

MONTHS IN REVIEW

JANUARY / FEBRUARY

compiled by April Long

13.01

- ☀ The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, has endorsed all of the recommendations made in the recent review of the Torres Strait Regional Authority's ('TRSA') governance structures. This includes new election rules to restrict eligibility to stand as a TSRA candidate or to vote in the TSRA election to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in the region.

14.01

- ☀ Aboriginal man Terrance Briscoe, 28, died in Alice Springs police custody on January 5th 2012. But despite allegations from his family of police brutality, an independent investigation has been ruled out by the Northern Territory's chief minister Paul Henderson. Aboriginal rights campaigners in Alice Springs said Briscoe was found unconscious in his cell about 2am. He had been "taken in 'protection custody' earlier that night after drinking with friends". The family and Aboriginal rights campaigners in Alice Springs have demanded all evidence, CCTV footage and witness accounts be released to the family.
- ☀ The Rottnest Quod, a former Aboriginal jail where about 300 prisoners died in miserable conditions, is to stop being used as holiday accommodation. Negotiations are under way to separate the Quod from Rottnest Lodge. In exchange, the new operator of the lodge, John Spence's Karma Royal Group, will be given land behind the Quod - and adjacent to Garden Lake - to build new resort accommodation. Rottnest Island Authority chairman Laurie O'Meara said he expected an agreement to be reached within months.

16.01

- ☀ A welfare group has criticised the South Australian Government's response to the Mullighan Inquiry into the abuse of Aboriginal children on the APY Lands. Former Supreme Court Judge, the late Ted Mullighan, released his findings in 2008, attaching 46 recommendations. The inquiry found evidence of child abuse and violence against women. A report into the Government's progress is released annually. Jonathan Nicholls from Uniting Care Wesley says the latest report is skewed and contains little useful information. Mr Wesley stated, "as we've started to examine it closely and we've gone to departments and organisations and say

'can you tell us a bit more about what was in the report' we've found that what was in the report in fact wasn't accurate or was quite out of date".

17.01

- ☀ Aboriginal leader Bella Bropho has confirmed she will be lodging an appeal against a prospecting application made over Bassendean's Point Reserve. Bassendean resident Adrian Griffin lodged the application with the Department of Mines in November to prospect lots 197, 198, 239 and 240 of North Road, an area of just over one hectare that covers Point Reserve and Mr Griffin's own residence. The Town of Bassendean confirmed it had lodged an objection to the application, citing that extractive and mining industries were land uses not permitted within a residential zone. Their objection also identifies Point Reserve as a regionally significant foreshore reserve that is valued by the community, and the granting of a prospecting licence will be inconsistent with this view. Mrs Bropho said she was shocked when she heard of the application, which she described as disgusting.
- ☀ A senior Aboriginal Legal Service lawyer says changes are needed to a justice program running in parts of the New South Wales north coast. Questions are being asked about the effectiveness of circle sentencing, which has run in Lismore for seven years. Indigenous offenders are sentenced by a magistrate and local elders but research shows it does not lower re-offence rates. John McKenzie says the so-called Koori Court system, used in Victoria, is better, where social workers also play a role. "You seek to address the underlying problems of the offending people, which may well be leading them to not only have committed the offence for which they're appearing in court now, but also may continue to contribute into the future," he said.

19.01

- ☀ The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples releases their report entitled *Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution*.

23.01

- ☀ A senior policeman sacked for importing 20 cartons of beer into a remote alcohol-restricted Aboriginal community and letting the local rodeo queen dress up in his uniform with a gun

may get his job back after winning an appeal that exposes cracks in Queensland's tough grog policies. Senior Sergeant Bryan Kennedy knew Doomadgee's alcohol management plan prohibited carrying more than 27 litres of liquor, so he ferried the beer in smaller batches and stockpiled it at the police social club before a community Christmas party in 2007. Queensland's Civil and Administrative Tribunal cleared Sergeant Kennedy of two counts of misconduct last month, recognising alcohol stockpiles were common in the northwest Queensland community, 100km from the nearest pub.

01.02

- The nation's largest Aboriginal organisation has called for an independent investigation into the actions of police against protesters at an Australia Day function that left the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader running for safety. NSW Aboriginal Land Council chief executive Geoff Scott made the call following the release of footage of the incident outside the Lobby restaurant in Canberra that he said showed Australian Federal Police dealing inappropriately with the protesters from the Aboriginal tent embassy.

14.02

- The fourth anniversary of the National Apology is a reminder of how our nation can come together in efforts to overcome injustices of the past and look to the future.
- The Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's home, the first home to house Aboriginal Stolen Generation children during the Stolen Generation years has been listed on the state heritage register. It was the first of its kind in New South Wales and played a significant role in the government's assimilation policy of the time. The Home opened in 1908 and operated until the early eighties. It is now used by the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- The Cooamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home where Aboriginal girls were trained as domestic workers for decades has received the highest level of heritage protection in New South Wales. The Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home operated from 1912 to the 1970s and events are being planned to mark its centenary in August.
- Family and supporters of TJ Hickey have renewed calls for the inquest into the indigenous teenager's death to be reopened at a rally in inner Sydney. At a rally marking eight years since TJ's death, about 150 people chanted and called for justice as they marched through Waterloo and Redfern. Thomas Hickey, known as TJ, died on February 14 in 2004 after he came off his bicycle and was impaled on a fence in Waterloo. His family believe police chased the 17-year-old while he was on his bike and were responsible for his death. The incident later led to violent clashes between police and members of the Aboriginal community.

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