



**UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION  
ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Published by Amnesty International Australia  
ABN 64 002 806 233  
Locked Bag 23, Broadway, NSW 2007  
Phone 1300 300 920  
[supporter@amnesty.org.au](mailto:supporter@amnesty.org.au)  
[www.amnesty.org.au](http://www.amnesty.org.au)

This version of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adapted by Dr Sarah Pritchard from a plain English language version of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and was commissioned by Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

The full text of the declaration is available at  
[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration).

FRONT COVER

**Lindsay Bird**

Skin name: Mpetyan

Bush name: Arrereke

Language group: Anmatyerr

Home: Akay/Mulga Bore

ODD PAGES 5 – 17

**Jessie Bird**

Skin name: Ngal, Nangala

Language group: Anmatyerr

Home: Akay/Mulga Bore

BACK COVER

**Harold Payne**

Skin name: Mpetyan

Language group: Anmatyerr

Home: Akay/Mulga Bore

## DECLARATION ABOUT JUSTICE

On 12 February 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised for past injustices to Australia's Indigenous peoples and promised to "embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed".

On 3 April 2009 I was at Parliament House to witness the Australian Government make a public statement in support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Both events are positive milestones that will hopefully move Australia forward from a sorry history of misguided unilateral policymaking to an era of true consultation and partnership with Indigenous Australians.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Amnesty International worked on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Stolen Generations. More recently, we began working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians through our Demand Dignity campaign. Together, we will demand human rights and dignity and work to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.

The first step is to turn this declaration into action. We will be working hard to ensure that it is considered by local, state and federal governments when developing policy and legislation.

I would like to thank the 2009 Australian of the Year, Mick Dodson, for his foreword to this publication, and the other prominent Australians who have written about an article of particular importance to them. Thanks also to the artists who interpreted the meaning of the declaration through the wonderful artwork in this book. Read their story on page 20.

We have published this booklet to raise awareness of the rights of Australia's first peoples. With awareness comes responsibility. And with responsibility comes change.

### CLAIRE MALLINSON

National Director, Amnesty International Australia



Claire Mallinson. © AIA



Mick Dodson AM © AAP  
IMAGE/MARK GRAHAM.

## FOREWORD

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most comprehensive international tool to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples. An overwhelming majority of the world's states voted for the declaration in the UN General Assembly in 2007. It was endorsed by Australia on 3 April 2009.

While endorsement of the declaration is crucial, the main challenge is to ensure its implementation, with Indigenous peoples, through effective legislation, policies and programs at the domestic, regional and local level. Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples stand ready to contribute to this process.

It is easy to take articles of the declaration out of context and to raise anxieties by doing so. All of its parts make this document one. It has to be approached in this way. No state need be concerned by its content but should embrace it as a framework for public policy, law and practice in partnerships of good faith with Indigenous peoples.

The existence of human rights standards is not the source of Indigenous disadvantage. Human rights do not dispossess Indigenous peoples, they do not marginalise them, they do not cause their poverty, and they do not cause gaps in life expectancy and life outcomes. It is the denial of rights that is a large contributor to these things. The value of human rights is not in their existence; it is in their implementation. That is the challenge for the world and for Australia with this declaration.

The standards are set. It is up to us to meet them.

### MICK DODSON AM

Professor Mick Dodson AM is a member of the Yawuru peoples, traditional owners of the area around Broome. The 2009 Australian of the Year is a tireless campaigner for Indigenous rights. He is currently Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University and Professor of Law at the University's College of Law. He is also a Director of Dodson, Bauman and Associates Pty Ltd – Legal and Anthropological Consultants. He is a former Director of the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales and served as Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner from 1993 to 1998.



## ARTICLE 1: HUMAN RIGHTS

### COMMENT

This article is an important reminder that human rights are inherent to all people and that, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we have an entitlement to all human rights and freedoms; not just those in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. When we assert our rights, we are seeking to exercise rights that we have; we are not asking for special treatment. This article also emphasises that we have rights not only as individuals but also collectively as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This has particular significance for issues such as language, cultural heritage, traditional land and water. We might have a right to language as an individual but that is not meaningful unless the right to language of the group is valued and protected.

