous women at the summit.

"They show so much respect to their elders but I think it's time we stood back and listened more to the young people.

"They are the future."

While in Canberra Ms Gray had the chance to meet Indigenous Affairs minister Jenny Macklin and said she now has a life long friend.

"We just clicked," Ms Gray said.

"We have so much in common I feel I've known her forever.

"It's good to get to know politicians on a personal level and realise they are human beings too.

"We're not only Indigenous women but above all we're women of Australia and it doesn't matter your racial background."

Issues raised during the summit varied however Ms Gray said housing, homeless-

ness, alcohol abuse and domestic violence were a common theme.

She said the biggest issue facing Cherbourg was men's issues.

"Our men need help," she said.

"I am a strong advocate for women and children but in the last few years I have seen the men struggling.

"There are not enough resources to help them," she said.

"They want to step up to the plate and change but without resources it won't happen."

She criticised the strict alcohol restrictions in place within her community and said sniffing was still a major issue in Cherbourg.

"A lot of people who are sniffing do it because of deep trauma experienced in their past," Ms Gray said. "Others do it because of peer pressure and we need to address these problems now."

Ms Gray said she would write to minister Macklin in the next week and invite her to come to Cherbourg and have a look at the community for herself.

She said she wouldn't attend another summit but said she would encourage other women in the community to go next year.

"It's very beneficial and our women can learn a lot from going," she said.

"It was very educational and inspirational."



**DOING IT FOR THE WOMEN:** Cherbourg elder Lillian Gray attended the Oxfam Straight Talk Summit in Canberra last week to discuss issues within her community and meet female politicians.

Photo: Danielle Lowe/South Burnett Times

  
MEDIA MONITORS



Tennant & District Times  
23/09/2011  
Page: 5  
Section: General News  
Region: Tennant NT Circulation: 1500  
Type: Regional  
Size: 147.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: ----F--

# Local in ACT for Straight Talk Summit

**A TENNANT Creek grandmother has spent this week walking the halls of Parliament in Canberra lobbying Federal politicians.**

Joyce Taylor is one of 60 women from around the country who have trav-

elled to the capital for the Oxfam Straight Talk Summit.

The annual event brings the women face-to-face with some of the most powerful women in Parliament.

The event was opened by Indigenous Affairs Minis-

ter Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop, and Greens Senator Rachel Siewert.

The three political forces encouraged all of the women to speak up, encouraging them to feel free to broach controversial topics.

Joyce said she was thrilled to be part of the Straight Talk Summit and was looking forward to speaking up about what's happening in the Barkly and throughout the Territory.

The third annual gathering ends today.



**North West Telegraph**  
 21/09/2011  
 Page: 3  
 By: Kim Kirkman  
 Section: General News  
 Region: South Hedland WA Circulation: 10000  
 Type: Regional  
 Size: 147.00 sq.cms  
 Frequency: -W-

## Yamatji woman joins indigenous panel

KIM KIRKMAN

NEWMAN'S Ruby-Lea Whitby will join Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from across the country at Canberra's Parliament House this week at a summit to find ways of improving the lives of indigenous people.

At Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit, the 62 participants will bring their concerns and comments to the ears of politicians.

Women from across Australia will meet Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop and Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues Senator Rachel Siewert.

Ms Whitby, a Yamatji woman originally from Meekatharra, works as an Aboriginal health worker at Newman's schools.

She believes there is not enough education about HIV and STIs.

"That's why I wanted to get back into the workforce as an Aboriginal health worker," she said.

The next generation is a priority. "The main problems we have here in Aboriginal communities come down to alcohol related incidents," she said.

Ms Whitby recently formed a group for Aboriginal health workers and liaison officers employed by WA Country Health Service which is meeting for the second time this week.

"The problem that I have, being an Aboriginal health worker, is the lack of support we have," she said. "Not only myself, it is also Aboriginal health workers and liaison officers throughout the Pilbara. At \$47,000 to \$49,000, we are the most underpaid Australia-wide."

The Aboriginal Action Affirmative group is for Aboriginal people who are employed by WACHS.

Ms Whitby will also continue her campaign to have Section 100, which charters the supply of essential medicines to remote area Aboriginal Health Services, applied at Newman.



National Indigenous Times  
28/09/2011  
Page: 6  
Section: General News  
Region: Malua Bay NSW Circulation: 10075  
Type: Regional  
Size: 342.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: Fortnightly

## Straight Talk Summit hears the voices of 60 female leaders

# You are change makers

**Indigenous women are the change makers who will help Close the Gap of disadvantage confronting Aboriginal people, a leadership forum has heard.**

The annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit has brought 60 Indigenous women from across Australia, from cities, the outback and the Torres Strait, for a week-long leadership program.

The participants shared their stories with female politicians and had the chance to increase their understanding of how the political system works.

Australia's first Indigenous Federal MP, Ken Wyatt told the women he hoped to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run for parliament and dreamed of one day seeing an Indigenous Prime Minister.

"One day I hope one of the faces in this room is sitting somewhere in one of the chambers of parliament," he said at Parliament House in Canberra.

The MP paid tribute to his mother and the Indigenous women who had helped him on his journey.

"Never hold back. Speak the truth that is your truth. Speak what's in your heart with a combination of passion and logic," he said.

Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin told the women they were "change makers" in their families, communities and workplaces.

Deputy Opposition leader, Julie Bishop said her favourite part of the program was chatting in her office with a group of participants 'laughing and crying' over shared experiences.

"Whatever challenges our nation faces, empowering women must be critical to the solution," she said.

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Senator Siewert said politicians and Indigenous women could learn from each other.

"There's awful long way to go. We're a long way from joining the dots, so we need you here to tell us how to do it," she said.

"It's important to have you here telling your stories to people in this place, because many people in this place do not get out and hear the issues."



Back row L-R: Straight Talk participants Gabrielle Alvarez-Sledge, Carla McGrath, and Ruby-Lee Whitby. Front row L-R: Straight Talk lead facilitator Michelle Deshong, Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin and participants Nancy Sweeney and Lilian Gray. Image© Anna Zhu/OxfamAUS



**National Indigenous Times**  
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## The women tell it straight about the troubles at home

**Lillian Gray has spent decades working in her Queensland community of Cherbourg to curb systemic alcohol abuse and family breakdowns.**

The 63-year-old support worker was one of 60 Indigenous women who went to Canberra to tell Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin and 26 other female parliamentarians what she believes is killing her community.

While the summit was female-oriented, Ms Gray, who runs a program that takes families away on holidays in an environment where there is no access to alcohol or drugs, said men desperately needed more support.

"I am a strong advocate for women and children but in the last few years I've seen the men struggling. They lack the resources," she said.

She criticised the strict alcohol restrictions in place within her community, saying she could not even keep the bottle of wine won by her father in a football championship in her home.

Joyce Dimer, a 57-year-old social worker

**By Lauren Wilson from The Australian**

from Bunbury in Western Australia, said she hoped the female parliamentarians who attended the two-day summit would do more to encourage grassroots leadership in Indigenous communities.

"We still have a long, long way to go," she said. Ms Dimer said parliamentarians needed to make themselves more visible to remote communities that struggled to connect to the political system.

One of the younger delegates at the forum, 32-year-old Carla McGrath, who is business manager for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Sydney's inner-city Redfern, said she hoped the summit would encourage more positive conversations between political and community leaders.

"I hope the female politicians will have a positive interaction with Indigenous Australian women and I hope having that will change their mind about what they think is possible for our communities," she said.



From left to right: Straight Talk participants Lillian Gray and Joyce Taylor meet with Senator Penny Wong at Parliament House in Canberra. Image© Anna Zhu/OxfamAUS.



# Women power!

## Straight Talk Summit was a privilege and it was valuable

I was privileged to be one of more than 60 Indigenous women from around the country at this year's Oxfam's Straight Talk summit.

Indigenous women came from places far away to meet in Canberra. They came from Halls Creek in Western Australia, Thursday Island in Queensland and Hobart, Tasmania to name a few.

We yarned about our Communities, learnt more about the Australian political system and forged new friendships which I am sure will continue for a long time.

I laughed, yarned and cried with the delegates when they told stories of life in their communities, which resonated with me when reflecting upon the issues facing Indigenous people in North Queensland.

I asked one lady from La Perouse in Sydney what it meant to be part of the summit and her comments pretty much summed up the feeling for a lot of us.

"It gives me a sense of belonging and knowing we aren't alone in trying our hardest to make good changes," she said.

I heard from guest speakers, strong Indigenous women trailblazers, building upon the legacies of the strong Indigenous Women who have come before them.

Hearing stories from Monica Morgan a Yorta Yorta woman and Tammy Solonec a Nyikina woman has inspired me to continue on my journey in assisting Indigenous Women Leaders in north Queensland.

Tammy talked about her personal challenges

Michelle Watson, a Ghungunji woman from Yarrabah, has joined the National Indigenous Times as our correspondent covering news and events in north Queensland. Michelle attended the Oxfam Straight Talk Summit in Canberra as a delegate and her report provides an insight into this important event.



and how it made her persevere to become a human rights lawyer in Western Australia.

