

DON DALE FACILITY SHAME

NATSICC CALLS FOR QUICK AND DECISIVE ACTION TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) has expressed shock and devastation at the treatment of young people incarcerated in the Don Dale Correctional Facility in Darwin and called for quick and decisive action on this important national issue.

“The systematic abuse on our children is wrong; our nation is hurting with all the suicides and the ongoing abuse through generational trauma,” said NATSICC NT Councillor Dean Chisholm.

Bishop of Darwin, Eugene Hurley said the recent ABC Four Corners footage, detailing abhorrent and inhumane treatment of young people, has brought to light a betrayal of the trust that has been placed in the correctional system.

“It is that betrayal of trust, that we thought we could take for granted, that so confronts us as a community,” Bishop Hurley said.

“So many of us feel less as human beings today; we sense that we are all complicit in some vague way for trusting people to do what we considered to be the decent thing.” Compounding the outrage is the fact that the continual calls for the criminal justice system to address the rate of youth incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been ignored - 97% of all youth detained in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal. Across Australia, young Aboriginal people are 26 times more likely to be in detention.

Victorian NATSICC Councillor Sherry Balcombe, a volunteer at a youth correctional facility in Melbourne, said that she was sickened by the footage. “I have always been treated with the utmost respect by the kids and to see this footage is heartbreaking. In many cases they are already damaged and the continued abuse only continues the cycle of institutionalisation. We urgently need change.”

NATSICC CALLS FOR QUICK AND DECISIVE ACTION TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

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NATSICC is calling for the Royal Commission to urgently investigate whether a culture of cover-ups and a lack of organisational empathy towards young people is endemic throughout the criminal justice system.

“The process of change must be immediate and across the board,” said NATSICC Chair, John Lochowiak. “Our young people cannot afford for us to wait. The Royal Commission needs to properly engage the families and communities that are affected by incarceration” The process of change in the Criminal Justice System must be immediate and applied across Australia.

- Alternatives to incarceration need to be incorporated into the national juvenile justice system, given our nation

is already hurting with all the suicides and the ongoing abuse through generational trauma.

- The mistreatment of the ‘invisible’ or those most marginalised, including children is bordering on endemic and it needs to stop.
- The Royal Commission must engage families and communities that are directly affected by juvenile incarceration, to discover why Young Aboriginal people are 26 times more likely to be in detention and what can be done to break the cycle.

NATSICC representatives are available for interview
Media Contact: John Lochowiak 0418 832 550

Catholic voices

“It is that betrayal of trust, that we thought we could take for granted, that so confronts us as a community, So many of us feel less as human beings today; we sense that we are all complicit in some vague way for trusting people to do what we considered to be the decent thing. Our response must be a total commitment to healing the harm done and commit ourselves to making sure that we have procedures in place to supervise systems that have demonstrated they cannot be trusted. This applies equally to Government, Church, Nursing Homes and any institution entrusted with the care of children or vulnerable adults.” **Bishop of Darwin, Eugene Hurley**

“I have always been treated with the utmost respect by the kids and to see this footage is heartbreaking. In many cases they are already damaged and the continued abuse only continues the cycle of institutionalisation. We need change. The systematic abuse on our children is wrong; our nation is hurting with all the suicides and the ongoing abuse through generational trauma.” **Victorian NATSICC Councillor Sherry Balcombe**

“We can’t divide society, and what was done to those youth despite their crimes makes me sick to the core, a breach of basic human rights. No child deserves this treatment” **Former youth worker and NATSICC Councillor Dean Chisholm**

“Those images have left me sick to the core, heart broken and devastated. For the last 3 Holy Thursdays I’ve washed those feet, for years I’ve enjoyed singing and praying with those kids, and at our last Service they acted out the Good Samaritan.” he said. “How utterly contrary is that to what Dylan, Ethan and the other boys have been through. Just metres from one of the places where we had our Services were these horrendous cells I didn’t even know existed. I’ve lost faith in the system I’ve tried to work with. Over the years I’ve met many caring and dedicated staff but the current “jail” and system are grossly inadequate for these kids, things must change now.” **Volunteer Catholic Chaplain Fr Dan Benedetti**

NATSICC YOUTH COUNCILLOR PRESENTS AT SCHOOL RETREAT



Following a request by Sharon Cooke from the NSW Catholic Schools office, Sabrina Stevens recently presented at a retreat run by Gunnedah’s St Mary’s College. Held at Warraymalaya Retreat, Sabrina shared with the students information about NATSICC and her role as the National Youth Councillor. The following report was written by Corey Bennett and Aiden Hill for a school assembly presentation and comes courtesy of the schools newsletter:

On Tuesday the 29th of March we left St Mary’s for the Warraymalaya Retreat. We arrived at Coffs Coast Adventure Centre where we settled into our dorms and got acquainted with everyone else. That night one of the instructors ran some ice breaking challenges so we could get to know everyone from the surrounding schools in the diocese. We were all looking forward to the next day.

On Wednesday we met Brother Michael and Sister Katherine from The Mission of God’s Love. They told us a bit about themselves and situations they have been in throughout their lives. After that we went to the Community Christian School next door where we had a games extravaganza. We played flinch football, pacman,dodgeball, and bang bang. After dinner we went to ten pin bowling at club 300 where Miss Wortley picked up a spare and Mrs Garnett got a strike. We also played at the arcade. We went back to our dorms to go to bed for the next day ahead.