*Larissa Behrendt is a Eualeyai/Kamillaroi woman. She is Professor of Law and Director of Research at Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney.*



© PRIVATE

### United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

#### Article 1: **Human rights**

Indigenous peoples, as groups and as individuals, have the right to enjoy all the human rights and freedoms recognised in international law.

#### Article 2: **Equality**

Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, and must be free from discrimination.

#### Article 3: **Self-determination**

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. This means they can choose their political status and develop as they want.

#### Article 4: **Autonomy**

As a form of self-determination, Indigenous peoples have the right to autonomy or self-government in relation to their own affairs.

#### Article 5: **Distinct institutions**

Indigenous peoples have the right to keep and develop their distinct institutions. They also have the right, if they want, to take part in the life of the rest of the country.

#### Article 6: **Nationality**

Every Indigenous person has the right to be a citizen of a country.

#### Article 7: **Existence**

Indigenous peoples have the right to live in freedom, peace and security. They must be free from genocide and other acts of violence, including the removal of their children by force.

#### Article 8: **Cultural integrity**

Indigenous peoples shall be free from forced assimilation.

Governments shall prevent:

- a) actions that take away their distinct cultures and identities
- b) the taking of their land and resources
- c) their removal from their land
- d) any form of forced assimilation
- e) propaganda against them.

## ARTICLE 10: REMOVAL AND RELOCATIONS

COMMENT

This article evokes emotion from Indigenous people for many reasons, some of which have been well documented, but are seemingly forgotten in the current discourse on reforming Indigenous Australia.

Across the nation, Indigenous people are emerging to reinstate a presence on their ancestral lands and provide management of these landscapes. This epitomises the inherent and custodial responsibilities that are overlooked in the debate about Indigenous Australians 'taking responsibility'.

While small in number, there is an emergence of natural and cultural resource managers actively pursuing management and culturally-appropriate development of their estates. This presents an opportunity to contribute to nation building and, most importantly, to rebuilding their communities, their families and the land that has been regained.

Support, through an equal partnership with Indigenous land and sea managers, is required urgently, to ensure that the 20 per cent of Australia currently owned is managed for future generations. Forcefully removing Indigenous people's rights and obligations to their lands would spell profound disaster in terms of healing the divide between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians.



© PRIVATE

**Joe Morrison** was born and raised in Katherine in the Northern Territory. His heritage is Dagoman and Mualgal. Over the past 15 years, Joe has worked with Indigenous communities across northern Australia to develop local action to care for their country. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and has a BA in Natural Resource Management from the University of Sydney.

### United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

#### Article 9: **Communities and nations**

Indigenous peoples have the right to belong to Indigenous communities and nations, in accordance with their traditions and customs.

#### Article 10: **Removal and relocations**

Indigenous peoples shall not be removed from their land by force.

They shall not be relocated without their free, prior and informed consent. Where they agree, they should be provided compensation, and, where possible, have the possibility to return.

#### Article 11: **Culture**

Indigenous peoples have the right to their cultural traditions and customs. This includes aspects of their culture such as sacred sites, designs, ceremonies, technologies and performances. Their cultural property shall be returned to them, if it was taken without their free, prior and informed consent.

#### Article 12: **Spiritual and religious traditions**

Indigenous peoples have the right to their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies. They have the right to their sacred sites, ceremonial objects and the remains of their ancestors. Governments shall assist Indigenous peoples to recover their ceremonial objects and the remains of their ancestors.

#### Article 13: **Language**

Indigenous peoples have the right to their histories, languages, oral traditions, stories, writings and their own names for places and people. Governments shall ensure that in courts and other proceedings, Indigenous peoples can understand and be understood through interpreters and other appropriate ways.

#### Article 14: **Education**

Indigenous peoples have the right to their own schools and to provide education in their own languages. Indigenous people, especially children, have the right to the same education as all people. Governments shall assist Indigenous people, especially children who do not live in Indigenous communities, to learn their own culture and language.