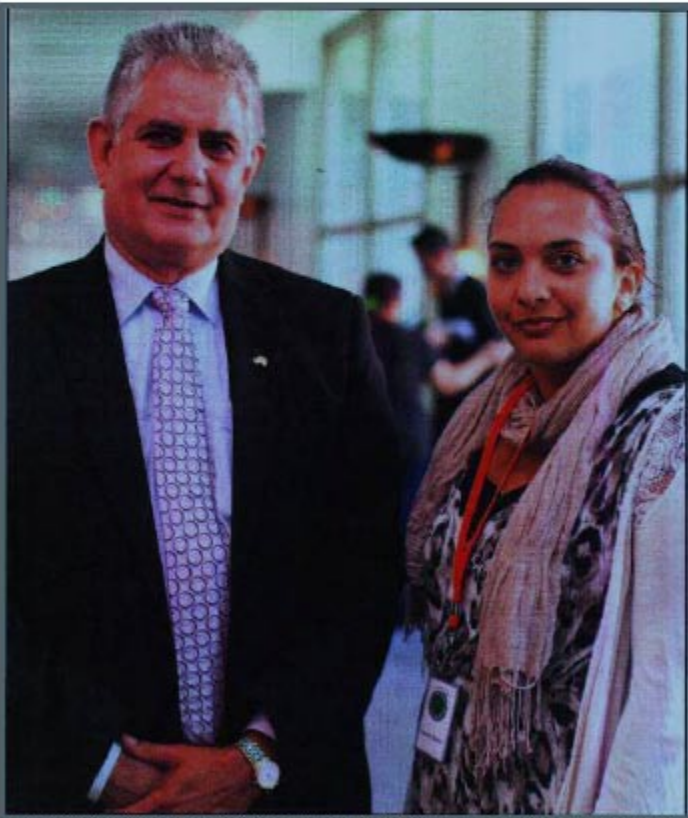
I was captivated by her resilience to continue her studies whilst juggling two children as a single mother and trying to stay on track struggling with depression. Hearing Tammy's stories has reinforced my commitment to continue on my journey.

Oxfam organised meetings with Women from all sides of politics. I enjoyed this opportunity to observe, meet and hear from Minister, Jenny Macklin and Liberal Deputy Opposition Leader, Julie Bishop. Julie Bishop ended her welcome to the delegates with this encouragement "this is your time to make change".

This statement and the summit itself reinforced that message for me in particular and I am sure for all the women attending. It has certainly inspired me in my vision to assist Indigenous women in north Queensland to lead in the conversations for change.



Straight Talk participants outside Parliament House in Canberra. Image© Anna Zhu/OxfamAUS



Ken Wyatt, MHR, with Straight Talk participant Kamara Green. Image© Anna Zhu/OxfamAUS

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## We don't need the poisoned chalice



I am fascinated by the world of politics because of its intriguing dynamics and shifting dimensions. In particular, I try to keep abreast with as much as possible the political twists and turns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders affairs. I admittedly do not possess any academic qualifications in political

science.

Nonetheless, I am a citizen of Australia. I too have the right like other citizens to comment on political agendas including, in particular, those matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially women and children.

Raised to respect my Elders, I was taught what was right and was wrong under protocols governing our cultural existence and place of being. My Mother, Flo Watson regularly reminds me "Michelle you only have the right to talk on behalf of Indigenous women within the region of North Queensland (with their support to do so).... Michelle you shouldn't be so arrogant to think you can talk on behalf of all Indigenous women (throughout Australia)".

As such, in accordance with our protocols, my commentary is subject to the upmost scrutiny by many other Indigenous women living in North Queensland before gaining public release. Notwithstanding, I willingly accept any criticism directed at me by others after going to print and will stand corrected when found wrong with the facts.

Learning the facts about politics and sharing this information with other Indigenous women who also want to understand things like the difference between State and Federal governments, about 'spin-doctoring' and why it takes so long to implement the decisions by Governments. I think this is omnipotent to making transformational leadership a successful approach towards overcoming prolonged disadvantage impacting on Indigenous women, especially in rural and remote communities.

Together, we, Indigenous women must take a stance by controlling our futures. Building a bank of knowledge about the machinery of government and realms of political dimensions that profoundly impact on our lives is an essential part of this process. Undoing the perceptions and truth behind the 'poisoned chalice' may appear to be also profound. Regardless, within the context of choice for Indigenous Australians, it is worth exploring what this actually means.

Terms such as deficit model, disadvantage, dysfunctional, mutual obligation, reciprocity,

solution brokerage and intervention conjure negative thoughts that something is terribly wrong and bad. I remember reading a newspaper article about the appointment of a new Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs being described by a political reporter as the inheritor of the "Poisoned Chalice". Searching the internet, Wikipedia defines "poisoned chalice is applied to a thing or situation which appears to be good when it is received or experienced by someone, but then becomes or is found to be bad".

Does this mean that the affairs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are bad and tempestuous? Conversely, the affairs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are good and peaceful? Whichever polemic stance is taken on these questions, the stigma of the 'Poisoned Chalice' is appropriate. In my view, Ministerial

portfolio responsibilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs is not about providing choices but about determining what is the best approach to 'finding solutions to the problems'. Quoting the following words "Never tempt me with your vanities! What you offer me is evil. Drink the poison yourself" was never a choice for the peoples of the First Nations.

Choice is about the power of selecting what is the best, worthy of being chosen, excellent and superior. Choice for peoples of the First Nations was never an option. Many of the First Nations choose to fight the invading

immigrants and eventually succumbing to the only option, life under the giver of the 'Poisoned Chalice'. Over 223 years later the choice for Indigenous Australians remains limited. This is particularly so in rural and remote communities where Indigenous women are powerless to make choices for the betterment of their children and their community.

Domination by the invading immigrants ensured there were no choices for the peoples of the First Nation. Liberation from the occupying immigrants was no longer an option. Forcibly removed to live in reservations, missions, compounds, holding centres, which, otherwise best described as 'prisons' where choices these days are greater than those afforded to the peoples of the First Nations by the invading immigrants. From overt to covert conversion befits the domineering views to dismiss any notion of accepting what has been done and turning it around by suddenly becoming the 'experts' to address the prolonged disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

The 'Closing the Gap' speech in February 2011 by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Julia Gillard MP called for changes in behaviour of Indigenous Australians by announcing "A call to every person, to every family, to every community...to take care of your children...to take a job when you find one...to create a safe environment...to send your kids to school, pay your rent, save up for a home...to respect good social norms and to respect the law. to reach out to other Australians".

I do not consign myself nor do I stoop to toadying values which appear to be espoused by the Prime Minister in a speech which gives

us little hope, certainly nothing inspirational and totally misses the point. 'Rebutting the Myths' about Indigenous peoples within contemporary Australian society is a much better starting point than a deficit model absent of choice.

Government specific programs and services for Indigenous people in rural and remote communities are not about giving people any choice. Life in remote and rural communities is about making do with what is available. There is no other choice.

A strong Indigenous woman from Kowanyama referred to life in rural and remote communities as like "camp dogs fighting over one bone". The highly regarded woman always asks the question "Michelle when will we get a choice". An outsider may make an observation that Indigenous people do have the choice and freedom to leave the community in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Extreme views labelled these communities as 'cultural museums'. Notwithstanding, these rural and remote communities now provide the cultural safety zone where Indigenous people can proudly call their place their home.

With the permission of Dr Kerry Arabena the following is an extract from a Discussion Paper 'Implementing the Gender Equity principle in the National Congress of Australia's First People' states that "...to achieve gender equity through strategies that require men and women to work together in search of solutions and in ways that encourage mutual respect and trust" and that "Equality between men and women, gender equality, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices". I believe this quote clearly articulates the aspects which perhaps by omission are salient points missing from the unfortunate 'Closing the Gap' speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Australia at the beginning of this year. There are many obstacles in the way to achieving transformational leadership for Indigenous women. Best described as Machiavellian, actions by Indigenous men

against Indigenous women, whether family violence or lateral violence, are destructible and soul-searching for Indigenous women wanting to know why these actions continue to occur. Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the employment of cunning and duplicity in statecraft or in general conduct", Machiavellianism is also a term that some social and personality psychologists use to describe a person's tendency to deceive and manipulate other people for their personal gain. Narcissism often means inflated self-importance, egotism, vanity, conceit, or simple selfishness.

Transformational leadership is not about imposed limitations but how the majority of people, both women and men, can work together to find solutions and in doing so make their own choices. Healing will play an integral part of this process. Kathi Gibson from Hopevale, Queensland wrote "We need to be recognised and start making those around us accountable for all the hurt, ignorance, pain and suffering us women constantly endured...women all over Australia achieving our goals without prejudice and fear".

I quote April Weston "When we realize that we always have choices – no matter how out of control things may seem – we suddenly find that we no longer feel helpless, but empowered". Transformational leadership for Indigenous women is therefore about inspiring and influencing Indigenous women's futures. Making choices for the future is now and we the Indigenous women are not helpless to do so.

Indeed, we now have the choice by refusing to drink from the "Poisoned Chalice".

**Michelle Watson is a Ghungunji woman from Yarrabah. She is a mother of three and Director for the North Queensland Indigenous Women's Leadership Centre. She is passionate about giving a voice to women from Cape York.**



Above: Inspirational - Dr Kerry Arabena. Image supplied



for you to talk to us as well as for us to talk to you about the way we both do things.

I think we all know that we've got to grow and learn together. The old ways often have to be put aside so that we can figure out more productive and more effective ways that we can work together.

I know that we've got some fantastic examples here and people that you're going to hear from.

People who are already leaders in their communities, people who are part of our new National Congress for Australia's First Peoples. So make sure you take the opportunity to hear about their experience and take what they can give you back to your home towns.

From the Government's point of view I do want to really reinforce how much we want to continue this work with women both locally as well as nationally and internationally.

We've got some people here today who are also contributing at the international level and I've got this wonderful quote from Jahna Cedar, part of the Australian delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Jahna went to New York earlier this year and she said:

"As I shared my views, I sat and pictured the pride on the faces of my Elders and Ancestors before me. How hard they fought for justice, equality and acceptance.