Next morning we woke early for breakfast. After breakfast we had a quick break before being called in for the next session with Sabrina Stevens, Youth Councillor from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council. We learnt about her journey, her role at NATSICC and what NATSICC does. After that we had a talk with Nicole Turner about living a healthy lifestyle and making good choices. However, she didn’t like it if anyone yawned through her session. They then split the groups into boys and girls. The boys learnt about good choices and bad choices, domestic violence and how drugs can affect your life. The teachers told us some stories about their lives. The girls met with Aunty Doreen and Aunty Cheryl and they spoke more about the Dignity of the Human Person, about making Jesus our role model for life and linking this with our Aboriginal spirituality. The girls then spent time making and decorating mirrors.

After that we all joined back up and went to the beach for some surfing lessons. Group 1 learnt how to surf while Group 2 played beach games. After a while we swapped over and Group 2 learnt how to surf and Group 1 played beach games. After a surf and swim we had a sausage sizzle and went for a quick walk around the headland while the sun was setting.

On Friday morning we had an early breakfast, cleaned up our dorms and packed our gear onto the bus. We spent the day travelling back to Gunnedah with an early lunch at Armidale. It was a fantastic week. We learnt lots, made new friends and had quality time reflecting on who we are and how we can be even stronger people.

We would like to thank Miss Wortley, Mrs Garnett and Mrs Kennedy for taking us and Mrs Sharon Cooke from the CSO for making the retreat possible.

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION



Senator Pad Dodson - Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition

their First Nation people. In addition the Queensland, NSW and Victorian state Constitutions recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Federal Government initiated the Recognise campaign to open dialogue on a referendum that will ask Australians to vote on amending our founding document to include a preamble that recognises the first nation status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as amend several sections that are racially based and discriminatory.

As the peak Catholic body representing over 120,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics, NATSICC must consider the vast range of experiences, language groups and the impact that previous Government policy has had on our people when assessing the benefit of the Recognise campaign.

Some of our people are against the

concept of Constitutional Recognition, mainly on the basis that they feel it is tokenistic, will provide no real change to people's lives and that it will jeopardise future negotiations on Treaty. Melbourne Aboriginal Catholic leaders from Victoria are of this belief and their statement can be found on page 6.

Meanwhile supporters of Constitutional Recognition align the enormity of the proposed changes with the 1967 Referendum that saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people classified as human and therefore counted as an inhabitant of the Australia. It is seen as a bipartisan effort to raise our self esteem and value and place importance and reverence around our culture and spirituality which will in turn build the capacity of our people to achieve and succeed.

Both sides of the argument share a common ground - whatever the approach, be it Treaty and/or

Constitutional Recognition, it must translate into real change for our people. It is no good being recognised in the founding document of our country if we are dying early, our young people are committing suicide and we are more likely to go to jail than University.

Recently there has been a ground swell of support for a Treaty process. Legal experts have declared that Constitutional Recognition does not prohibit the establishment of a Treaty (either nationally or on a Language group basis). Aboriginal Leader Warren Mundine believes that it may in fact assist the process - *"I can't see any prospect of a treaty being negotiated under a constitution that doesn't even acknowledge Aboriginal people exist."* Newly appointed WA Senator and Aboriginal leader Pat Dodson also feels that Recognition and Treaty can coexist.

Saint John Paul II is a man that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Catholics hold very dear to our hearts. His words to us in 1986 in Alice Springs have provided spiritual leadership and inspiration for the past 30 years.

They can now provide guidance to our decision makers on this issue:

"The establishment of a new society for Aboriginal people cannot go forward without just and mutually recognized agreements with regard to these human problems, even though their causes lie in the past."

The greatest value to be achieved by such agreements, which must be implemented without causing new injustices, is respect for the dignity and growth of the human person."

And you, the Aboriginal people of this country and its cities, must show that you are actively working for your own dignity of life. On your part, you must show that you too can walk tall and command the

respect which every human being expects to receive from the rest of the human family."

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics the equation is clear - we need to be consulted, and in the words of Pope Francis, *engaged* in the process. We need to know that Recognition will provide a clear benefit and **NO DOWNSIDE**. We want the discussion of Treaty to continue.

We ask that Catholics as a whole support the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders rather than a particular approach. You can do this by listening to your local people and *engaging* with them. They may be anti Recognition and pro Treaty, or visa versa however they will have very valid reasons for their stance. Listen, support, provide opportunities to discuss the issue and work together so that the outcome is a more equitable Australia that values our people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.....

"We want to be recognised. It's just as simple as that. We've never been recognised. We are the first Australians, okay? And it is time we were recognised."

LOWITJA O'DONOGHUE, legendary campaigner

"lift the historical burden that sits like a heavy skin across our nation"

Aboriginal film maker Rachael Perkins

"In 50 years I want my grandchildren to know that they have been recognised in this country as the First Peoples, but I also want to see self-independence, economic independence"

Rhoda Roberts - Widjabul woman, head of Indigenous programming at the Sydney Opera House Sydney Opera House

"It's as if the history of Australia began in 1900, so the cornerstone legal document of this country needs to recognise the First Peoples."

Mark Yettica Paulson

"A well-written, new constitution will take out the colonial and racist overtones of our original constitution and give us a pathway forward to sustain our population into the future,"

Norm Sheehan Wiradjuri man and director of Southern Cross University's Gnibi College

"constitutional recognition is a way of promising something, but with no real substance".

Kombumerri woman and academic, Mary Graham

"Many Victorian Aboriginal peoples do not want to be recognised in the Constitution as it will be more of the same lip service we have endured for decades, like many of the promises made to us in the past that changed nothing."

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria

"My beef with the Recognise campaign is its lack of transparency and the fact that it seems to be just another tokenistic gesture that will do little, if anything at all, for Indigenous Australia."

Jimblah, Musician, Larrikia

I don't want your Recognise campaign – it's nothing but a sham

Celeste Liddle - Arrernte woman, National Indigenous Organiser for the National Tertiary Education Union

Those that support Recognise need to have a look at the history first and realise that you cannot trust a foreign people to put us into their constitution.

Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, Arrernte-Alyawarra elder

MELBOURNE CATHOLIC LEADERS CALL FOR TREATY



Pope St John Paul II gave the most dramatic recognition by the church in Australia to Aboriginal people in Alice Springs in 1986. He challenged the Aboriginal people to find their rightful place in the Australian church; following that speech the Aboriginal Catholic people around Australia felt new life and inspiration.

We at the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria have been greatly supported by the Archdiocese of Melbourne and we acknowledge this support and are grateful for helping us make our voice heard. It takes courage to step across the cultural abyss so many thanks to the Archdiocese.

I feel that it was a personal challenge to me, and continues to be, to find our rightful place; we are constantly challenged to justify ourselves.

For far too long governments, authorities and the church have tried to do things for Aboriginal people. Our wish is to do things for ourselves, and with your support, encouragement and collaboration we can make this a brighter, prouder and more inclusive chapter in Australia's shared history.

Although dominant cultures in Australia see us as the victims and problems, we know and see our great warriors: people running organisations; bringing up families, and educating the wider communities on the deep, meaningful contributions that we can make to the life of this great country.

We have the chance right now to move forward the right and proper way by working with Aboriginal people towards the common goal of a Treaty.

Our people have struggled on the fringes of society for far too long.

For the first time in this nation's history, Aboriginal people have true hope, a hope that has never been afforded to us before, and emulate our brothers and sisters from around the globe where their countries have heard their cries. We all know in our hearts that a Treaty is the right and merciful thing to do.

We are about to change the tapestry of this nation for all time and we as Aboriginal people have started the process. We are not only changing a nation; we are rebuilding it to suit our new diverse cultural shape, something that all Australians can be truly proud of.

Australia is the only country in the English-speaking New World that does not have a Treaty with its First Peoples. The USA, Canada, New Zealand and many other countries have had Treaties with their First Peoples, recognising their rights and prior occupation of their lands. We can all be part of this together. It was made clear during community consultations that many Victorian Aboriginal peoples do not want to be recognised in the Constitution as it will be more of the same lip service we have endured for decades, like many of the promises made to us in the past that changed nothing.

We want true recognition and having a Treaty will give us the dignity, self-determination, respect and pride that so rightly belongs to us but has been denied us since colonisation.

We all want our descendants to look back with pride that we as a modern advanced, first world country can be truly proud of:

- that this generation appreciated and acknowledged that we are living in the country where the longest continuous culture in the world still lives and thrives;
- that this generation gratefully and mercifully worked with our First Peoples for the rights of their ancestors and their descendants;
- Where you can be proud of the nation you call home, that has been our home for thousands of years; we hope you all agree that there must be a better way.

Please walk with us on this journey. It is not going to be easy but anything worthwhile is never easy. With your help, support and encouragement we can do this: TREATY NOW!

Get on board, be part of the solution not part of the problem, look for ways you can join the struggle. This is an important start to those conversations.



Marjorie pictured with Bishop Oudemann and Archbishop Prowse at the NATSICC Assembly in Darwin 2015

VALE MARJORIE LIDDY

Proposed Changes to the Constitution

- * Remove Section 25 – which contemplates States banning people from voting based on their race;
- * Remove section 51(xxvi) – which can be used to pass laws that discriminate against people based on their race;
- * Insert a new section 51A – to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to preserve the Australian Government's ability to pass laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- * Insert a new section 116A, banning racial discrimination by government; and
- * Insert a new section 127A, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were this country's first tongues, while confirming that English is Australia's national language.

In August we lost Aunty Marjorie Liddy - a Tiwi woman from Melville Island. A kind and gentle woman, Marjorie painted the image that appeared on the chasubles for the papal Mass for World Youth Day in Sydney (image below).

Marjorie had a vision of an Indigenous image of the Holy Spirit after a day of fishing in the Timor Sea, and created a painting of it despite having never painted before - she called it, "The Day the Holy Spirit Visited Marjorie and Her People". Tributes have flowed in from all over Australia and we keep Marjorie and her family and friends in our hearts, thoughts and prayers.



Aboriginal & Islander Catholic Ministries

Grassroots workers

A NEW COLUMN IN THE NATSICC NEWS, WE ARE SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT ON THOSE WORKING ON THE LOCAL LEVEL.

Meet Br. Laurie Sweeper, who works at the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Adelaide as the Pastoral associate and 'jack of all trades'.

What is your background?

I am a Capuchin Franciscan Friar of Murrawari descent on my mother's side. My family come from North West New South Wales - Brewarrina, Goodooga. For over 20 years I have worked in Catholic Schools, both Primary and Secondary as a Pastoral Counsellor offering parent and student support.

In the 1990's I had the privilege of working with the Brisbane ACM as part of their Juvenile Detention Chaplaincy and as a Juvenile Court assistant.

Tell us about your ministry and your role.....

My current role with the Adelaide ACM is admin and pastoral support - assisting June Romeo the Coordinator of the Otherway Centre. The Centre offers a place of peace and rest for Elders who take part in two programs held each Wednesday and Thursday. My role is preparation for the day and interaction with the Elders. On Sunday we gather to celebrate the Eucharist with others associated with the Centre.

What is your vision for the future of the Ministry?

As we now have a staff of three working at the Centre four days a week and John Lochowiak the Manager. The Otherway Centre has the opportunity to expand in other areas of Ministry. John currently runs Cultural Awareness programs for various groups at the Centre, John is hoping to expand this to School groups. The possibility of engaging men and youth in some kind of program is another idea John has in the pipeline.

How do you think we can better encourage youth to be active in their faith and their local communities?