## ARTICLE 14: EDUCATION

### COMMENT

It is a fundamental human right of Indigenous Australian children to receive an education that makes them stronger – in a way that enables them to develop a rich and positive sense of their own cultural identity; and smarter – in a way that enables them to participate in a modern society as any other Australian would.

If schools only seek to make Indigenous children smart, without developing any positive sense of cultural identity, then they do little more than assimilate those children into the mainstream. In this circumstance, we all lose.

As educators, we can do much better than this. We truly can deliver on the promise of a stronger, smarter future for all of Australia's Indigenous children. This is something that is not only great for Indigenous Australians. It is something great for all Australians. This is an Australian future with honour and integrity.

*Dr Chris Sarra is the Executive Director of the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute which, working with school leaders throughout Australia, is changing the tide of low expectations of Indigenous children in Australian schools. During his time as the first Aboriginal Principal of Cherbourg State School, it received national acclaim for dramatic improvements in literacy, numeracy, school attendance and community engagement.*



© PRIVATE

## United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### Article 15: Information

Education and public information shall reflect the dignity and diversity of Indigenous cultures, traditions and aspirations. In consultation with Indigenous peoples, governments shall take measures to promote tolerance and good relations between Indigenous and other peoples.

### Article 16: Media

Indigenous peoples have the right to their own media in their own languages. They shall also have equal access to non-Indigenous media. Government-owned media must reflect Indigenous cultures.

### Article 17: Employment

Indigenous peoples have rights under international and national labour laws. In consultation with Indigenous peoples, governments shall take measures to protect Indigenous children from exploitation and harmful work. Indigenous peoples must not be discriminated against in matters connected with employment.

### Article 18: Decision-making

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. They can choose their own representatives and use their own decision-making procedures.

### Article 19: Free, prior and informed consent

Governments shall consult with Indigenous peoples in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting laws and policies that may affect them.

### Article 20: Economic activities

Indigenous peoples have the right to their own political, economic and social systems, and to pursue their traditional and other economic activities. Where Indigenous peoples have been deprived of their means of subsistence, they are entitled to compensation.

## ARTICLE 18: DECISION-MAKING

### COMMENT

I have been the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner since 12 July 2004 and will conclude in January 2010. I have also served as Race Discrimination Commissioner from 12 July 2004 until 12 July 2009.

In July 2009, after 12 months of extensive consultations, I presented the Federal Government with a proposed model for a new national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was the guiding principle for this work.

People told us they wanted the new national representative body to be independent of government; for representatives to be appointed by and responsible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and to form enduring and respectful partnerships with government to enable us to exercise our right to self-determination.

The proposed model was designed to ensure that, through a new relationship with government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be able to directly influence government policies, programs and services so that they are appropriate, applicable, effective and sustainable.



© AAP IMAGE/ALAN PORRITT

**Tom Calma** is an Aboriginal elder from the Kungarakana tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja tribal group, whose traditional lands are southwest of Darwin and on the Coburg Peninsula in the Northern Territory respectively.

*He has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, state, national and international level for more than 35 years. Earlier in his career he served as a senior diplomat in India and Vietnam.*

*Tom Calma managed the Community Development and Education Branch at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services for five years, and was Senior Adviser, Indigenous Affairs, to the Minister of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.*

## United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### Article 21: **Special measures**

Indigenous peoples have the right to improved economic and social conditions. This includes in the areas of education, employment, housing, health and social security. Governments shall adopt special measures to ensure the improvement of economic and social conditions.

### Article 22: **Elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities**

Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this declaration. Governments shall adopt measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to protect Indigenous women and children against violence and discrimination.

### Article 23: **Economic and social development**

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine priorities and strategies for their development. They should be involved in determining health, housing and other economic and social programs and, as far as possible, administer these programs through their own organisations.

