

# National Indigenous Legal Conference

**JOHN RAWNSLEY** Manager, Law and Justice Projects, NAAJA

On 13–14 August 2019 Winkiku Rumbangi NT Indigenous Lawyers Aboriginal Corporation hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> National Indigenous Legal Conference (NILC) for the first time in Darwin.

Overwhelming feedback was received that this was the best NILC to date and, for many, an exceptional and one of the best conference experiences ever. Attendees referred to the energy and vibe, extensive speaker list including Aboriginal people across the legal system and in senior and diverse roles in the NT, and the leadership and inspiration across the board.

The conference theme was *'True Justice: Integrating Indigenous Perspectives'*.

Over 400 people attended including many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers and law students supported by their universities, law firms and law associations from across Australia. We were particularly pleased to showcase Territory talent and to share the unique inspiration, insight and knowledge the Territory brings for our interstate visitors, many of whom will remember this experience for many years to come. This experience also places the Territory in a strong position when the conference returns in seven years.

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) Community Legal Educators James Parfitt (Fejo) and Mililma May (also a law student) were exceptional in their role as emcees. Their personalities and styles of engagement complemented each other and the enthusiasm, welcoming hospitality and energy they brought was central to the quality of the conference experience.

Principal Legal Officer of NAAJA and President of Winkiku Rumbangi NT Indigenous Lawyers David Woodroffe delivered the Opening Plenary, alongside Barb Shaw as Chair of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT and in line with the concurrent theme of Health Justice. There is growing momentum and interest in how health and justice issues intersect

and how improved collaborations and partnerships lead to better outcomes. By focusing on this theme at a national level, and in the context of the Northern Territory, we were able to showcase our work and also highlight the many issues and valued perspectives in this space.

We are appreciative of the many Territory-based speakers at the conference: Leanne Liddle, Prof Mick Dodson AM, Priscilla Atkins, Ariana Tutini, Eddie Cubillo, the Hon. Justice Jenny Blokland, the Hon. Justice Trevor Riley, Mr Mark Guyula MLA, Dr James Gaykamangu, Stephanie Monck, Commissioner Andrea Mason OAM, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Kenisha Gumbula, Zhenia Kavunenko, Dr Pat Miller AO, Adam Drake, Carol Chistophersen, Brenda Muthamuluwuy, Adam Drake, Tamara Cole, Zoe Smith, Amy Frew, Jordina Rust, Dr Paul Lawton, Kristy Bloomfield, Dr Curtis Roman, Commissioner Sally Sievers, Alison Hanley, Joy McLaughlin, Heather D'Antoine, Helen Bishop, Jared Sharp, Ben Grimes, Micah Kickett, and more.

We are also appreciative of speakers involved nationally in support of issues relevant to the Territory including the President of the Law Council of Australia Arthur Moses SC, Tony McAvoy SC, Dr Hannah McGlade, George Newhouse, Professor Marcelle Burns, and more.

On Wednesday morning at the Supreme Court interpreters at the Aboriginal Interpreter Service acted out a Yolngu-Matha reverse court role play. Mr English was on trial. We are appreciative of Derek Hunt, Nadyezhda Pozzana, Labi Gumbula, Bernadette Nethercott and Jennifer Baker and witnesses Ben Grimes and Beth Wild for performing this role play.

Following this session a new concept was launched—*Legal Education for True Justice: Indigenous Perspectives and Deep Listening on Country*. The concept is intensive, on-country courses to hear from a range of perspectives relating to law and justice including interpreter, Traditional Owner, Aboriginal lawyer, law student and academic. In partnership with the Australian National University College of Law the first course will be held near Uluru in September 2020. The video of the launch is available on YouTube (search

Winkiku Rumbangi). We are interested in holding similar courses as cultural competency courses tailored to different participant groups including lawyers, students, law lecturers, judicial officers, and others.

Hosting the NILC for the first time in Darwin was a significant event for Winkiku Rumbangi NT Indigenous Lawyers Aboriginal Corporation. We appreciate the sponsorship of the Law Society NT and Marsh amongst other sponsors. ■