It would be a good idea to have an outreach to Aboriginal youth in the surrounding areas as well as the local schools. Catholic Schools would be an area to have some initial contact, offering support where needed. Then encouraging their participation in the Sunday Eucharist and other programs.

An aspiring artist, here is some of Brother Laurie's work:



NT PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING

The Aboriginal Diocesan Pastoral Council was held at Nungalinga College 27-30 June 2016.



Back row: L to R Olivier Noclam - (Alice Springs) Dan Benedetti - (Darwin); Charlotte Flowers - (Santa) Lorraine Tomlins - (St Martin de Porres); Peter Huan - (Nauiyu); Tan van Nguyen - (Pirlangimpi) Pat Mara - (Wurrumiyanga); Roderick Daiyri - (Palumpa) Leo Wearden - (Wadeye);
First Row Standing: Maurice Heading (Darwin); Vincent Mai (Santa) Mary Therese Mulladad - (Santa) Nina Black - (Milikapiti) Cecilia Cadell - (St Martin de Porres) Gerarda Pultchen - (Palumpa) Theresa Munkanome - (Wurrumiyanga); Benita de Vincentiis - (Darwin) Josephine Palmer - (Alice Springs);
Seated Row: Anne Marie Puruntatameri - (Pirlangimpi) Sr Barbara Tippolay - (Pirlangimpi) Marcella Fernando - (Wurrumiyanga); Alma Cadell - (St Martin de Porres); Brian Steel - (St Martin de Porres); Ben Cubillo - (St Martin de Porres); Virginia Garlala - (Pirlangimpi)Dulcie Kelantumama - (Wurrumiyanga);
Front Row: Natassia Gorey Furber - (Alice Springs) Kathy Smiler - (Palumpa) Troy Madigan - (Nauiyu) Adrian Lantjin - (Wadeye); Angela Ninnal - (Wadeye); Bernardine Kungul - (Wadeye); Sandra Lantjin - (Wadeye)

Members attended from Santa Teresa, Alice, Nauiyu, Wadeye, Palumpa, Darwin, Wurrumiyanga, Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti. After the Welcome to Country by Ben Cubillo we spent the first session working in our community groups and recalling all the Good things and the Sad/Hard things that had happened over the previous year. Then each community group shared their story with the other communities. Bishop Eugene shared his response to matters raised in the stories.

In-input was provided by Mick Fox on Catholic Mission; Jude Long (Principal) and Carol Muller (Catholic Dean) on Nungalinga; Charlie King on Catholic Care's No More to domestic violence; Mark McGuinness on the diocesan plan for protection of children and vulnerable adults; Benita de Vincentiis, Troy Madigan and Sandra Lantjin on diocesan youth ministry; Dean Chisolm via skype on NATSICC and Dan Benedetti, Mavis Waddell and Lindy Schubert on prison ministry.

As usually happens this process of remembering and sharing our stories moved people deeply and held everyone's attention.

People said they felt good with the sharing process and were committed to working on their Action Plan for the coming year.

Each community organised prayer services or masses each day. In all a total of 51 people participated as members of the Council, presenters or visitors.

Let's Reconnect!

Send your email address to craig@natsicc.org.au or call 08 8363 2963

CLOSING THE GAP REPORT CARD

Closing the gap is a strategy that aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, employment outcomes. Endorsed by the Australian Government in March 2008, Closing the gap is a formal commitment developed in response to the call of the Social Justice Report 2005 to achieve Indigenous health equality within 25 years.

In this edition of NATSICC News, the council reminds the Government that consulting and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are cornerstones of Catholic Social Justice teaching and the Closing the Gap program should implement the fundamentals of consultation and Subsidiarity.



Prime Minister Turnbull’s Closing the Gap (CTG) Report card, handed down in February 2016, did not contain many surprises for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some targets are on track – Child Mortality rates falling and Year 12 attainment rising – however in many key areas the Gap remains. Aboriginal communities and organisations - rural and urban – are acutely aware of the challenges facing our people on the ground level.

These challenges are ‘simply’ displayed as numbers, percentages and pie charts on the Closing the Gap Report Card. For communities and organisations these challenges manifest themselves as hungry families asking for assistance, planning funerals on a regular basis for people who have died far too early or dealing with the injustice of counselling people who have faced the shame of having to use a BasicsCard when paying for a \$10 bottle of milk at a community store.

There have been many well researched reports from organisations that have made detailed comment on the strategic shortcomings of the CTG programs and the falling short of Key Performance Indicators, a selection of which are contained at the end of this statement as an attachment. Many of these reports highlight the fact that crucially the program misses several key, non-negotiable targets – Youth Suicide and Aboriginal Incarceration. These targets need to implemented with the highest urgency.

As Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we are deeply concerned by the lack of reverence and respect for the rights and dignity of the individual displayed in Government policy and funding strategies attached to the CTG program. All social values are inherent in the dignity of the human person, whose authentic development they foster. Essentially, these values are: truth, freedom, justice, love. NATSICC is concerned that all of these values seem to hold a low priority when developing and delivering programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Catholic Social Justice teaching forms the cornerstone of all of the work we undertake as Catholic. It asks us to respect human freedom by enabling men and women to assume responsibility for their own lives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had this right consistently eroded for over 200 years under the guise of assimilation, protectionism, welfare, intervention

and most recently through programs like BasicsCard.

If self-determination, pride and self-respect are the banks of the river through which the waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life flows, the system of roots and grasses holding the soil together have been poisoned by Government policy. Every time an Elder lines up at a designated checkout at the supermarket so that she can use her BasicsCard to buy the items that she has been told she can buy with it, the soil is eroded further.