### Article 24: **Health**

Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and health practices. The plants, animals and minerals used in medicines shall be protected. Indigenous peoples shall have access to all social and health services without discrimination. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

### Article 25: **Lands, waters and resources: distinctive relationship**

Indigenous peoples have the right to keep and strengthen their distinctive relationship with their lands, waters and other resources.



## ARTICLE 22: ELDERS, WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

### COMMENT

This article reminds us how important it is to protect the most vulnerable of our people in order to safeguard the health and future of our communities.

In particular, violence against women undermines the family, the building block of our uniquely flexible and adaptive cultures. Violence against children threatens our very future as independent peoples.

In recent years, protecting our women and children from violence and discrimination has become a central part of the national debate. This has been a positive, though sometimes painful, development.

Most importantly, this article also tells us that solutions must be developed and implemented with our communities, rather than being imposed on us. Simply, in the long term, only those approaches that are based on respect for our rights and our history will work.

**Pat Anderson** is an Alyawarre woman and well known advocate for the health of Indigenous peoples. She co-authored the *Little Children are Sacred* report into abuse of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory and is currently Chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health.



© PRIVATE

### United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

#### Article 26: **Ownership**

Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use and control their lands, waters and other resources. Governments shall recognise and protect these lands, waters and resources.

#### Article 27: **Independent process**

Governments shall establish a fair and independent process to recognise and decide the rights of Indigenous peoples relating to their lands, waters and resources. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

#### Article 28: **Restitution**

Indigenous peoples have the right to the return of their land and resources when taken without their free, prior and informed consent. Where this is not possible, they shall receive fair compensation in the form of lands and resources, or money.

#### Article 29: **Environment**

Indigenous peoples shall receive assistance in order to restore and protect the environment of their land and resources. Hazardous material shall not be stored or disposed of on the land of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent. Governments shall take measures to assist Indigenous peoples whose health has been affected by such material.

#### Article 30: **Military activities**

There shall be no military activities on the land of Indigenous peoples, unless justified by a public interest or agreed by the Indigenous people.

#### Article 31: **Cultural and intellectual property**

Indigenous peoples have the right to control and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and sciences and technologies – including seeds, medicines, knowledge of flora and fauna, oral traditions, designs, art and performances. Governments shall take measures to recognise and protect these rights.



## ARTICLE 24: HEALTH

### COMMENT

The provisions of Article 24 will only be realised when Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders at the national, regional and local levels have the right to full participation in health service design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This is integral to closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation.

The network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services provides frontline, culturally-appropriate, primary healthcare in urban, regional and remote communities across Australia. It also gives Indigenous Australians the chance to set priorities to address needs at the local level.

The health sector needs to be properly resourced and expanded so we can reach our full potential and provide comprehensive care and improved health outcomes for people in all our communities.



© PRIVATE

**Dr Mick Adams** is a descendant of the Yadhigana people of Cape York, has ties with the Grindji/Wardaman people of the Northern Territory and with the people of the Torres Straits, Warlpiri (Yuendumu) and East Arnhem Land (Gurramaru) communities. He spent his childhood in Darwin's Parap Camp community.

Dr Adams is the elected Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, representing more than 145 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across Australia.

## United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### Article 32: Resource development

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine strategies for the development of their lands and resources. Governments shall consult in order to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before giving approval to activities affecting their lands or resources, particularly the development of mineral, water and other resources. Just compensation must be paid for such activities, and measures taken to lessen their adverse impact.

### Article 33: Indigenous citizenship

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine who their members are. They have the right to decide upon the structures and membership of their organisations.

### Article 34: Indigenous laws and customs

Indigenous peoples have the right to their own legal systems and customs, as long as they accord with international human rights law.

### Article 35: Responsibilities

Indigenous peoples can decide the responsibilities of individuals to their communities.

### Article 36: Borders

Indigenous peoples separated by international borders have the right to maintain relations and undertake activities with one another.

### Article 37: Treaties and agreements

Governments shall respect treaties and agreements entered into with Indigenous peoples.

### Article 38: National measures

In consultation with Indigenous peoples, governments shall take measures to give effect to this declaration.