What a history and journey that has now led to me, a small town country woman sitting in the United Nations in New York, sharing ideas on how to better the future for all Australia."

So if I can say to you as another small town country woman from a different part of Australia, you can do it. You can do it wherever you're from, whatever your background. You too can go to New York. You too can come into the Federal Parliament and make a contribution.

Through our Indigenous women's program we're really pleased to be supporting communities right across the country in very practical ways and we're always looking for new ways to do that. Please share your ideas with me for those of you who are coming to

see me, but also with the departmental staff who are here today.

To use just one example, we've got from the north-west coast of Tasmania the fantastic example of an Indigenous woman using her own experience of prison to help young people who are at risk of entering the judicial system.

Things like that that can really help us figure out how to better support people on the ground, building on your experience in your communities.

We're wanting to do this at the national level as well, making sure that women's voices are heard through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance. I know there are women here who are part of that Alliance. Keep being strong through the Alliance, keep your voices coming through.

We were very pleased to announce the money for that Alliance at this Summit last year and that money is making sure that you are able to come together as a group of women and really be a cohesive and strong force.

Also make sure that you feed into those women who are participating at the international level. Make sure they hear what you have to say, the issues you want spoken about.

The real message is that your voices do matter. They do matter. Things that you want to say do matter.

I've just spent a lot of time on the ground in the Northern Territory as part of our thinking to build stronger futures for Aboriginal people there.

A lot of time sitting on the ground talking with people about what's important to them. The message, especially from women, young women, mums, grandmas, who've really sat down and talked with me has been exactly what I think many of you will say to me as well.

What we want is the best chance for our kids to get a great education. We want them to be at school. We want them to make sure they're able to go on and get a decent job. We want to make sure they're growing up safely, that they have a decent home to live in. And they also to say to me over and over again, yes, we want these things, we want these things passionately for our children, but we also want them to grow up part of our strong culture. Part of our culture that continues to be strong in each and every one of our communities. And it's not that any one of these issues is more or less important. We want these issues to be dealt with together so that our children do have a stronger future.

Of course to get that message across you need a strong voice. You need a strong voice in your own communities. You need a strong voice on the national stage and the international stage. Please use your strong voices. Make sure you take this opportunity that's here with you today to get that message across to all of us who also come to this with a very open heart and a very open mind.

Thank you so much for coming and we look forward to a very, very productive time together.

Thank you.

**Jenny Macklin is the Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**



Lillian Gray 63yrs old from Cherbourg, Qld, Carla McGrath, 32yrs old from Sydney and Joyce Dimes, 57yrs old from Bunbury WA were among 60 Indigenous women who travelled to Canberra to meet with female parliamentarians as a part of Oxfams "Straight Talk Summer" at Parliament House in Canberra. Image: Kym Smith



## The penny has dropped or has it really?



Just the other day, I was sitting beside a young overseas student on a flight from Sydney to Cairns when she politely asked about Aborigines and where they lived. She had been in Sydney for a month learning English and wanted to know more about the Aborigines. She was flying north to meet the real Aborigines. She was especially excited about meeting the Aborigine women.

The visiting student, a qualified teacher back in Germany explained in good English that she had researched the noun on her laptop and was confused by what she had found. Other words such as Indigenous, Identity, Aboriginality and Koorie appeared before her inquiring eyes. I tried to clarify her muddled confusion but only adding more to her puzzlement by the bemused expressions on her face. In the period of 30 days living in Sydney and travelling throughout New South Wales, the welcome tourist did not get the opportunity to meet any peoples of the First Nations. Admittedly, I too was somewhat bemused, then the penny dropped.

Using English.com defines the idiom: 'The penny dropped' as 'when the penny drops, someone belatedly understands something that everyone else has long since understood'.

While the German teacher may not understand the use of this idiom, our brief exchange between two women of differing cultures did serve to exemplify the ugly truth of Australia and perpetuation of the mistruths about the peoples of the First Nations. Otherwise, how inconvenient the truth? How many of the thousands of visitors to Australia each year depart without gaining an understanding of the First Australians or actually meeting an Indigenous Australian and recognizing the myriad of identities?

My youngest daughter came home one day to tell me that her teacher said that 'all Aborigines came from Papua New Guinea'. This was in the 2006. Surely after years of educational reform that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were at least now widely recognised in curriculum as the First Australians. At the time I reflected on just how little progress had been made since my days at school when taught that Captain Cook discovered Australia.

I contacted the school the very next day and made an appointment to meet with the teacher. I followed up my conviction by asking the Principal to allow me to give a presentation to the students to celebrate NAIDOC week. I was knocked out by the comment of one of the students who said "all Aborigines were extinct".

Extinction of the Aborigines was the premise of the first piece of legislation in Queensland, Anno Sexagesimo Primo Victoriae Reginae No.(17) 'A Bill to make Provision for the better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal and Half-Caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to make more effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium'.

The Queensland Government's history site reads, 'As fears were expressed that Aboriginal people in Queensland faced extinction, the Government resolved to establish new governmental reserves to accommodate the remaining tribes throughout the State. In 1897,



the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act was passed, authorizing the removal of Aboriginal people to reserves'. Notably, these powers of removal did not discontinue until 1971.

Perhaps the German student may have also found the Queensland Government's site: Queensland's History on Indigenous people. A learned reader would question the validity of this information. Nonetheless, I must quote "It is difficult to know precisely when the Aboriginal people first arrived in Queensland. The oral tradition

of Aboriginal people, passed down through myths and legends of the Dreaming...there are differing theories as to how Aboriginal habitation occurred".

Arguably these words suggest that ethnocentricity and homogeneity remains the prevailing view. In my view this clearly reads that the peoples of the First Nations were all the same of one group and like the invading immigrants they must have arrived from outside.

Aboriginal women do share a common legacy of dispossession, dispersal and prolonged disadvantage. Another common legacy is that Aboriginal women, especially living in rural and remote communities can tell you with pride the name of their Nation(s) and boundaries defining their Nation(s) within the area of land and water called the Australian Nation. Within this context, the most confusing aspect for the German visitor like so many before and after, is that the plethora of misinformation and deceiving written fabrications are abound.

An official website which appears on the first page when searching the key noun was not available to the German visitor. In the meantime, [www.CreativeSpirits.com.au](http://www.CreativeSpirits.com.au) looks about the closest site I found in my search which provides information to visitors from a visitor's insight as well as rebutting the many prevailing myths about Indigenous Australians.

The German visitor asked me whether I

owned a didgeridoo. By this stage of our conversation, I was exhausted and politely said no without giving an explanation as to why not. The next question was about the name of the artist who designed the print on the QANTAS uniform. I politely replied that I do not know at the moment and nor did the flight attendant sitting across the aisle from us. Maybe at this stage of our conversation the German visitor thought 'what sort of Aborigine woman is this?'

No matter how much I tried to explain that I was a Murri woman from North Queensland not a Koori woman from New South Wales was I unable to convince her of my identity. I attempted to explain the diversity of Indigenous Australia and that we were not all the same. Our protocols determined that I could not talk on behalf of other Aboriginal people from differing States and Territories of Australia who identified themselves such as Koori, Goori, Palawa, Nunga, Nyungar and Yolngu.

Deciding not to confuse the German visitor anymore I wanted to explain that the people of the First Nations identified themselves by their nation (as well as clan group) and while in Cairns she may meet people from the Yidinji Nation, the Ghungunji Nation, the Idirji Nation, the Tjapukai Nation, the Irukandji Nation and so on.

Perhaps in hindsight I could have used an analogy of touring Europe and meeting people from many different nations. Then again this may have been too complicated not only for the German visitor but as I have found this is also the case for 'Dinky Di' Australians. Speaking the truth and what is true blue may have two different meanings. 'You know what I mean'.

After attending the Oxfam's Straight Talk summit involving 62 Indigenous women from the many First Nations participating in a week long series of activities involved with the machinery of the Australian Government, the high level conversation with the German visitor was purely coincidental.

The inspirational talk by the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, the Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, was timely. The Minister's words echo in my thoughts 'to get the message across you need a strong voice in your own communities, you need a strong voice on national and international stages...please use your strong voices'. These words complement the move towards transformational leadership for Indigenous women by inspiring and influencing



Indigenous women's futures.

The Hon. Linda Burney, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, New South Wales wrote 'Being Aboriginal is not the colour of your skin or how broad your nose is. It is a spiritual feeling, an identity you know in your heart...It is a unique feeling that is difficult for non-Aboriginals to fully understand'. These words and the meanings behind these are in my opinion, a true reflection of the situation faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a daily basis in contemporary Australian society.

I do not want to get into a philosophical debate on this subject. However, this may be an understatement. The recent Federal Court ruling may spark considerable national debate. I am not surprised by the recent news surrounding the Federal Court ruling which found to have contravened Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth). Notwithstanding, this Act of Parliament gave effect to Australia's obligation under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library Research Note 18 2000-01 entitled 'The Definition of Aboriginality' refers to the legal historian John McCorquodale 'In his analysis of over

700 pieces of legislation...found no less than 67 different definitions of Aboriginal people'. It is interesting to read The Research Note in its entirety to understand the necessity of definition for determining eligibility (descent, self-identification and community recognition). However, it makes you wonder for a moment or two and then you realize what this means for Indigenous women, especially in rural and remote communities.

I may be erroneous in saying that Indigenous men of a different ilk cannot flippantly refer to Indigenous women as "non-Indigenous Aboriginals" because the women no longer live in rural and remote communities. Indigenous Australians, both women and men, do share a common legacy over the past 223 years however we still identify with our own nations, especially our sense of belonging and our cultural ways. Identity remains an issue we must proudly uphold if transformational leadership for Indigenous women is to succeed.