In a 2011 Equality Alliance report 74% of women believed that the BasicsCard does not make it easier to provide for their family. This response is consistent with that received by NATSICC from stakeholders. Additionally it is predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are placed on the BasicsCard, which in itself, is a discriminatory form of policy that is treating the symptoms and not the root cause of alcohol and drug issues. It is also throwing a ‘blanket’ over all welfare recipients and labelling them as abusers and having the inability to look after themselves and their families. Again, where is the dignity for the individual? Although NATSICC disagrees with the BasicsCard system, it should the very least, make the system voluntary to provide a small sense of self determination to those that require assistance.

Astoundingly, the Government has begun trialling the Cashless Welfare Card where 80% of benefits are paid to the card which can only be used for mandated spending. Although it doesn’t appear in Government reports, income limiting policies have unintended and tangible consequences for recipients. People are harassed for money and cards, legitimate items are purchased and then on sold (for a loss) to fund addictions and relationships between friends and particularly family members are strained, and at times irreparably damaged, by the need to access money. Compounding this are the cultural responsibilities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to care for extended family members.

It should be a principle of good government, therefore, that no law should be passed with possible social consequences without first considering what effect it would have on family life and especially on children. Depriving people of their responsibilities and intervening directly in their lives and ability to make decisions leads

“self-determination, pride and self-respect are the banks of the river through which the waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life flows”

to a loss of self-determination and human energies as well as a need for additional layers of bureaucracy and overseeing structures.

Layering of additional structures and hierarchy is in direct contradiction to the principle of subsidiarity, as described by the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church:

The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community.

A key term the compendium uses is help, which implies that, in the spirit of solidarity, we all work together as God's people. It does not say direct or mandate because we are being called to unearth and discover the genius and gifts that we all possess. We must encourage and use these intrinsic attributes to forge a path forward for our people and not bury them under protectionism or paternalistic measures.

Subsidiarity also compels us to realise that the people closest and most affected by the issues are the ones best placed to address them, with the help of the Government. In Australia there are approximately 670,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and nearly 150 language groups (110 of which are endangered). From the experience of our Council, programs that genuinely embrace the principle of subsidiarity when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most effective. The contemporary action of adding a term of consultation to a project does not tick the box of subsidiarity.

The issues that affect the targets contained in the CTG program are often concentrated in certain areas and very obvious to the Elders and people of that area. It is not beyond the capability of Government and private enterprise to build programs with the people that are being affected directly. The term in consultation with should be scrapped entirely and replaced simply by with. Every part of the program should be focused on solving the problem in that community by working with that community – regardless it means working with a group to address the fact that only one in twenty people there consume the recommended intake of vegetables daily in a community of 100. Helping

19 people consume more vegetables does not look impressive on paper or in a Prime Minister's report card but it does make a difference in that community on so many levels and on so many indicators.

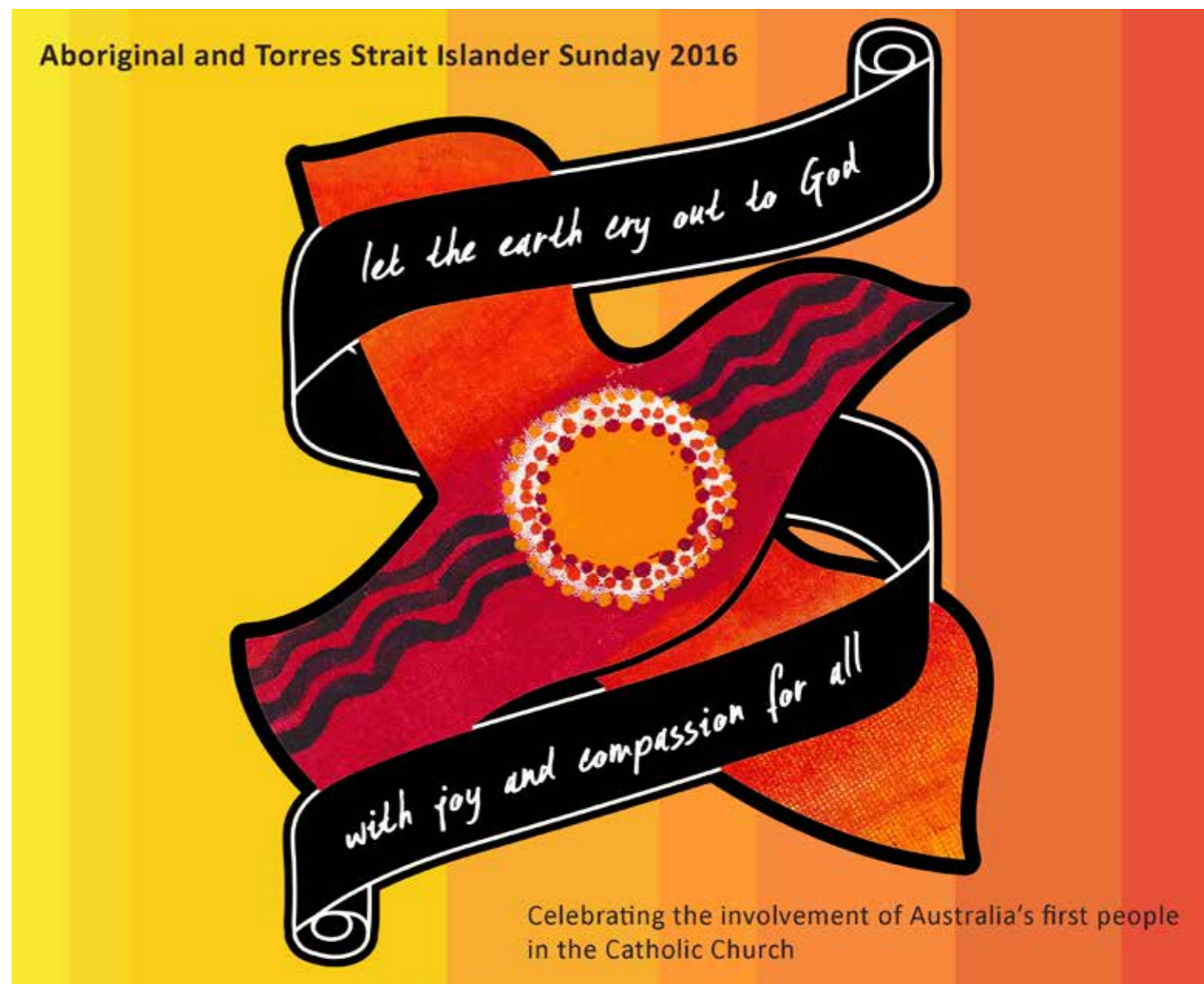
That is the beauty and effectiveness of subsidiarity, it strips away the levels of structures that have been built up over the years by successive Governments which impede the ability of programs to work with communities.

