

MONTHS IN REVIEW

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER

compiled by April Long

02.11 ✦ Southbank Institute of Technology and the Queensland University of Technology have paired up in a special initiative that aims to inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue a career in Law or Justice.

03.11 ✦ Earlier this year, the Mayala people signed a deal with the company Pluton, to allow them to build an iron ore mine on a remote island north of Derby. However, a group of Elders boycotted a community celebration of the deal, with elder Aubrey Tigan saying he did not understand the process and felt he was being pressured into signing.

04.11 ✦ Liberal National Party ('LNP') leader Campbell Newman announces that an LNP government would abolish *Wild Rivers Declarations* in four Cape York River basins. Indigenous leaders including Noel Pearson have staunchly opposed the declarations, which they believe will prohibit economic development in the affected areas that include the basins of the Wenlock, Stewart, Archer and Lockhart Rivers.

✦ Aboriginal community leaders condemn the Gillard government over plans to extend its predecessor's controversial intervention in the Northern Territory, which will be introduced before the end of the year. The Elders travelled thousands of kilometres to brand the intervention as 'racist and discriminatory', claiming living standards have gone backwards since the Howard government introduced it four years ago.

07.11 ✦ The Yindjibarndi Aboriginal community and the Australian Greens have asked the Federal Government to respond urgently to an application seeking protection for Aboriginal heritage sites in the Pilbara from potentially damaging mining operations. Fortescue Metals Group is undertaking work at the Firetail/Solomon site, and there is concern that this is having an adverse impact on ancestral burial grounds and other areas sacred to the Yindjibarndi community.

08.11 ✦ Justice Mildren has said conditions at both Alice Springs and Darwin prisons breach the UN's *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and rules on the minimum treatment of prisoners. About 82 per cent of all prisoners in the Northern Territory are Indigenous. Conditions are crowded, prisoners are often housed in dormitories with many others and remand prisoners are mixed with convicted criminals.

18.11 ✦ The First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region have become recognised as native title holders of about

260 square kilometres of land and waters in the Riverland, South Australia. Justice John Mansfield made a consent determination recognising the non-exclusive native title rights and interest over parts of their traditional land in areas of the Murray River around Renmark, Berri, Barmera, Waikerie and Morgan. The consent recognises the non-exclusive rights to access, hunt, fish, camp, gather and use the natural resources, undertake cultural activities, conduct ceremonies and meetings, and protect places of cultural and religious significance.

23.11 ✦ The Government's Stronger Futures legislation was introduced into parliament. It includes measures to extend current alcohol restrictions, develop alcohol management plans and increase penalties for grog running.

✦ The Gillard Government has welcomed the tabling of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Annual Native Title and Social Justice Reports in Parliament. The Reports, prepared by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Mick Gooda, highlight the importance of ensuring Australia's human rights and native title systems are operating effectively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

✦ The Northern Territory Government announced its historic decision to pay the rent to Aboriginal traditional land owners in return for long term leases over parcels of Aboriginal land where sole possession by the Government is required. Indigenous Development Minister, Malarndirri McCarthy said this historic decision lays the foundation for a proper working relationship between Land Councils, Aboriginal traditional owners and the Northern Territory Government.

28.11 ✦ MCG Quarries Pty Ltd has been fined \$80,000 by Moranbah Magistrates Court for disturbing 30-35 culturally significant Aboriginal artefacts, including stone items, during the construction of a gravel track at the Moranbah Quarry, west of Mackay. MCG was charged with one count of failing to comply with their cultural heritage duty of care under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*.

01.12 ✦ Aboriginal sporting legend Arthur 'Artie' Beetson passes away at 66. His passing reminds us of the unacceptable life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians. As the first Aboriginal person to captain Australia in any sport, Artie Beetson was an inspiration to Indigenous Australians. The ILB extends our condolences to his family and friends.