

Open Door

Newsletter 228

7th June, 2024

to healthy minds and healthy bodies

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

1st August 2024

Please email contributions to
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Armidale Incorporated**

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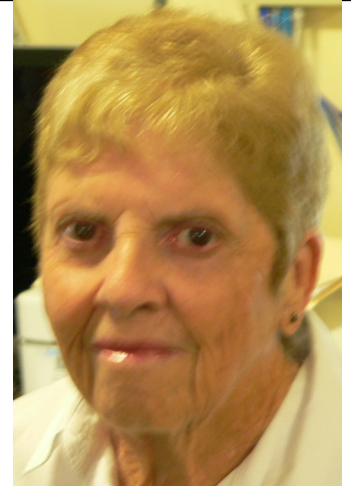
Please support our sponsors:

2ARM-FM, Armidale City Bowling Club, Bunnings, CGA Country Glass and Aluminium, Chris Ferris, Armidale Horticultural Services (0458474035), New England Foot Clinic, Regional Australia Bank, SportUNE.

For further information sponsors' websites can be accessed from the U3AA website www.u3aa.org.au

From the Desk of the President — Sue Cameron

The painters have finished and we have a refurbished building which has met with the approval of all. We are very proud of the efforts put into achieving this by so many. There are always ideas to expand on our accomplishments, but for now they will remain in the "bucket list" as we prepare for Semester 2.



The Course Booklet is in the development stage and will be available in hard copy and on-line very shortly. You will find more new Courses added to our already extensive list of activities. Unless advised otherwise by your Leader, there is no need to re-enrol in your chosen activity.

With 454 members, after only five months, our total now exceeds that of the whole of last year's membership. For this, I, the Committee and Course Co-ordinators wish to express our sincere thanks to all our Group Leaders who co-operated by generously opening up their enrolment numbers so no prospective members were turned away from activities in which they wished to participate. I hope we have finally "killed" the perception that all our Courses were permanently full, so it wasn't worth trying to join the U3AA anyway.

Finally I have to finish on a sad note. Pam Barber, wife of our Treasurer Doug, recently passed away. I'm sure you will all join with me in expressing our deepest sympathy to him and his family for their loss.
Sue Cameron



NEW!

French Refresher (Enrolment by Office Only) 85

Did you learn French at school (decades ago)? Are you interested in being able to function on a visit or when you meet French speakers? This course will be a revision of all you used to know! It will be based on situations you may encounter and what vocabulary and grammar you need. (Next year, in *French for Non Beginners*, we will try to have real life conversations, read simple texts and deepen our knowledge of how to use French. We will use games to help).

Leader: **Jill Turner**
Phone: **0417 211 409**
Frequency: **Every Wednesday**
Time: **10:30am—12 noon**
Venue: **ASCA House**
Incidental Costs: **Nil**
Start Date: **24th July 2024 - 11th December**

Member Profile: CLAIRE JENNINGS

I came to Armidale to retire. I had mainly lived in coastal and city locations such as Port Macquarie, Newcastle, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Valla. As most of my working career as a registered nurse was community nursing, I had plenty of opportunities to look around for a place to finally settle. Armidale attracted me because some of my relatives live in the New England area and Armidale seemed a very friendly place with beautiful seasonal changes. Autumn has always been my favorite time of the year and in the New England, it is stunning when the trees change colour and the temperature starts to cool.

The other things I wanted to find in a place to settle were; an active U3A, some sporting activities, good neighbours and friends, and I have found all of these. I firstly joined the local dragon boat club but unfortunately the club decided to train with Coffs Harbour dragon boat club so to paddle, I would have had to travel to Coffs, which I was not keen to do.

Just after I settled here, I went on a tour of Tasmania and met a woman from Armidale who ran a retired nurse's group. I met some interesting women through this group who have remained good friends over the past nine years.

I became a member of U3AA not long after I moved here. I did three mornings a week. I have met some amazing women in this group, with whom I now socialize on a regular basis. I am also doing the yoga in chairs class with Maureen, which is not as easy as I thought, but I keep trying. I have been extremely impressed by the work the volunteers do at U3AA. They are always willing help with enrollments and to have a chat.

As part of my extensive nursing career, I taught student nurses in a hospital and then at a university in Sydney. This interest in nurse education has remained with me, so I do some "acting as a patient", with UNE. This has given me the opportunity to see, at first hand, how and what the Nursing, Medical and Pharmacology students are learning. I have been very impressed by how a majority of the UNE students' progress though their degrees.