The underlying point of asking the Government to genuinely embrace the concept of subsidiarity is because it removes the macro view that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the same. It allows programs to be more flexible and relevant. It reinstates human dignity and worth by genuinely encountering those that need help. Pope Francis speaks regularly of the need to encounter the poor and the needy "because they have something in common with us: they are images of God, they are children of God. Going out to meet everyone, without losing sight of our own position.

Gayili Yunupingu, a member of the Gunyangara community at Galupa in Nhulunbuy is an excellent example of subsidiarity and encountering the needy. Gayili's community had the worst rate of suicide in the world until, along with her brothers and sisters decided that they had seen enough. Unknowingly she used her experience and knowledge of the needs of young people to become a point of call for those in need. By meeting those needs the suicide rate has dropped to zero. Several programs have taken note of the success of Gayili's approach and have started similar programs, with Wesley Mission launching the LifeForce suicide prevention program.

Imagine a Government wide commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to meet the Closing the Gap targets built on a foundation of subsidiarity, encountering people and respecting human rights and dignity. The Gap would close as quickly as the layers of bureaucracy are stripped away to facilitate programs on a community or even family scale rather than State or National initiatives.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY 2016



Let the Earth cry out to God with joy and compassion for all was the theme for the 2016 NATSICC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Resources. Tied in with the sentiment behind the Year of Mercy initiative, the resources called for Australians to come together and celebrate the gifts that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people bring to the Church in Australia.

NATSICC produces a Resource kit every year to assist Parishes, schools and other organisations to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday.

In 2016 Resource Kit included:

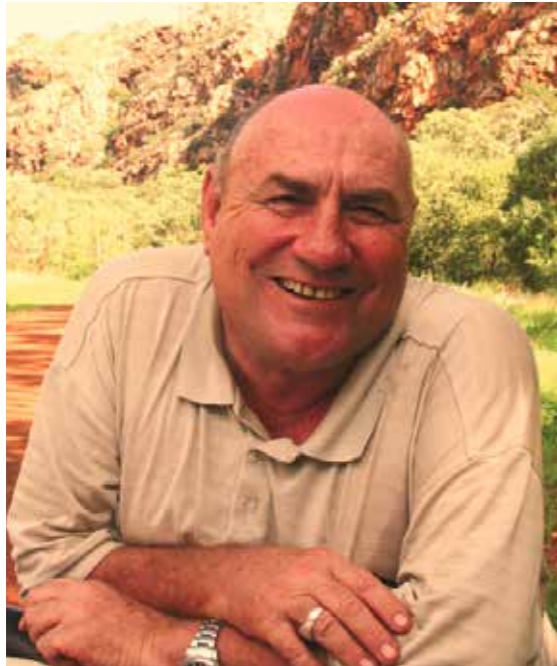
- Liturgy Notes
- Faith Story by Evelyn Parkin
- Suggested hymns
- Homily
- Reflection by Bishop Oudemann
- Children and youth activities.

The 2016 resources garnered the most positive response from the Catholic community that NATSICC has ever experienced. "I just wanted to email and thank you for the wonderful resources and information provided by NATSICC. I have forwarded them onto all of our Catholic schools in the Diocese and they have been received and utilised well." said one Education Officer.

The package was designed to be an educational tool as well as an Evangelical resource that was inclusive to all of the situations that Parishes and schools find themselves in

The council estimates that the Multimedia slideshow was downloaded and shown in over 300 Parishes over that weekend.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live the name of mercy in their lives



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples so often live the name of mercy in their lives, Bishop Christopher Saunders stated as he launched the annual statement to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday on 3 July.

The peoples of Australia's First Nations are famously resilient and in their own words they are survivors. Notwithstanding the vagaries of government policy or the faulty efforts at work to close the gap, or the dreadful prejudices evident in racist attitudes so notoriously on display even in the public forum in recent times, Aboriginal and Islander Peoples so often live the name of mercy in their lives.'

Representing the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (BCATSIP), Bishop Saunders also launched a new brochure 'Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners 2016' as a guide for parishes and Catholic organisations to use when hosting an event or service.

The theme of this year's statement is We Need Mercy. 'Pope Francis tells us that humanity is deeply wounded and for this reason is in need of mercy, a mercy proclaimed by God and tenderly shared among people.

'The word "encounter" used so frequently by Francis demonstrates that the Mercy proclaimed in this Jubilee Year is not a one-way street. Our meeting with Christ Francis tells us is authentically an encounter.

'It is an exchange in which the outpouring of a generous love made present in Christ evokes in us a loving response, given freely and generously.

'In the merciful love we experience in this Godly encounter we have the opportunity to embrace those around us who perhaps are not coping or who are weighed down with the terrible disappointments of life.