Indeed, the penny dropped.

**Michelle Watson is a Ghungunji woman from Yarrabah. She is a mother of three and Director for the North Queensland Indigenous Women's Leadership Centre. She is passionate about giving a voice to women from Cape York.**



Elverina Johnson from Yarrabah in north Queensland with Hon Linda Burney . File image.



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# Women get the issues straight

NICOLA KALMAR

DERBY woman Winifred Taylor has a dream to help establish a networking summit in WA to help indigenous women overcome challenges and strive for a better future, following a trip to Parliament House in Canberra last month.

Ms Taylor was one of 62 women of various ages and backgrounds who attended this Oxfam's Straight Talk Summit, where they spoke with key political figures and tackled big issues and discussed challenges faced by indigenous people in Australia.

Since its launch in 2008, the summit invites hundreds of women every year from remote communities, country towns and big cities to raise issues with members of parliament and create long term solutions.

Ms Taylor, who works on a Prevention and Diversion program for West Kimberley Youth Justice Services, said she raised several issues during the week-long summit, including domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse. She said she was surprised to find some of these issues weren't isolated to Derby.

Ms Taylor said the summit provided the perfect opportunity to meet other women, swap stories and discuss strategies including strengthening skills of indigenous women, starting ongoing relationships and increasing her capacity to access political representatives.

She met many powerful and inspiring women, learned a lot and, being a strong advocate of supporting youth, had been "blown away" by the young women who attended the summit.

"We need the community to allow youth to walk alongside us and for us to pass on experience and involve them," she said.



Derby woman Winifred Taylor.

Picture: Nicola Kalmar

Upon her return to the Kimberley, Ms Taylor said she was left feeling inspired and empowered, and she encouraged all indigenous women to apply for the opportunity to attend next year.

Returning to the Kimberley with a different mindset, Ms Taylor said she was passionate about making a difference as an individual by joining committees and hoped one day to reunite with all the women she met last month through an innovative homegrown summit for women in WA and the Northern Territory.



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# Change-makers...



**INDIGENOUS** women are the 'change makers' who will help close the gap of disadvantage confronting Aboriginal people, a leadership forum has heard.

The third annual Oxfam Straight Talk Summit last month brought 60 indigenous women from across Australia, from cities, the outback and the Torres Strait, for a week-long leadership program.

The participants shared their stories with female politicians and increased their understanding of how the political system works.

Australia's first Indigenous federal Lower House MP, Ken Wyatt, told the women he hoped to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run for parliament and dreamed of one day seeing an Indigenous prime minister.

"One day I hope one of the faces in this room is sitting somewhere in one of the chambers of parliament," he told summiteers.

The MP paid tribute to his mother and the Indigenous women who had helped him on his journey.

"Never hold back, speak the truth that is your truth, speak what's in your heart with a combination of passion and logic," he said.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin told the women they were 'change makers' in their families, communities and workplaces.

Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop said her favourite part of the program was chatting in her office with a group of participants 'laughing and crying' over shared experiences. "Whatever challenges our nation faces, empowering women must be critical to the solution," she said.

Australian Greens senator Rachel Siewert told the women to follow the lead of big business and learn to make the political system work for them.

"You need to learn how this place works so you know what buttons to press to get the decisions that you need," she said.

Senator Siewert said politicians and Indigenous women could learn from each other. "There's an awful long way to go ... we're a long way from joining the dots, so we need you here to tell us how to do it," she said.

"It's important to have you here telling your stories to people in this place, (because) many people in this place do not get out and hear the issues."

Amongst the diverse group were: 63-year-old Cherbourg women's and children's advocate Lillian Gray; Bunbury social worker Joyce Dimer; Carla McGrath, business manager for the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern; Sydney-based Gumbaingirr woman and Aboriginal cultural heritage researcher Kaiya Donovan; Ngarrindjeri-Kaurna grandmother Emma Sumner, who works with Aboriginal carers, grandparents, and their families to gain better access to services, information and counselling; Brisbane-based single mum, Qld Council of Social Service project support officer and social justice advocate Katie Lowah Bond; and Yuin-Larrakia woman and Department of Health and Ageing Indigenous Peer Support Lee Jard.

Oxfam Australia advocacy manager Jo Pride said the Straight Talk participants were an inspiring group of women working across a range of issues, using different ways to change their communities for the better.

"One thing they have in common is a commitment to bring about change," she said. "Many of the women coming along are already running successful initiatives, from supporting young people, to working to change the way education is delivered in communities."

"There are women who are focused on housing and employment or working as health practitioners, counsellors, or cultural coordinators. Straight Talk is also an opportunity to share their successes and challenges with each other." – With AAP



Joyce Dimer (Bunbury, WA), Carla McGrath (Sydney, NSW) and Lillian Gray (Cherbourg, Qld) were among 60 Indigenous women who took part in Oxfam's third annual Straight Talk Summit at Parliament House in Canberra. *Newspix image*



During the summit, the Straight Talk participants attended a women and leadership session of the AAT 95 2011 Indigenous Studies Conference. They're pictured here at the Commonwealth House in the National Gallery of Australia.



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# Women share stories

## ALICIA BRIDGES

KUNUNURRA woman Ruth Abdullah has returned from the Oxfam Straight-Talk Summit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with a fresh perspective and an understanding of Federal Parliament.

Ms Abdullah was one of 62 women from all over Australia who participated in the event, which provided an opportunity for them to raise their local concerns with politicians.

Before visiting Parliament House in Canberra, the women had an opportunity to discuss their individual stories and differing cultural backgrounds.

Ms Abdullah said some of the younger delegates who grew up in cities were intrigued by her more traditional childhood.

"Some of them shared their

knowledge and asked us a lot of questions about all our experiences and our history and (being) part of the Stolen Generation," she said.

"The city is so completely different to us out in the Kimberley here. Some of them had lost their identities in the cities.

"They only know a certain amount of their history or their background. We just told them all ours.

"Some of (their stories) were really moving, they were crying because it brought up a lot of things that they never thought of."

After they were introduced, the women spent two days at Parliament House, where they saw Federal ministers discussing the carbon tax and immigration during question time.

Ms Abdullah said her meeting

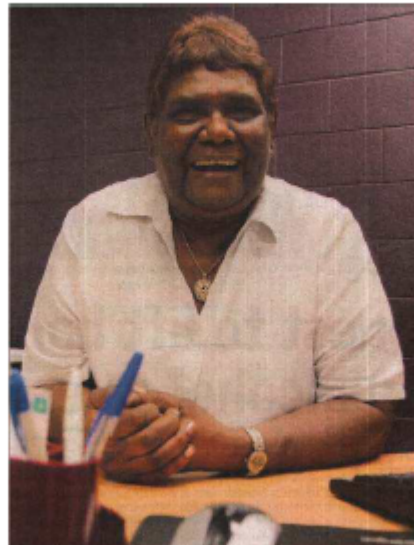
with Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop was a highlight of the trip.

"It was a gateway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women too because Julie Bishop said they didn't have a chance to listen to people ... and all the issues from around Australia," she said.

"All those things they hear and read but they never have it given to them straight out."

Ms Abdullah said some of the summit participants would continue to meet in the future.

Oxfam Straight-Talk co-ordinator Karrina Nolan said the summit participants were inspiring women who were dedicated to improving their communities. "These women are already striving for and achieving change in their communities," she said.



Ruth Abdullah said visiting Parliament House in Canberra as a representative of the Oxfam Straight-Talk Summit was an eye-opening experience. Picture: Alicia Bridges



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Opinion 19



Indigenous leaders enjoy...

## A chat with Stephen Hagan

This column introduces Indigenous people who share their views on social, economic and political issues.

Tammy Solonec, Director, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, chats about:

### Aboriginality and triumphs over adversity

SH: In recent years you've come on the national stage, it would appear, with a quick pace. Can you tell me whose your mob.

TS: I am a Nyikina woman from Derby in the Kimberley of Western Australia. I grew up in regional and remote WA before moving to Perth when I was 16 years of age, where I have lived ever since. I had strong Catholic influences in my early childhood, due to my Aboriginal Nanna and Spanish Poppa being devout Catholics. My Nanna was raised at Beagle Bay mission and would have been one of the first Aboriginal nuns, had she not met Poppa.

SH: What do you remember about your childhood?

TS: We left Derby when I was two and moved to Exmouth, where we spent 6 years. What I remember about Exmouth mainly is the beach (my Dad was the President of the Yacht Club). When I was 8 years old we moved to Mullewa, a small town in the wheatbelt of WA. In August that year (1985), there was a racial riot in Mullewa that rocked in the town and the State. It occurred after an Aboriginal man died after being hit over the head with a bottle by a publican at the Railway Hotel – and the publican was only charged with assault. The charge was later upgraded to unlawful killing, but only after numerous Aboriginal people from the town were charged with various offences as a result of the riot. It was a strange town to live in. In addition to the Railway Hotel, there was another pub, where Mum worked as a kitchen hand. This pub had two sides. One nice, carpeted bar where you could get a counter meal, and the other side was what they referred to as 'the animal bar'. This was where the local Aboriginal people drank. The bar had no good furnishings, bars on the windows and was generally in poor condition. We were allowed into the white side of the bar, because Mum worked there and because her husband was non-Aboriginal. But I used to look at the animal bar, and the people in there, and wondered what it must have been like for them. There were all sorts

of racial distinctions in the town and I think living there, at that time, planted a seed in me that matured as I grew.