## ARTICLE 31: CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

### COMMENT

Indigenous arts, culture and knowledge are interconnected with land and sea. Handed down through the generations, Indigenous cultural heritage is the heart of our identity. It is our past and our future.

Article 31 recognises that Indigenous peoples must have enforceable legal rights to control and develop their cultural heritage. For the continuation of culture, we must have the right not only to guard the integrity of our cultural heritage, traditional cultural expression and traditional knowledge – but also to give consent to uses of it that are acceptable to us. We must be recognised and attributed when our cultural and intellectual property is used with our prior, informed consent.

Any government measure must ensure Indigenous Australians can control, develop, protect and maintain their cultural heritage in ways that are economically, socially and culturally appropriate to their needs and interests. Only in this way will the future of a rich cultural heritage be equitably sustained. Measures could include amendments to existing laws, but preferably, Australia should be moving towards the enactment of special laws and the development of a National Indigenous Cultural Authority. We need a peak cultural alliance linking Indigenous cultural creators and communities, establishing a framework to guard culture from inappropriate use, and managing the approved use on suitable terms.

*Terri Janke is an Indigenous Australian solicitor and author. Her law firm advises arts, cultural and business entities on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. Her publications include: Our culture: our future (1999), Minding culture (WIPO, 2003) and Beyond guarding ground: a vision for a National Indigenous Cultural Authority (2009).*



© AMANDA JAMES

### Article 39: Assistance from governments and international organisations

Indigenous peoples have the right to financial and other assistance from governments and international organisations in order to enjoy the rights recognised in this declaration.

### Article 40: Disputes

Indigenous peoples have the right to fair procedures for the resolution of disputes with States and other parties, and to effective remedies for infringements of their rights. These procedures must take account of Indigenous customs and traditions.

### Article 41: Assistance from the United Nations

The United Nations and other international organisations shall provide financial and other assistance in order to give effect to the rights recognised in this declaration.

### Article 42: Special United Nations bodies

The United Nations and its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, shall promote respect for this declaration.

### Article 43: Minimum standards

This declaration contains only minimum standards for Indigenous peoples.

### Article 44: Men and women

The rights recognised in this declaration apply equally to Indigenous men and women.

### Article 45: Other Indigenous rights

Nothing in this declaration affects other rights Indigenous peoples presently hold or may get in the future.

### Article 46: United Nations Charter

Nothing in this declaration allows any action against the Charter of the United Nations or which harms the territorial integrity of independent countries.



## THE DECLARATION: ENGAGEMENT

### COMMENT

Governments and societies across the world have struggled to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples when developing the policies and programs that affect us. This declaration now documents our individual and collective rights in one document and provides a comprehensive guide for future collaboration. It clearly defines how existing human rights, applicable to every man, woman and child throughout the world, apply to the very particular situations of Indigenous peoples.

I am hopeful that Indigenous peoples, our governments and our societies will use the declaration as the foundation to our engagement with each other – recognising that Indigenous rights are human rights and that we all deserve a life of dignity.

**Sheena Graham** is a Nudgu woman from Western Australia and the first Aboriginal person elected to the National Board of Amnesty International Australia. In 2007, Sheena participated in an Amnesty International mission to the Grassy Narrows First Nations reserve in Canada, to witness the impact of continued logging on the human rights of the Anishinaabe people. She works in international development and has recently made a contribution to the United Nations study on the Challenges to the Right to Education for Indigenous Peoples.



© NARELLE ALBRECHT

### Karen Bird

Skin name: Ngal, Nangala  
Language group: Anmatyerr  
Home: Akay/Mulga Bore



## A BRINGING TOGETHER

The artwork in this book was commissioned by Amnesty International from a family of prominent Aboriginal artists. This is the story of the art through which they interpret the declaration – as told to our researcher, Lucas Jordan.

Lindsay Bird's bush name is Arrereke. He is a senior lawman, leading artist and elder of the Anmatyerr people living at Mulga Bore on the Sandover Highway in central Australia.