'The Church we belong to, Francis tells us, is a "field hospital", which serves people in need of healing. However, it is each of us singularly and all of us collectively who are capable of being ministers to our brothers and sisters in need. And there-in lies the challenge.'

Praying for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Bishop Saunders asked that 'in their prayers and in their loving communion may they continue to enrich the Church in Australia so that it will be fully the Church that Jesus Christ wants her to be'.

As we celebrate this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday in 2016, so we might echo with one voice the thoughts in psalm 66: 'Let the Earth cry out to God with joy and compassion for all'

Bishop Christopher Saunders



Prayer

Father, Our Creator
You created all things seen and unseen
Listen to my silent prayers as I stand here before you
As my weary eyes look back over distant horizons,
Back to those days where my people walked.
The footprints of my Grandfathers are imprinted on the earth,
And the images become real to me.
I see my Grandfathers standing tall and strong,
Warriors of long ago.
I hear them singing.
I see them dancing,
And my Spirit moves within me.
They told of the emus fighting,
And the kangaroos picking up the scent or our hunters.
The images fade away as I feel the hurt of my people.
I can hear the cries of my Grandmothers as they cry for their children.
Grandfather, you can see me as I stand here and feel this hurt.
Father Creator, is this the purpose of my being here.
Or is it your plan to reshape my people
To be once again the proud race it once was?
Let me walk with you and my Grandfathers
Towards the dawning of a proud and new nation.
I thank you for my Sacred Being.



IN STEP: Dancers Ken Dunleavy, Evelyn Mack, Mabel Lechewski and Marsha Hind get together every week.

STEPPING OUT FOR RECONCILIATION

A line dancing class at Stepney is creating common ground for a group of dancers from indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds.

The Otherway Guys and Gals dancing group is a collaboration between ACH Group's Social Links program and the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry at Stepney.

The class began in 2012 when Aboriginal Wyatt Holiday customers joined a Social Links dance group at Burnside. Social Links Coordinator Tash Burczyk says by the time the six-week program ended and the venue was no longer available, strong friendships had formed.

"It had been so successful, not just in terms of dancing, but in terms of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous customers," she says.

The Aboriginal Catholic Ministry at Stepney offered its Otherway Centre at Stepney as a venue, and the group meets there every Wednesday.

Otherway Centre Coordinator June Romeo says the class is more popular than ever.

"They are all so close, there's a lovely bond there, so we're pleased that a way was found to keep it going," she says. "We went and did a demonstration at the Aboriginal Elders Village this year which was great - everyone loved it."

"You don't need a partner, but you're still having fun and socialising."

Marsha Hind, who came to Adelaide from Scotland 47 years ago, is very happy to be part of the group. "I have my music on at home all day long and I dance all day long," she says. "I love dancing and I love the company."

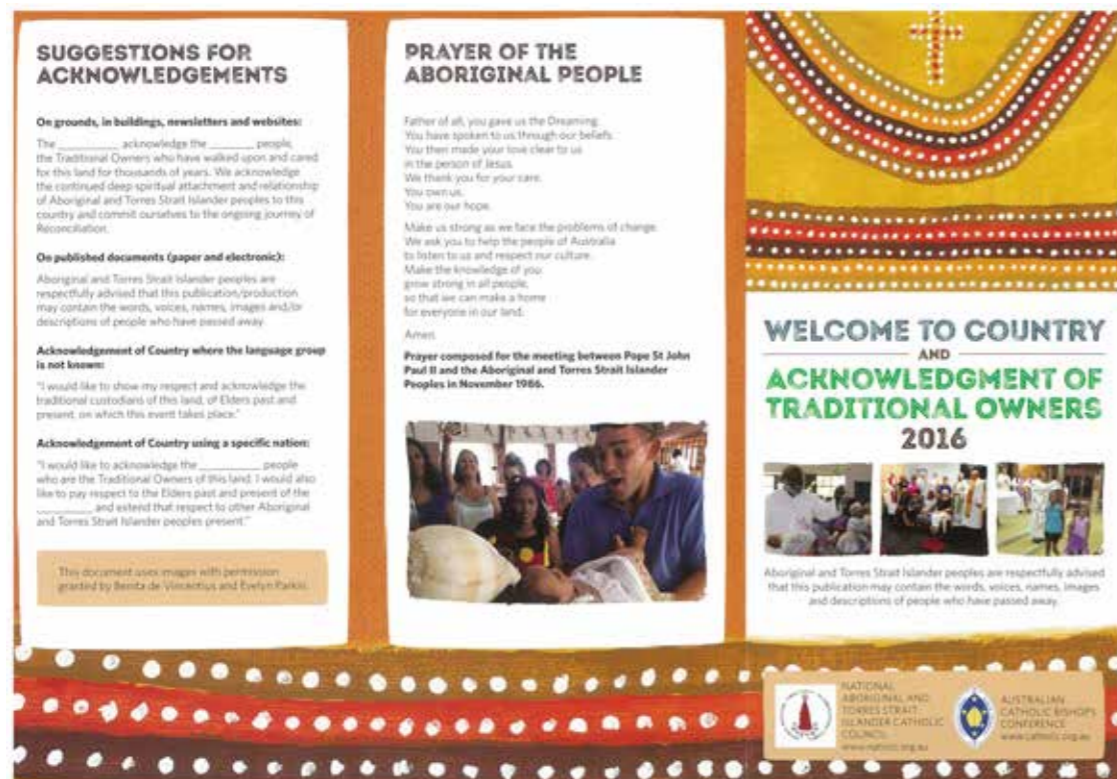
Dance instructor Margaret Plaw says beginner level line dancing is low impact which is suitable for people who are recovering from injury or illness.

"We try to keep it at a speed and pace that suits everybody," she says. "You don't need a partner, but you're still having fun and socialising."