After Mullewa, we went to the remote Pilbara town of Marble Bar – the hottest town in Australia. I loved Marble Bar. Its remoteness, the fact that our school was tiny and 80% Aboriginal and the beautiful and endless views from our backyard on General Street – the main street of town. The town had a different feel to Mullewa and a different level of acceptance of Aboriginal peoples and ways. It was there that Mum was offered tertiary studies through a block release program with Edith Cowan University. She studied Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies and as she told us about the history that had not been taught in school, the picture of the true Australia became clearer to me.

Mum continued studying after we moved to Tom Price, a remote mining town in the Pilbara. At the time, Tom Price was a closed town and Aboriginal people weren't allowed in, unless they had a job with the mining company or a service provider like us. So in this town, I was part of a very small minority of Aboriginal people. Mum continued to teach my sister and I about the 'true' history of Australia and its treatment of Aboriginal people as she continued with her degree. I became increasingly interested in Australia's history and my identity.

SH: Did you question your Aboriginality at that young age?

TS: I must admit it took me a while to come to terms with being Aboriginal. I have a big nose and although I have dark skin, it's not that dark. My sister looks white as do a number of my cousins and my Dad is not Aboriginal. People would always ask me what my ancestry was and were never content with me saying I was Aboriginal. They wanted to know what else – and usually they guessed wrong. But now, after 35 years, I am comfortable with my Aboriginality and honour it. I am so lucky to have the heritage that I do.

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When I was 17, I was fortunate to be accepted into the inaugural Aboriginal Pre-Law Program at the University of Western Australia. This program, which provided provisional entry to Aboriginal people into Law School was the first of its kind in Australia and has been so successful that it has now been mirrored in numerous law schools throughout the country and has assisted hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into law degrees.

Studying law at UWA and mixing with other passionate Aboriginal students was a very empowering experience for me and I became drawn to all the social justice units and learning about how the law evolves and adapts. I knew even then, that rather than working within the confines of law – I wanted to be a change maker.

SH: Do you recall your first real taste of racial discrimination?

TS: My first real taste of this came whilst studying Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Law. I had been looking for a rental and had taken Mum and another Aboriginal friend to look at a place. The woman who had been so welcoming to me on the phone didn't want a bar of me or my family and I knew I had been discriminated against. It's an awful feeling to know you have been denied something because another person has made a judgement against you based on your race. I started talking to other people at Uni and discovered that I wasn't the only one this had happened to. So I started researching and interviewing and ended up putting my all into a paper on discrimination in the private rental market. I ended up with the top mark in the Unit for that year, my article was published in the Indigenous Law Bulletin – and since then there have been two enquiries in WA into to discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in public and private housing. I've remained committed to this subject, and am now the Vice-Chairperson of Shelter WA – a mainstream housing advocacy body that advocates for affordable housing for all people, but especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

SH: How did you meet your husband?

TS: Whilst studying law, I met my husband and we fell in love. We were married when I was 20 in April 1996 and in February 1997 our son Jonathan was born. Four years later, we had another child, Jacinta. She was born with a cleft of the soft palate and was very sick as a baby. I couldn't breast feed, I had to stop studying to care for her and my husband and I seemed to be fighting all the time.

Whilst I was in hospital with Jacinta I was

helped by other mothers who had been in the same situation, through the Cleft Lip and Palate Association. I was so touched by the care these women gave and the ideals behind the organisation that I joined the Committee and became their Secretary and Newsletter Editor. I found this incredibly rewarding and enjoyed my first experience of being part of a not-for-profit organisation. But this didn't sit well with my husband, who was against me doing anything voluntarily. The more I learnt at uni and the more I mixed with people trying to 'make a difference', the more I realised we were from opposite worlds and that our core values differed greatly. I was utterly depressed and felt that I had dug myself into a hole that was too deep to get out of. By this stage we had two children and a mortgage. But then, I reasoned, that no hole was too deep to climb out of – and that all I needed was a rope to climb up. So, on the 29 August 2002, when my daughter was just 18 months old, I left my husband and the children. I felt it was the only way out. He would not leave – and I had nowhere to take the children, so I left them behind. That was the hardest thing I ever did, and had I known what would happen afterwards – I probably wouldn't have done it. My husband reacted badly to my leaving. He quit his job, changed the locks on the house and allowed me no access to the children. So, I took it to the family court. I thought the court would see that I had been the primary carer, that he was unreasonably disallowing access, and that they would restore my custody. But they didn't. I still can't understand what happened. I don't know whether it was because I was represented by the ALS and discriminated against because of that – or if the ALS had represented me poorly. All I knew was that I had lost.

SH: How did you react to losing custody of your children?

TS: That was probably the lowest point in my life. I had rented out a little villa to have the kids in and after the judgement came down, I sat in that villa for a whole week and cried. I couldn't get off the couch, or clean or go to work. In a spate of despair, I took every pill I could find in the house and got them in front of me and was going to end it. But then, something inside me made me stop. I was still alive, I had plenty to give the world – and I wanted to live.

So, I got myself off the couch and started living. I went back to law school, got a boyfriend, got a good job and started getting used to being the weekend parent. But then, that relationship went bad too.



The pain probably wasn't as great as my divorce or losing the kids, but because I had given up everything to be with this man, all the safety nets were gone – and there was no one to catch me. After he left, I went into another spate of depression – this time for 5 weeks. My safety nets weren't completely gone however and I had a lovely work colleague who introduced me to the book, 'You Can Heal Your Life' by Louise Hay. I chewed up this book and it offered much relief. I started to read as much of Louise Hay's work as I could, then I found Wayne Dyer and made my way through all the self-help books I could.

How did you overcome your depression?

TS: During this time I also turned to new age spirituality. I started meditating, I learnt about chakras, I looked to the healing properties of gems and stones and all sorts of other new age philosophies including feng shui, astrology and numerology. This was a period of great growth for me. It was an investment in my well being, in my self-confidence and my ability to overcome any hurdles that life put before me.

Once I got over the shock and realised it was just me, I decided that I needed to get my kids back. This was no easy task. By this stage, my ex-husband had been the primary carer of the kids for two years, I had a decent job and only saw the kids on weekends and school holidays. This meant that he was entitled to Legal Aid I was not. The ALS said they did not have the 'resources' to represent me. So I did it myself. I was blessed that a lawyer who had previously helped me with my case at the ALS, who was now living in Africa agreed to help me. Every night after work, I would stay back and write my affidavits and send it to her for comment. I ended up writing a 150-page

affidavit, with 50 annexures and 6 supporting affidavits and proceeded all the way to final trial – an effort that took a whole year.

I also scrimped and saved and managed to get together a deposit for a house, which I purchased near the children's school – to convince the court that I could care for the kids. My ex-husband had a barrister and solicitor representing him and on the other side – it was just me. After one day of a cross-examining my ex-husband, his team of lawyers came to me and said they were ready to settle. I ended up getting everything I asked for, which was all I ever asked for – and that is equal shared care of the kids.

It was incredibly ironic when we had signed the agreement, dated 13 April 2006 – and realised that that day was our 10 year wedding anniversary. After that day, I went down to the river and sat there for a while and realised that I can do anything.

Why did you also tell this story to the Oxfam Straight Talk forum held in Canberra recently?

TS: The reason I have shared this story is because until I had got through my feelings of worthlessness, did all that inner work on myself and faced my perpetrator – I wasn't in a position to help others yet alone engage politically.

My story is about building a solid foundation for yourself. If you want to work for the community, for social justice and for others generally – then you have to look after yourself.

You need to deal with your demons – and face them head on – or they will always come back to haunt you.

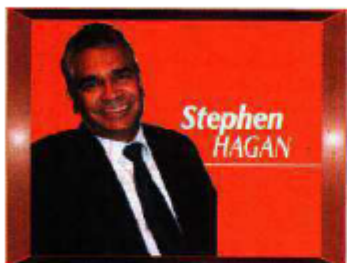
*Continued on page 25*



Above: Tammy Solonec. Image supplied



## Tammy Solonec's involvement in Indigenous Affairs



*Continued from page 19*

SH: How did you get involved in NAIDOC?

TS: Not long after the custody battle, in September 2006, I started my next big project – which was working on NAIDOC in Perth. I was working as an Indigenous Community Education Officer and was frustrated at the lack of coordination of NAIDOC events in Perth. Along with a few friends, we convened a community meeting about NAIDOC, then formed an interim Committee specifically to get us through 2007 – which marked 50 years of NAIDOC and we held our first Opening Ceremony and Ball.

Not long after this, I was selected to be a participant in a reality TV show called 'the Abbey', where I lived the life of a Benedictine nun for 33 days. I was still very much into spirituality at that stage and still very traumatised. The Abbey was a wonderful place to work on healing, forgiving and deciding what I wanted to do with my life. This was an enormously beneficial thing to do and I would recommend to any of you in need of healing, to take time out and do some sort of spiritual retreat where you can focus on your inner being.

I came back with a clear mind about what I wanted to do. I wanted to finish my law degree, I wanted to take my ex-husband back to court again – this time for the property and I wanted to really start devoting myself to NAIDOC. I found since the Abbey that I no longer had the dependence on self-help and spirituality – though I am still a seeker in many ways.

For me, it started to become clear that working for worthy causes fulfilled my spirit and it's been that way ever since. I did take my ex-husband back to court and got the property settlement. I did put effort into growing NAIDOC Perth, and in November 2006 – some 12 years after I started, I did finish my law degree.

SH: How did you get to work for the Aboriginal Legal Service?

TS: It was while I was on the dance floor of our 2007 NAIDOC Perth Ball that I managed to secure an interview for Articles at the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA and in September 2007 I started as an Articled Clerk in the Civil and Human Rights Unit.