Claire Jennings



In the vein of "Where's Wally?" can you decide "Where's Claire?"

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NEW!

Writing Quiet Time **XX**

Is it hard to find the time to write or research for your project? Is your writing/research time and other commitments battling each other? Are you finding it hard to settle into a writing/researching routine? This course is set up based upon the Writing NSW 'Write-ins' events, providing people who like to write a designated time and place, away from non-writing distractions and other commitments. We can also share and provide feedback to help and encourage each other to write. Bring your preferred writing instruments and needs to settle into a morning of writing.

Leader: **Catherine Michael**

Phone: **0421 431 381**

Frequency: **Every Friday (except school holidays)**

Time: **9:30am**

Duration: **3 hours**

Venue: **ASCA House (West Room)**

Incidental Costs: **Nil**

Start Date: **5th July 2024**

NEW!

Meditation - An Introduction **86**

Regular meditation practice aids calmness, clarity of mind, and promotes contentment. Learn to meditate with a group. Various techniques will be offered with an opportunity to practice, and focus will primarily be on mindfulness of breathing meditation. Initially five weeks in length, but may extend longer for those wishing to continue to practice in a group.

Teacher has more than 20 years experience as a meditator, teaching and leading mindfulness of breathing meditation at the Armidale Community Buddhist Centre.

There will be lots of opportunities for questions. Bring a meditation bench or cushion if you wish to use one, but sitting on a chair is fine.

Leader: **Sylvia Ransom**

Phone: **0458 728 938**

Frequency: **Every Thursday for 5 weeks**

Time: **3:30pm**

Duration: **1 hour**

Venue: **ASCA House (East Room)**

Incidental Costs: **Nil**

Start Date: **1st August 2024**

Hello Readers,

I created this story during a writing activity. We opened a kitchen drawer, choose an item, wrote a story about it, brought it to the group and lastly, shared our stories. I choose a small bread pan. Here is my story:

Changes In Our Lives

The old small bread pan sat forgotten in the back of a cupboard, no longer being used to make bread. Eventually, the owner left her home and her bread pan, and started a new life. The unused yard became overgrown. The unused home sat and so did the bread pan. Everything continued to decay until someone new arrived.

"What do you think we will get for this old thing?" said a crisp voice.

"It's all rusted up and old so I bet we can get a good bob for it," said a growly deep voice.

"Yes, I think it is worth selling. Maybe clean it up a bit."

"It is probably an antique so I can flog it for a good amount."

That is how the old pan began its new life, sitting on a shelf in a second-hand shop being sold as an antique. It was better sitting on this shelf because different people came into the shop all day long and the pan was in a nice warm sunny spot, remembering when it baked bread.

One day, a young child spotted the rusty old pan. He picked it up to examine its sides, bottom and corners.

"Mum, can we get this? I think it would be fun to make Grandma's bread in this," he said.

"We can get a newer, cheaper one at the grocery store," said his mother.

"Yes, but this one reminds me of grandmother. We could bake some of her bread and take it to her in the nursing home. Please...? It would be good for her to see something old like she is."

They left the shop. The little boy had a big smile because he was excited to make bread for his great-grandmother. The mother had a look of frustration because she was busy re-arranging her agenda to accommodate the hours needed to make a true loaf of bread.

I will not talk about the art of bread making because there isn't time, but soon, the mother and son were busy using their talents, both having a wonderful time talking together as they worked. The mother forgot her frustrations and was busy enjoying her son's company, answering his questions, and laughing with him.

Grandmother was sitting in a brightly coloured, overstuffed chair. She couldn't get out of it so she was stuck watching a TV program that the staff had chosen. She was not happy. But then the wonderful smell of freshly baked bread caught her attention and she saw her family enter the day room, the boy proudly holding the pan in his hands. Her eyes filled with happy tears. They ate the bread together and grandmother talked about their family history and the role that the now recovered family bread pan had played in it.

"Next week, we can make peanut butter bread for grandmother."

The End – Written by Catherine Michael in April 2023. Revised in May 2024.