To find out more or join in, phone ACH Group on 1300 224 477 or visit www.ach.org.au/social



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS IN PARISHES



NATSICC and the Bishops Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have developed a booklet to advise Parishes on how to conduct a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country prior to Mass or before other any gathering.

These simple ceremonies show respect and consideration to those that walked upon and cared for the land for thousands of years, and continue to do so. Copies of the booklet are available for 50c each (plus postage).

Please email craig@natsicc.org.au or aboriginesandtorresstraitislanders@catholic.org.au or calling 08 8363 2963 for copies.

NATSICC Councillor in profile Shirley Quaresimin



Shirley Quaresimin is the NATSICC Deputy Chairperson. Shirley is a Nyikina person from the Kimberley and was involved in the establishment of NATSICC over 20 years ago. She brings vast experience of regional and urban Aboriginal Catholics to NATSICC.

At just 8 years old, Shirley attended the first Catholic School in Derby and it is here that the Sisters of St. John of God and the Pallottine Fathers played a part in developing her faith journey. The Sisters prepared Shirley for life, to have the ability to be part of church and for young Aboriginal girls a message/creed for living.

Shirley was inspired by her Grandmother Emily who taught her how to understand her Aboriginal spirituality and Catholic faith. She was also a Catholic but did not lose her own Spirituality.

NATSICC ATTENDS CARITAS FIRST AUSTRALIANS PARTNER MEETING AT ROSS RIVER RESORT - NT



Caritas Australia's First Australians Program and other Caritas Australia staff recently gathered in Central Australia, with around 40 representatives from our Partner organisations for our annual FAP Partners' Meeting.

Youth Councillor Sabrina Stevens represented NATSICC at the meeting in the Ross River Resort, near Alice Springs. "It was so valuable to have her there, particularly from a youth perspective" said Sascha Costigan, leader of the First Australians Program.

From Zac Wone (Caritas): *Our Partner representatives expressed support for our long-term partnership approach to community development, built on trust, a strengths-based approach and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching such as subsidiarity. The network recognised a need for Indigenous Affairs to work from these same principles and for service providers to work with community leadership to co-ordinate their efforts and harmonise their requirements.*

Overall, it was an inspiring and encouraging week, which identified some clear directions for the Caritas team moving forward.

Congratulations Donna!



Mrs Donna Widdicombe, Koorie Education Worker at St Peter's school North Bendigo, this week was inducted into the Bendigo NAIDOC week Hall of Fame too recognize the outstanding contribution she has made in the area of education.

Donna has worked for the past 17 years at St Peter's as a Koorie Education Worker and is a much valued staff member and greatly loved by the students and the school community.

Donna has been a State Councillor for the ACMV for 14 years and has attended nearly every NATSICC Assembly since 2003.

Congratulations Donna on this well deserved accolade!

Broome Diocese celebrates Golden Jubilee and milestones for Bishop Saunders



In June, nearly a thousand worshippers gathered to mark the golden jubilee of the Catholic Diocese of Broome. A mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the diocese was rich in Indigenous culture and local parishioners were joined by worshippers from across the Kimberley as well as Australian and international visitors.

In attendance were the Pope’s representative in Australia, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana. Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Catholics sat side by side to celebrate the jubilee of one of Australia’s most unique Dioceses.

This year also marked 2 important milestones for Bishops Saunders, who is also the Chaplain to NATSICC.

In February, he celebrated 20 years as a Bishop and August marked the 40th Anniversary of his ordination.

KIMBERLEY DIOCESE JUBILEE 2016

Prayer

*My Lord and my God, we ask your blessing on us all.
In this Jubilee time, send forth your Spirit, upon your Kimberley people.
O my Jesus, I believe in you. You are my Lord, and my God.
I trust you, and I love you. Thank you for all the good things you have given me.
Please look after me and all my family.
Keep us safe and free from harm and make us truly good, deep in our hearts.*

Amen

Retreat Photo Gallery

Reconciliation with God, with Each Other and with the Land - Alice Springs 2016





NATSICC RETREAT IN THE RED CENTRE

50 people working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministry come together in Alice Springs for the first NATSICC Formation retreat to renew their spirit and receive formation of their faith. We were welcomed by local Elder Felicity Hayes and were blessed to have several other Elders share the week with us, including MK from Santa Teresa. Their wisdom and spirituality provided us with a wonderful foundation for the event.

Reconciliation – with God, with Each Other and with the Land was the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Catholic Council's inaugural Spirituality and Formation Retreat. The opportunity to sit and listen to our own thoughts and heart rarely arises in everyday life. In Alice Springs, delegates learned that the ability to look within is not only a gift from God, but also a necessity. They learned that even Jesus took to solitude to pray and reflect - "Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:15-16).

Led by Bishop Don Sproxton, WA Elder Shirley Quaresimin, Archbishop Christopher Prowse and Aboriginal Theologian

Evelyn Parkin, the first day of the retreat utilised the Lectio Divina method of praying Scripture. On the second day, attendees experienced "receptive listening" where Archbishop Prowse and Evelyn Parkin discussed Christian concepts and the similarities and differences with Aboriginal concepts.

"It was like listening to two interesting people have a discussion in their lounge room and there was a deep sense of appreciation to be able to experience their thoughts on the various topics" stated a delegate.

On the final day a Mass was held at Blatherskite Park to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Pope John Paul II's address to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs. Hosted by local Elders, it was a deeply spiritual moment that bound the retreat program together. John Lochowiak shared his cross cultural program and then facilitated a tour of sites around Alice Springs culminating in a visit to Emily's Gap.

The response for participants was overwhelmingly positive and shows NATSICC that there is a deep yearning for formation and spiritual growth in the community.

More photos inside

NATSICC SECRETARIAT

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