In December of that year the Redress WA compensation scheme for children who had been abused or neglected in State Care in WA commenced and I was thrown into the position of liaising with and taking statements from Stolen Generations clients. As you can imagine, this was an incredibly difficult task. I know that if I had not done all the inner work and healing, I would have been useless to those people.

I started to realise that everything I'd been through was preparing me for this – for my work. It gave me the empathy I needed to sit and cry with these people and validate their pain and suffering.

After my Articles I did my Restrictive Practice as the Senior Policy Officer for ALS and really started to get involved in drafting submissions and finding ways to influence government and be a 'change maker'.

SH: You also got involved in the Mr Ward case?

TS: In January 2008, there was a terribly tragedy in WA when a NG Elder, Mr Ward, was picked up for drink driving on the Australia Day weekend, refused bail and transported 400km from Laverton to Kalgoorlie in the back of an unventilated prisoner transport vehicle, in circumstances where the air conditioning failed.

The pain Mr Ward must have suffered, as he was burnt alive in the back of that van is unthinkable.

Soon after his passing, I was asked to attend



GSL (now G4S) offices in Melbourne and Adelaide with the Commissioner of Corrective Services to make recommendations on how prisoner transport in WA could be improved.

After that, I was appointed to the Inquest. This involved travelling to Warburton and the NG lands on three occasions to take statements from family members and represent the Aboriginal peoples of WA generally in the Coronial Inquest into his passing.

Working on the Ward matter was a privilege and honour. I have great admiration for the people of the NG lands and even greater outrage at the neglect that has been able to occur to them and other remote Aboriginal communities.

SH: What did you think of the initial findings in the Mr Ward case?

TS: The findings that were handed down by Coroner Hope found severe neglect, almost to the point of recklessness by the WA Government and company G4S.

He recommended changes to prisoner transport, the Bail Act, the Coroner's Act, training of police and Justices of the Peace and more.

In November 2009 I was fortunate to be accepted into the annual Diplomacy Training Program where I met Monica Morgan. This is a fantastic program aimed at teaching Indigenous human rights defenders from the Asia Pacific region about the international human rights system.

In December 2009 I completed my Restrictive Practice and was promoted to Managing Solicitor of the Law and Advocacy Unit at ALS.

Here I worked with a team of brilliant lawyers and support staff in drafting submissions and engaging in international law. Many of the submissions and work we focused on were directly related to the recommendations from Coroner Hope in relation to the Ward Inquest.

SH: How did you get involved in Oxfam Australia?

TS: Around that time I was approached by a friend from law school who wanted to set up an Aboriginal Lawyers Committee in WA to support and mentor Aboriginal law students, graduates and lawyers and to provide an additional voice of advocacy in WA. I agreed and we worked with the Law Society to make this happen.

I was fortunate in 2010 to be supported by Oxfam Australia to be a youth delegate to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York and by the Human Rights Commission to attend the

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva.

I am still learning about international mechanisms and how we can best engage with them and find it very rewarding. I have been able to meet Indigenous peoples from all around the world and find solidarity with these peoples in our common oppression.

SH: You continue to maintain your interest in NAIDOC?

TS: Throughout this time, NAIDOC Perth also continued to grow. Our events get bigger each year, we have gotten better at event management, coordination and promotion.

We also secured an Office at Noongar Radio and for the first time in 2010, had money to pay a consultant to help us manage NAIDOC week.

In early 2010, I was appointed to the National NAIDOC Committee. Although I was still enjoying my work at ALSWA, I found it difficult being constrained to criminal justice and felt unsupported as Managing Solicitor.

SH: How did you get involved in the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples?

TS: I found it very difficult managing staff, working full time, being a single parent and contributing to NAIDOC, Shelter and the Aboriginal Lawyers Committee.

When the opportunity came up to nominate to be a Director of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples I jumped at it.

It was one of the proudest days of my life when I was elected by the Delegates to be a Director of Chamber Three.

I officially started at the Congress on 8 July. The position is 3 days a week, has great flexibility and freedom and suits my lifestyle and responsibilities well.

Some of the work I've been involved in to date includes Strategic Planning, Constitutional Recognition, the Northern Territory Emergency Response and developing policy processes and frameworks.

I set up my office for Congress at Noongar Radio and was able to secure an office just across the hall from our NAIDOC Office.

I am now working to make both offices functional and with NAIDOC in particular, we are looking towards our long-term strategic position.

SH: You're also involved in ANTAr?

TS: I also took up the position recently, as Chairperson of ANTAr WA.

Although working 3 days a week has been good for the kids and me, due to all the voluntary work that I do and events that come

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up, I still require a lot of support. I have found that relying on others to provide it out of good will is fraught with difficulties and I prefer to do things myself.

I have a cleaner and a gardener and had the kids in afterschool care. However, I was still feeling that I needed more support, especially since losing my secretary after leaving ALS.

So recently I moved to a beautiful new home which is closer to my son's high school and my cousin is going to move in with us. I've also left a room vacant for an au pair (nanny) and am actively looking for the right person.

In terms of engaging with the political system – this is something I am very much still learning.

SH: What have all your work experiences taught you?

TS: My time at ALS was instrumental. I learnt how to lobby and be effective in influencing change. Writing a good submission and get your message clear is important – but knowing how and who to deliver that message to is even more important.

I decided a couple of years ago that I wanted to pursue a political career and have now been working towards that.

I joined the Greens political party and have started attending meetings and conferences

and I contribute to the formulation of policies.

What I've found with this – is that politicians are just people like you and me – and that they are very approachable.

I would encourage everyone to get to know your local members of Parliament and start engaging. If you have political ambitions like me, then I encourage you to join a political party and start to get involved.

Even if you decide not to run for election with the party, just becoming involved in the party will teach you a lot about politics.

So that's where I'm at. I still have a long way to go on my journey and still need better support systems, but I know that because I have invested so much time into building a solid foundation for myself, that I will be in a position to be effective in my political engagement.

SH: Are you more contented these days with your personal life?

TS: I have sorted through things with my ex-husband and feel that equal shared care is working well.

**Stephen Hagan is a Kullilli traditional owner of south-west Queensland, 2006 NAIDOC Person of the Year, and a multi-award winning author and film maker.**



Taremy Solonec (second from right) with NAIDOC Committee members recently. Image supplied



## Belongingness: but who belongs to whom?



Yarning with my niece the other day about life and relationships with the opposite sex, the topic of belonging to someone took somewhat of an interesting twist. As a single mother my life experiences include the highs and lows of marriage, divorce and relationship breakdowns but I have never been physically abused by my partner.

But here I was listening to my niece saying "Hey Auntie when a man hits you it means you belong to him, you are his woman....it is our way, everybody knows this". Sadly, my niece was absolutely right. I have heard this story many times before from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, especially from women living in rural and remote communities.

Indigenous women know about family violence, whether as a victim and/or affected by it. The horrific stories told by Indigenous women of cowardly and senseless acts of violence perpetrated by 'their man' are without doubt typical of life in rural and remote communities for Indigenous women, children and their families. Paradoxically, certainly self-contradictory and absurd as it may appear, family violence becomes an acceptable social norm underpinned by a cultural vagary that men have the right to physically abuse 'their woman' because they belong to them.

Moreover, unbelievable as it may seem, Indigenous women know that it is wrong to be physically abused by 'their man' but perhaps the euphoria of belonging to someone is better than not belonging to anybody. Love, inspirations and dreams of Indigenous women becomes a denigrating nightmare of self-fulfilling prophecies of denial and acceptance punctuated by violence, depravation and

helplessness. So you may ask when this did all begin and when will it end?

People of the First Nations enjoyed a better healthier life without the trauma of family violence before 1788. Diseases common in 18th century Europe were not common in the First Nations of Australia. In fact these foreign diseases such as smallpox, measles, influenza, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, sexually transmitted syphilis and gonorrhoea were nonexistent until brought into Australia by the invading colonists. Like diseases carried by vermin the spread of the filthy ways of the invading immigrants was devastating on the peoples of the First Nations.

Dispossession of land, sea and sovereignty, the murders and atrocities, dispersal of peoples of the First Nations resulting in breakdown of cultural structures, kinship and gender roles is the historical context in which to better understand and recognise the beginnings of family violence as we know it today in contemporary Australian society. In the words of the former Prime Minister, Paul Keating in the unforgettable speech on 10 December 1992 "...It begins, I think with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We bought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion.....It is our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?"

Recognition of the unacceptably high rates of family violence over the past couple of decades is indicative of the numerous research papers, publications and reports on the impact of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The '2000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence' reported that in Queensland "the harsh reality is that many families are now trapped in environments where deviance and atrocities have become a normal behaviour and as such, form an integral part of the children's socialisation".

'Ending family violence and abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities - Key Issues' an overview paper on research and findings by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2001-2006 by Tom Calma, the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, provides a number of key messages including "Family violence is abhorrent and has no place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. It is a scourge that is causing untold damage and trauma among Indigenous communities, to our women and children, and to the fabric of Indigenous cultures". The paper outlines ten key challenges in addressing family violence and abuse including "...we need strong leadership from women, but we also need the support of Indigenous men if we are to make progress in stamping out violence. Indigenous men need to model appropriate behavior, challenge violence and stand up against it, and support our women and nurture our children".

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which is Australia's national health and welfare statistics and information agency, in the 2006 publication 'Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' states that "Family violence is acknowledged as an issue of national significance, both generally and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples." In view of data on prevalence of violence from the '2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey', it was suggested that the "rate of being a victim of physical or threatened violence among the Indigenous population was over twice the rate of non-Indigenous population". Other findings of the 2006 report included "people in remote areas were much more likely to report that family violence was a neighbourhood problem".