Your turn to write:

Open a cupboard or drawer in your home and write a story about an object inside it. It can be a true story or a story that follows the traditional story structure of introducing the people and place, give the story a problem and then fix the problem. Set a timer for about 20 minutes, if you like, and write away. Don't worry about spelling and punctuation at this point. Just get your ideas and thoughts onto paper. The spelling and punctuation can be cleaned up later. Have Fun!

New! Art of Living

This course examines an old concept—the notion that life is meaningful.—from a unique point of view. We will attempt to explore the role of the arts in general and literature in particular, with regard to answering the question: what is the meaning of life?

By means of a play, some poems, a novel and music, we will show how these "imitations" or "intimations" of being are relevant to the meaning of life.

Beginning with a short digression to Shakespeare and his "stages" of life we progress via a short discussion of a time-worn topic—the seasons—and how they reflect human life. This is followed by a detailed dissection of various "artistic" expressions or representations of key questions in life.

The course concludes by trying to reconcile the various approaches to the question of "meaning" via a diverse group of creative/artistic forms.

A feature of the course will be the use of audiovisual items including poets reading their own work and other contextual materials.

Leader: **Gary Melville**
Phone: **0432 659 792**
Frequency: **Every Wednesday for 5 weeks**
Time: **1:00pm**
Duration: **Up to 2 hours**
Venue: **ASCA House (East Room)**
Incidental Costs: **Nil**
Start Date: **7th August, 2024**



Tyler, Rose and Bob in the gallery

What a wonderful and informative 10 weeks we spent at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place with

Director, Rose Lovelock. We

learned about Rose's extraordinary life, family history and what it is to grow up an Aborigine in colonial Australia. With graceful generosity, Rose presented the history of her family and the real effects of colonisation.

Our sessions mostly took the form of a Yarning Circle, the system used by indigenous peoples all over the world. A communications system of equality, to learn from one another, build respect, share cultural knowledge and governance. Yarning is a collaborative inclusive process where decisions are made together. It is the first thing that differentiates the indigenous system from the colonial patriarchal system of hierarchy.

By Yarning, I mean that our two hourly sessions were created with an informality of open conversation and discussion. Using historical film, photos and videos we learned the meaning of a 'Smoking Ceremony', 'Welcome to Country' and successfully 'getting back to Country'. We were taken by Rose, Tyler Stackman, Bob Blair and Adam Spencer, on guided tours and demonstrations learning about tools, symbolism and the importance of storytelling.

In one of our sessions we discussed fully the NO Vote in the Referendum. Very few white people would ever get to hear directly, the pain this result has for many aboriginal people. There was broad opportunity to ask the really deep questions and we did. We felt the hurt and the injustice and were able to share the deep feeling of grief Rose expressed for her people. I reflected on the statement, *Close the Gap* and realised it is we who can do this by sitting together, yarning.

We painfully heard how racism is experienced in everyday interactions by First Nations people in our little region of Armidale; happening quietly in the background. Henry Reynolds called it 'The Great Australian Silence.' Many of our group expressed surprise at hearing about the overt racism our indigenous friends experience on a daily basis. Racism is only a word unless you experience it.

When we no longer notice the colour of skin, racism will die.

Historically, governments made every effort to destroy aboriginal customary law, language, rites of passage and marriage rites; believing that such policies of destruction would wipe out the people of this land and assimilate who was left.

Rose's mother (one of the Stolen Children) was taken when she was a tiny five year old and she was not reunited with her sister until she was in her 20's, by chance. Rose shared the emotional story of how the reconnection of the two sisters came about and the joy of that reconnection.

Fiona Lovelock, Crime and Security Support Officer, presented a talk on Circle Sentencing. It's a community program based on the Aboriginal system of justice where a panel of Elders, all volunteers, work together with a magistrate to arrive at a better outcome for everyone involved. 'Circle Sentencing is not about punishment, it's about changing behaviour', said Fiona. 'It came about because of the high incarceration rate of our people and it's a small part of trying to fix that problem.' It's a co-operative process, an accepted Koorie alternative where a defendant has pleaded guilty or has been found guilty in the Local Court. Fiona added. 'We have a great result in Armidale where we have not had any re-offending here.' This is outstanding when offenders don't reoffend. This intervention program is only for local adult aboriginal offenders at this stage.