Lindsay and his brother Harold Payne belong to the Mpetyan skin group. In the Anmatyerr language area the Mpetyan and Ngal skins are the principal owners or merekartwey for the songs, paintings, designs and sacred knowledge relating to the Ahakey or Bush Currant Dreaming. The Ahakey tree is prolific on Anmatyerr country and is most often associated with Mulga communities.

When Lindsay heard about the declaration, he likened it to the Ahakey Dreaming and those Aboriginal laws that bring all families together in "one line". Lindsay says "we live in the middle of our Dreaming". That Dreaming, and the songs and social relationships and responsibilities endowed within it, bring peace and unity not just to Anmatyerr families, but also to their neighbours, who take up the Ahakay Dreaming as it travels from east to west across central Australia.

To demonstrate this sense of respect for all people connected to the Dreaming, Lindsay said he could not paint the declaration cover alone. Instead, Harold Payne joined him to continue the line/story where Lindsay's responsibilities finished. Similarly, Lindsay's daughters Jessie and Karen Bird were invited to paint the designs for the inside of the book, to represent their generation's connections to the Dreaming and the social and kinship relationships that it stands for.

When Lindsay heard about universal human rights, he reconciled them with the Anmatyerr world view:

"We don't change em: one law, one song.

"What I'm talking about is one line. We can't read (us old people), we got song, song we sing, everybody's song."

As Lindsay, Harold, Jessie and Karen presented their art for the declaration book, four songs were sung that are as much a part of the paintings as are the Anmatyerr people themselves.

The first song represented Lindsay's own painting, which begins at one of the two starting points of the Ahakey Dreaming, a place known

as Aremele rockhole. The song and painting tell how the Dreaming travels west, encompassing an array of native plants and animals that connect with the story of the Ahakey (Bush Currant). Look closely at the painting and see the tracks of the Aherte (bilby). Also represented is the Anakweltwey, a type of inedible tyap (grub) that is associated with the Ahakey bush. Much of the dot painting in the background represents Tyankern, a type of mistletoe that flowers and grows on the Mulga trees that are associated with the Ahakey habitat.

Lindsay's painting can be painted onto alkwert (shields) or rubbed on the bellies of grandsons to make them healthy and strong.

The second song was connected to the continuation of the Ahakey line through Harold Payne's painting. It begins at a soakage called Antyere near a small hill or rocky outcrop on the eastern side of Anmatyerr country. The painting and its songs follow the journey of the Ahakey Dreaming as it travels west to Imeyeteng (Mount Solitary), onto Ilwempe artweye artwey near Ti Tree, through the old Ti Tree station west of the Stuart highway on to Paw (Mt Barkly), before moving onto the traditional lands of the Walpiri people who take over the Dreaming from there.

The third and fourth songs that accompanied the paintings tell the story of the owners of the songs – the people of the Mpetyan and Ngal skin groups – and the responsibilities of other family members or kwerterngerl. The fourth song passes the responsibilities onto the Walpiri people who carry on this Dreaming.

## ANMATYERR WOMEN'S PAINTINGS

The art inside this declaration booklet is the work of Jessie and Karen Bird Ngal, the daughters of Lindsay Bird and highly regarded artists in their own right. Both women live at Mulga Bore, raising their young families and working as teachers' assistants at the primary school.

Jessie's art represents the colours of the feathers of Thep Inpernp (Yellow Throated Minor Bird). This bird is frequently encountered in the Mulga and Ahakey scrub country.

Karen's painting represents bush medicine, namely, Alpar and Alpar anterrng, the leaves and seeds of the Green Crumbweed or Rat Tailed Goosefoot. This strong smelling, sticky herb stands up to 25 cm high and has small clustered flowers. It grows most often in Mulga communities and its small, black, shiny seeds are produced a month or so after rain.

The seed is an important food source, however this painting honours Alpar for its medicinal qualities. The highly scented leaves are ground into powder and mixed with fat for use as an ointment, or soaked in water and used as a wash or inhalant to ease the symptoms of colds and flu.





To demand dignity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander peoples visit [www.amnesty.org.au](http://www.amnesty.org.au)