The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet publication 'Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, April 2010' is a comprehensive summary of the most recent indicators of the health of Indigenous Australians. The publication makes the concluding remarks "It is clear from this overview of current health status that Indigenous people remain the least healthy sub-population in Australia... But clearly the gap between the health

status of Indigenous people and that of other Australians is still very, very wide.... awareness by governments of the enormity of the challenge, but the real test will be to sustain the commitments through changing political and economic cycles".

I encourage Indigenous women to check out the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet which is not only an excellent source of freely assessable information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, it also provides 'one-stop info-shop' open for information sharing through the 'yarning places'.

The impact of Family Violence on Indigenous women is far-reaching and widespread. Transformational leadership for Indigenous women is the key to bringing together strong Indigenous women, with passion and commitment, to inspire Indigenous women's futures for a life without family violence. There are many stories of Indigenous women who have successfully got off the vicious cycle of family violence to transform themselves through self-belief and sheer determination into strong, proud, independent and inspiring women.

Last month, I had the pleasure of meeting Michelle Deshong at the Oxfam's Straight Talk conference in Canberra. As the facilitator of the conference, Michelle shared many stories with 62 Indigenous women from throughout Australia on her life experiences with family violence, raising three children as a single mother in Townsville and achieving a First Class Honours Degree in Political Science from James Cook University. Michelle exemplifies transformational leadership.

Michelle is a strong Indigenous woman and her passion to advocate on issues affecting women is an inspiring story. Michelle shared the following words "Having women to support me, women like Pat Andersen and Jacki Huggins, they gave me confidence and are now my peers who I can discuss and address issues with particularly on women's issues. My mother and father instilled respect, good work ethic and laid the platform for my continued interest in social justice and political involvement".

I like to share with Indigenous women



"The Strength of Women Words of Understanding and Encouragement for Survivors' which is a compilation of quotes and writings by strong women. "There is Strength in Knowing the Many Faces of Courage" by Bonnie St John which reads "Sometimes you will stand up for what you believe in, say no to that which is not compatible to your views and show your strength and courage by being true to yourself. But no matter how many times you are knocked down, with strength and courage you will always rise again".

I believe that us Indigenous women need to galvanise ourselves into taking action against Indigenous men from pulverizing our inspirations and dreams for a prosperous and safe future for our children and our families without creating a schism between our women and men. But enough is enough.

There needs to be another twist in what constitutes belongingness, no longer in the shape of men's fists but for the love of belonging to each other. Indeed, who belongs to whom?

Michelle Watson is a Ghungunji woman from Yarrabah. She is a mother of three and Director for the North Queensland Indigenous Women's Leadership Centre. She is passionate about giving a voice to women from Cape York.



Michelle Watson speaks about Aboriginal women galvanising together for a prosperous and safe future. Miss Aberigine SA 1972 high light Aboriginal women's pride. 2nd from right back row: Eunice Wangamen (Miss Aberigine 1971). Seated: Miss Christine Sumner (Miss Aberigine 1972).  
 Image News Ltd Archive

## BROADCAST CLIPPINGS:

**4K1G (Townsville)**

**Murri Voices - 14/09/2011 - 01:09 PM**

**Lloyd Wyles**

Program Preview

- Interview with Karrina Nolan, the Straight Talk coordinator for **Oxfam** Australia about the Straight Talk Summit this week in Canberra.
- Interview with Rachel Siewert, member of the panel on Constitutional Recognition Of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about the public consultations being held.
- The Aboriginal Message.

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**Duration:** 1:27

**4K1G (Townsville)**

**Murri Voices - 14/09/2011 - 01:44 PM**

**Lloyd Wyles**

Wyles discusses the **Oxfam** Australia Straight Talk summit that will start next week in Canberra. Wyles also notes the group of indigenous students from across Australia who have arrived at Parliament House this week to undertake a week of work experience with the Australian Government with Mark Arbib, Federal Minister for Indigenous Employment, and Jenny Macklin, Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs through the Learn Earn Legend initiative.

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**Duration:** 1:32

**4K1G (Townsville)**

**Murri Voices - 14/09/2011 - 01:22 PM**

**Lloyd Wyles**

Wyles is joined by Karrina Nolan, the Straight Talk coordinator for **Oxfam** Australia to discuss the third annual Straight Talk Summit being held this week in Canberra. Nolan says they have received over 300 applications this year, from which they have chosen a diverse group of 62 women. Nolan confirms that Deputy Opposition leader Julie Bishop, **Indigenous** Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin and Greens spokesperson for **Aboriginal** and Torres Strait Islander Issues Senator Rachel Siewert will be at the summit. Nolan says for the second and third day, they will hold the summit at Parliament House. Nolan says that Straight Talk isn't just about talking about problems but also about sharing some solutions that are working and notes that the debate has been dominated by the disadvantage and the problems and not talking about the resilience and strength that we all see in the community. She says that **Oxfam** has been working with **Aboriginal** and Torres Strait Island peoples for over 30 years so is certainly well placed to support the **Close the Gap** campaign.

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**Interviewees:** Karrina Nolan, Straight Talk Coordinator, **Oxfam** Australia

**Duration:** 6:53

**ABC North Queensland (Townsville)**

**08:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 08:32 AM**

**Newsreader**

Michelle Watson, campaigner for the rights of **Indigenous** Women, has been chosen to take the North's issues to Canberra this week to meet with Politicians during **Oxfam's Straight Talk Summit**. She wants to see more **Indigenous** community controlled services.

Straight Talk 2011 Media Clippings. <http://www.oxfam.org.au/straight-talk>

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**Interviewees:** Michelle Watson, Campaigner  
**Duration:** 0:43

**ABC Far North (Cairns)**  
**08:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 08:32 AM**  
**Newsreader**

A campaigner for **Indigenous** women's rights Michelle Watson has been chosen to take FNQ issues to Canberra alongside 61 **Indigenous** women from around the country during **Oxfam's Straight Talk summit**. She will argue that women need to have more say in how **Indigenous** programs are run in northern Qld.  
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**Interviewees:** Michelle Watson, rights campaigner  
**Duration:** 0:42

**ABC North Queensland (Townsville)**  
**07:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 07:32 AM**  
**Newsreader**

Michelle Watson, campaigner for the rights of **Indigenous** Women, has been chosen to take the North's issues to Canberra this week to meet with Politicians during **Oxfam's Straight Talk Summit**.  
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**Interviewees:** Michelle Watson, Campaigner  
**Duration:** 0:45

**NITV (Sydney)**  
**NITV News - 16/09/2011 - 05:39 PM**  
**Natalie Ahmat and Kris Flanders**

**Aboriginal** women will meet in Canberra for a **summit** called **Straight Talk** which links **indigenous** women to the Austn political process. Yorta Yorta woman Corina Nolan (\*) is the organiser of the event.  
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**Duration:** 0:17

**2MCE (National Australia)**  
**17:00 News - 19/09/2011 - 05:01 PM**  
**Newsreader**

**Oxfam** says their third annual **Straight Talk Summit** will allow **indigenous** women from across the country to meet with politicians to discuss the issues that affect their local communities. The **summit** will take place in the Parliament House at Canberra this week.  
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**Interviewees:** Carina Nolan, Coordinator, **Straight Talk**  
**Duration:** 0:44

**2MCE (National Australia)**  
**14:00 News - 19/09/2011 - 02:02 PM**  
**Newsreader**

A group of **indigenous** women will head to Canberra for **Oxfam's Straight Talk Summit**. Karrina Nolan(\*), Coordinator, **Straight Talk, Oxfam**, talks about the programme.  
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**Interviewees:** Karrina Nolan(\*), Coordinator, **Straight Talk, Oxfam**  
**Duration:** 0:45

**4K1G (Townsville)**  
**Murri Voices - 19/09/2011 - 01:23 PM**  
**Lloyd Wyles**

Wyles introduces John Paul Janke of Australian Institute of **Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** Studies [AIATSIS], which is holding its National **Indigenous** Studies **Conference** at the Australian National University in Canberra. Janke says the **conference** has become a key **forum** for new research programmes regarding **indigenous** communities, covering fields such as education, health, information technology, employment, language, well-being and resilience. An **indigenous** interpreters' meeting will also be part of the **conference**, as will a special screening of 'Here I Am' at the National Film and Sound Archive. Janke says Kirsty Parker, Managing Editor of the Courier Mail, will chair a Q&A panel regarding **indigenous** woman leaders, which will also feature delegates from **Oxfam's Straight Talk summit**.  
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**Interviewees:** John Paul Janke, Australian Institute of **Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** Studies  
**Duration:** 6:25

**ABC Far North (Cairns)**  
**12:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 12:33 PM**  
**Newsreader**

Far north Qld **Aboriginal** woman Michelle Watson, chosen to attend this week's **Straight Talk summit** in Canberra, says she wants to see more **Indigenous** community controlled services.  
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**Interviewees:** Michelle Watson, Far north Qld **Aboriginal** woman  
**Duration:** 0:39

**ABC Central Australia (Alice Springs)**  
**12:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 12:33 PM**  
**Newsreader**

An **Indigenous** educator from Tennant Creek says she wants to use a Canberra visit to learn how the political system works. Joyce Taylor, **Indigenous** Educator is attending **OXFAM's Straight Talk summit** and will meet MPs including Jenny Macklin, Federal Minister for **Indigenous** Affairs.  
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**Interviewees:** Joyce Taylor, **Indigenous** Educator  
**Duration:** 0:43

**2MCE (National Australia)**  
**09:00 News - 19/09/2011 - 09:01 AM**  
**Newsreader**

**Oxfam's** third annual **Straight Talk Summit** for **Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** women will be held

in Canberra this week.  
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**Interviewees:** Karina Nolan(\*), Organiser, [Straight Talk](#)  
**Duration:** 0:39