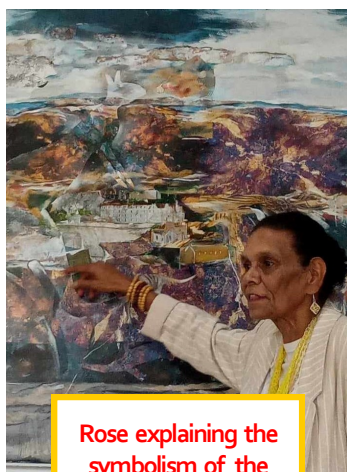
Towards the end of our Yarns, the Elders came to speak with us. Cecil Briggs, George Murray, Cyril and Hazel Green came and sat with us and of course our host, Elder Rose Lovelock.

Cecil Briggs, in his story telling way in his wisdom years, (still looking like a movie star) told us he was the first black man to have owned a business in Armidale. His heavy machinery business was used to build infrastructure in Armidale. It was the way he could 'make a living' to raise his family. Cecil explained the paradox of pushing over trees to build fences for the farmers and squatters, and all the while, he would hear his mother's voice in his heart.

He said, "My mother told us that family was our wealth in this country. We fell from the richest people to the poorest people in the shortest time; bought about by four things: invasion, domination, hatred and greed. What was taken from us can never be replaced. We were the wealthiest people because the land was our provider, our mother; and we were the keepers of this land".



Fiona's session on Circle Sentencing



Rose explaining the symbolism of the artworks

Armidale was gazetted as a town in 1849. Squatters soon settled the tablelands with their large sheep runs. They fenced, built roads, redirected water ways, destroyed landmarks integral to the song lines and sacred sites, which became inaccessible to the traditional owners. The landscape changed and with it, the culture.

Government banned the use of indigenous languages and across the tablelands, massacre sites are still being discovered today. Access to ceremonial and sacred places were not allowed and many of those sites were destroyed by the property owners. This is the way of colonisation in every land on the planet.

We learned that through the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place, Oorala and the UNE departments of Archaeology, Anthropology, Indigenous and Legal Studies, partnerships are growing and with it, knowledge. Sacred sites are slowly being identified and restored.

Rose invited musical legend Cyril Green with his wife Hazel to speak about his travels around the country with Jimmy Little as his lead guitarist. Cyril explained that he did not read any music at all but it never stopped him from collaborating with musicians all over the country. With the help of his roadie, George Murray, Cyril set up with his high-tech system using his band backing tracks to accompany his electric guitar. He treated us to a wonderful concert in the Gallery of the Keeping Place.



Demonstration of woomera spear throwing device

Over the weeks we explored the two systems since colonisation; These two cultures are practically opposite in every way. There is no word in Aboriginal language for money. Rose explained, trade meant exactly that, tools, weapons, medicine and knowledge were the currency. There was no concept of profit. We were treated to personal stories, painful stories and some very funny stories throughout all the sessions.

Rose told us on our final coming together that the Elders expressed their experience as being truly comfortable and safe enough with 'us whitefellas', to share their own stories, some of the more difficult moments in their lives and living with racism and prejudice. They talked of the loss they still feel every day for their culture and country. The Elders were appreciative that we had listened so respectfully. Being heard in the wider community wasn't something that happened very often.

I learned so much in our Yarning Circles and these were my take aways:

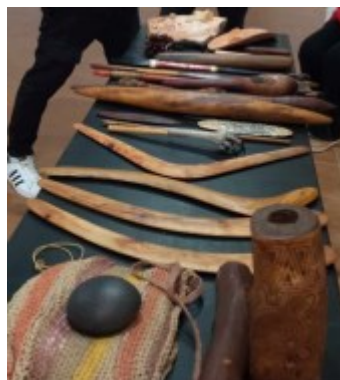
- Ultimately, family and kinship are the cohesive forces that bind Aboriginal people together.



Cyril Green played for us

- The knowledge around moiety, totems and skin names are being challenged every day with the unavoidable modernising of Australia.
- So many families were and are still are being decimated by child safety policies and intergenerational trauma.
- Complex kinship structures, maintained for thousands of years have largely been lost within half a dozen generations.
- Young aboriginal people do not necessarily know where they belong now in modern Australia but the pride in the culture is growing but the rebirth of language is restoring pride in culture.
- The Referendum if it had been a YES, may well have been a major step along the road to healing for First Nations but their resilience for 65,000 years will sustain.

There is no going back, only forward. But with learning, sharing, honour and respect, appreciation and coming together in relationship, we can build harmony and understanding. We can close the gap but it will take all of us to want that and build those relationships into a more informed and united Australia.