**ABC Central Australia (Alice Springs)**  
**08:30 News - 19/09/2011 - 08:31 AM**  
**Newsreader**

**Aboriginal** women will meet in Canberra this week for [Oxfam's Straight Talk summit](#), to learn about the Australian political system and discuss ways to improve the lives of **Indigenous** people. They'll meet female MPs, including **Indigenous** Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin.  
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**Interviewees:** Joyce Taylor, Tennant Creek  
**Duration:** 0:45

**2SM (Sydney)**  
**07:00 News - 21/09/2011 - 07:03 AM**  
**Newsreader**

**Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** women sit down with politicians today for [Oxfam's](#) 3rd annual [Straight Talk Summit](#). Karina Nolan, Program Co-Ordinator, says they are an inspiring group.  
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**Interviewees:** Karina Nolan, Program Co-Ordinator, [Oxfam](#)  
**Duration:** 0:34

**2DU (Dubbo)**  
**06:55 News - 21/09/2011 - 07:03 AM**  
**Newsreader**

**Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** women of all ages will be sitting down with politicians today for [Oxfam's](#) third annual [Straight Talk Summit](#).  
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**Interviewees:** Karrina Nolan, Program Coordinator  
**Duration:** 0:34

**ABC 666 Canberra (Canberra)**  
**Drive - 21/09/2011 - 04:22 PM**  
**Ginger Gorman**

Gorman says that **Indigenous** women are coming from across Australia to meet politicians in Canberra. Gorman talks to Karina Nowlan who is a Yorta Yorta woman and is [Oxfam's Straight Talk](#) coordinator. Gorman asks what [Straight Talk](#) is. Nowlan says it brings many **Indigenous** women from across the country and they are meeting with politicians. Gorman asks how many women are involved. Nowlan says 300 applied but they could only take 60. Gorman asks if there is one message. Nowlan says there is a whole bunch of issues but is a chance for women to talk about the success of their communities. Gorman says that **Indigenous** stories always seem negative. Nowlan says that it is very important to talk about the success of

**Indigenous** communities.

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**Interviewees:** Karina Nowlan, Coordinator, **Oxfam's Straight Talk**

**Duration:** 4:57

**4K1G (Townsville)**

**Murri Voices - 21/09/2011 - 01:54 PM**

**Lloyd Wyles**

Interview with Jason Mitzford, organiser, 1000 Warrior March. Wyles and Mitzford discuss the march, which is a walk to Federation Square on behalf of Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. Mitzford explains the theme of the march in the Wayaperri community. Mitzford says it is for Aboriginal men. Wyles says the **Oxfam** indigenous women's summit is taking place. Mitzford says he is the National Community Engagement Manager for the AFL, building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and supporting the Deadly Awards. Mitzford explains how they will promote the march.  
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**Interviewees:** Jason Mitzford, organiser, 1000 Warrior March

**Duration:** 6:56

**4K1G (Townsville)**

**Murri Voices - 21/09/2011 - 01:23 PM**

**Lloyd Wyles**

Wyles is joined by Michelle Deshon, the lead facilitator of **Straight Talk** to discuss **Oxfam's** third annual **Straight Talk Summit** being held at Parliament House in Canberra today. Deshon says the **summit** started a few years ago because **Oxfam** decided that one of the things that was lacking was an understanding amongst **Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** people about how they can influence and make change. Deshon says **Straight Talk** is an opportunity to change the conversation in the community to looking at solutions for the known issues. She says the **summit** brings people to Canberra to get them to understand the political system and then they will hold individual meetings with all of the female members of Parliament who are available. Deshon says that this **summit** empowers many women with their own self esteem and capacity to say they can achieve anything they want to. She says the opening ceremony at Parliament House was very good and was attended by a number of Ministers and Senators, including Jenny Macklin, Julie Bishop and Senator Rachel Siewert. Deshon says they have women from all of the country taking part in the **summit**, with women from as far north as the Torres Strait and NT, one women from Tas and the rest from throughout Australia. She says that they saw a real willingness from some members of Parliament this morning to having a yarn with some of the women. Deshon says they will head into question time after lunch and they will be able to see in context why politicians act up and make 'big scenes'. She says she thinks asylum seekers will be on the agenda today.  
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**Interviewees:** Michelle Deshon, Lead Facilitator, **Straight Talk**

**Duration:** 9:22

**SBS (National Australia)**

**World News Australia - 21/09/2011 - 06:57 PM**

**Anton Enus and Janice Peterson**

Women have been hailed as the change-makers of **indigenous** communities at a leadership **forum**, **Oxfam's Straight Talking summit**, in Canberra.

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**Vision: Oxfam**

**Duration:** 0:42

**NITV (Sydney)**  
**NITV News - 21/09/2011 - 05:42 PM**  
**Natalie Ahmat and Kris Flanders**

Politicians have been told by **indigenous** women what's really happening in their communities. The annual **Straight Talk Summit** opened today with the aim of tackling the big issues. Jenny Macklin, **Indigenous** Affairs Minister, encouraged them to use their voices to speak out.  
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**Interviewees:** Jenny Macklin, **Indigenous** Affairs Minister  
**Duration:** 0:51

**4K1G (Townsville)**  
**Murri Voices - 21/09/2011 - 01:09 PM**  
**Lloyd Wyles**

Program Preview

- Interview with Michelle Deshong, **Straight Talk** Lead Facilitator about **Oxfam's** third annual **Straight Talk summit** being held in Canberra today.
- Interview with organisers of the 1,000 Warriors March in the southern states.
- The **Aboriginal** Message.

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**Duration:** 1:09

**2SM (Sydney)**  
**05:00 News - 21/09/2011 - 05:02 AM**  
**Newsreader**

**Aboriginal** and **Torres Strait Islander** women of all ages will be sitting down with politicians today for **Oxfam's** third annual **Straight Talk Summit**.

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**Interviewees:** Karrina Nolan, Program Coordinator, **Straight Talk Summit**  
**Duration:** 0:35

**4K1G (Townsville)**  
**Murri Voices - 22/09/2011 - 12:43 PM**  
**Lloyd Wyles**

Wyles says that yesterday **Oxfam** held their third annual **Straight Talk Summit**, with women from remote communities, big cities, and country towns meeting with women in politics, including Jenny Macklin, Minister for **Indigenous** Affairs, Julie Bishop, Deputy Opposition Leader, and Greens Senator Rachel Siewert.  
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**Duration:** 1:20

**NITV (Sydney)**  
**NITV News - 22/09/2011 - 05:43 PM**  
**Natalie Ahmat and Kris Flanders**

A group of **Aboriginal** women have taken part in the **Oxfam Straight Talk Conference** in Canberra. The **conference** aims to teach **indigenous** people how to use the political system to have their voices heard. Coordinator Katrina Nolan says community representatives know what is happening in their communities.

Maryborough elder Gayle Minniecon says meeting senior female politicians was a wonderful opportunity.  
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**Interviewees:** Gayle Minniecon, Maryborough elder; Katrina Nolan, Coordinator  
**Duration:** 2:01

**ABC Central Australia (Alice Springs)**  
**Mornings - 26/09/2011 - 09:14 AM**  
**Tatjana Clancy**

Clancy says Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from across Australia last week mixed with some of the nation's top politicians at Parliament House in Canberra as a means of finding ways to work together and improve the lives of indigenous people and their communities. She introduces Joyce Taylor from Tennant Creek, who took part along with 61 others in the third annual **Oxfam** Talk Straight Summit. Taylor says she took part because she wanted to encourage more indigenous ladies to go into Parliament House. Clancy says the co-ordinator of the event, Katrina Nolan, has said those chosen to participate were leaders who were already achieving change in their communities. Nolan says the agenda included leadership. She says everyone in parliament is just human, but says there are too many men in politics who just sit there and scream. She talks about watching Question Time and arguments involving Julia and asylum seekers. Taylor says she spoke with Julia Gillard's advisor Trish Woolley about indigenous issues like health and education. Taylor says Woolley gave her her phone number and email address and organised monthly meetings to discuss indigenous issues. Clancy says the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and the Deputy Opposition Leader, Julie Bishop, were both present. Taylor says she didn't get to speak to them, although she says a couple of ladies from Darwin spoke to Trish Crossin. Taylor says ladies from Darwin and Katherine spoke to Macklin and were treated really nicely and were allowed to talk about issues. Taylor says she will help Tennant Creek women to take part in next year's summit because she says it is worth going.  
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**Interviewees:** Joyce Taylor, Tennant Creek  
**Duration:** 8:56

**ABC Kimberley (Broome)**  
**Mornings - 04/10/2011 - 11:27 AM**  
**Vanessa Mills**

Mills speaks to Ruth Abdallah, Kununurra resident about attending a meeting in Canberra where 60 **Aboriginal** women from Australia came together. It was for **Oxfam's** Annual **Straight Talk Conference**, which give **Indigenous** women the opportunity to learn about the political system and how to make changes in their community. Abdallah discusses growing up in Derby and moving to Kununurra. She discusses her community work and winning Elder of the Year award in 2004. She discusses moving to Kununurra before it was built. She discusses the **conference** and that she really enjoyed the question and answer time. They discuss how the **conference** worked. Abdallah says he like meeting Julie Bishop as she was 'warm and welcoming'. She describes the different conversation groups and the issues they got to discuss. She discusses how she will use what she learned to help her community and how she thinks communities can move forward.  
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**Interviewees:** Ruth Abdallah, Kununurra resident  
**Duration:** 20:12

**ENDS**