Tools, tools, tools



Tyler presents his kangaroo skin

Resources:
[Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Port Stephens \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal-women-heritage)
[Aboriginal Women's Heritage by Department of Environment and Conservation | AustLit: Discover Australian Stories](https://www.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal-women-heritage)
[Aboriginal Women's Heritage - Brungle & Tumut \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal-women-heritage)
[Place Remembered: Unearthing Hidden Histories in Armidale Aboriginal Community Garden - AHR](https://www.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal-women-heritage)

Mrs Mac the Animal Lover by Sue Mussett

Mrs Mac please open the door so we can have a chat
It's over complaints and this time it's not just
about your cat
The neighbours they are fed up and they can't
take anymore
So please Mrs Mac just open up your door

Your goat ate Masie's washing that was flapping
on the line
And she tells me she is sick of it cos it's not the
first time
Is it necessary at dawn for your rooster to
cocka doodle doo
After copulating with Henrietta to produce an
egg or two

Pebbles the parrot screeching whose a pretty boy
And before the sun has risen that's enough to
annoy
But the language he uses you taught him is
unwise
Mrs Mac open the door and please come
outside

Your cats dropping dead mice all over the place
You need to confine them inside their own space
Mr Smith's driveway and at his front door
Says he's not gonna put up with this anymore

And your flea bitten dogs well the postman's a
wreck
His trousers are ripped and he's got a stiff neck
His therapist told him he needs compo for some
weeks
He's upped his medication and along your
street he sneaks

The door it flew open and out came Mrs Mac
It's all lies she screamed as she kicked at the cat
The Chinese out the back looked over for a peak
Stop looking over my yard you pair of sticky
beaks

No good they cried Council take away your pets
Bugger off said Mrs Mac this is not your mess
My cats have been disappearing and stealing's
a sin
Bet you been putting them in your dim sims

Pebbles joined the chaos and fluffed up his
feathers
He wasn't gonna be left out not in any weather
So whose a pretty boy he screeched at the top
of his lungs
His feet bouncing up and down on his cage rungs

Well the flea-bitten dogs they had had enough
Slowly they approached me and they looked
real tuff
Their hair was standing upright and their snarls
were getting loud
Cos Mrs Mac their owner of her they were very
proud

I backed away slowly and smiled as I went
And then I bolted and jumped over the fence
My trouser leg it's still hanging there flapping in
the sun
And now I see a therapist and Mrs Mac has won.

Reflections by Gene Swindell

*The old man looks out, from his window on high
And as the clouds drift by, he lets out a sigh
As he remembers how good it felt to be that free
And youth was a wonderful, precious key*

*To open any door, that beckoned you to go in
And upon entering, you hoped all your dreams to
fulfill
How could he foresee, that all dreams would become
ash
And hopes lie on the ground, rusted and smashed*

*The brutality of war came swiftly, and with such
ease
And the daily prayer was 'Dear God save me
please'
As the guns blasted around and bullets whipped
through the air
He longed for the days, when there wasn't a care*

*Hurled headlong into mayhem, with deaths all
around
His one great hope then, was to never hear the
sound
Of another mate screaming, as the bullet found it's
mark
As high up above, came the faint song of a lark*

*Bloodied and bruised bodies, lay battered and
dead
But still the hungry guns had a need to be fed
Their appetite for death, seemed beyond all
measure
Taking the lives of the nation's greatest treasure*

*Tears fill his eyes, as he recalls all the horror
When no-one gave a thought about a new
tomorrow
Now here in his room, with life's end in sight
He thinks back to the lark, and how it took flight*

*Above all the destruction and death, lying below
Above the guns with only killing and maiming to
show
There just like the lark, his thoughts start to soar
Back to a place, where death is no more
He has lived a life marked by great sorrow and
pain
And life after the war was never the same*

*But hope springs eternal
When there is beauty to be found
In the flowers that now grow
In the once, blood-soaked ground*

*A quietness reigns, and peace fills the air
And the lark still soars above, without a care*

*The old man's eyes grow heavy, as he lays on the
bed
No need for more talking, it's all been said
Now with his life almost over, a smile lights up his
face
For he knows he has been pardoned, by a hand full
of grace
And like the lark, he too, will have a song to
sing
When he stands before the king of all kings.*