



Yirrim Trubala Symposium

Friday 28 November 2025

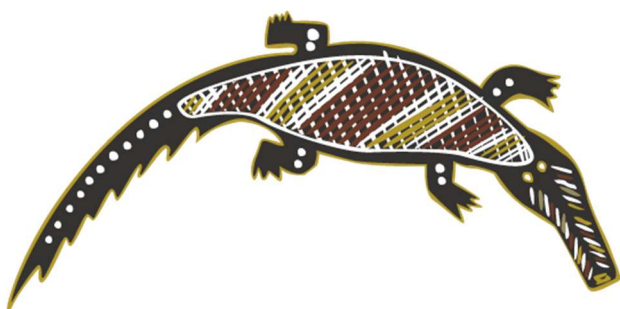
Danala Education and Community Precinct, Darwin

Program

Introduction

Welcome to *Yirrim Trubala*, a symposium designed for truth-listening. The simple rationale is that Aboriginal people across Australia have been telling the truth about Australia, its history, the brutality of colonisation and its subsequent effects—principally imposed by the enduring policies and practices of settler-colonialism—since the time of first contact. Those truths, held in this country's Original Archive, have traditionally fallen on deaf ears.

This symposium represents an opportunity to listen; to hear some truths and to learn from them. Some of our presenters have first-hand experience of settler-colonialism. Some have documented those truths. Others have heard and have learnt from them. All will share their experiences with us.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Larrakia Country on which we meet and further acknowledge that Larrakia sovereignty of this land was never ceded.

Image: Larrakia Nation

Times

Please note that all times in this program are Central Standard Time.



Image: ABC SA

Intergenerational Trauma

'Intergenerational trauma' is a term that is bandied around a great deal, yet there is little evidence that it is well understood. This symposium is designed to hear the truth from a variety of perspectives that are informed by trauma. That is, our presenters will speak from the perspective of having suffered intergenerational trauma, having to deal with the fallout from it or having designed programs or interventions in response to it.

Darwin et al provide this precis of intergenerational trauma:

- The dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and the forcible removal of children from their families from the 1800s to 1969 (the Stolen Generations) resulted in complex experiences of trauma and loss.
- The Stolen Generations resulted in the dislocation of Indigenous Australian children from their community, culture and family and in their subsequent exposure to multiple stressors, placing them at high risk of poor social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB).
- It is estimated that, at a minimum, one-third of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population may be affected by intergenerational trauma as descendants of the Stolen Generations.
- Survivors of the Stolen Generations and their descendants have demonstrably poorer health and wellbeing outcomes, compared with those who were not removed and their descendants – resulting in poorer mental health, suicidal ideation, attempts and/or death.
- The transmission of this trauma through successive generations is known as 'intergenerational trauma'.
- Intergenerational trauma can occur directly through exposure to harmful behaviours by relatives and community members such as violence, substance misuse and the feelings of stress caused by racism.
- Intergenerational trauma can be compounded by, and re-experienced through, contemporary interventions into Indigenous Australian communities – including the health, juvenile justice, child protection, and welfare systems.
- Children of survivors of the Stolen Generations have also been found to be at twice the risk of significant emotional and behavioural difficulties compared with children in families who were not separated.
- The presence and promotion of SEWB protective factors – including strong connections to families, culture and Country – are essential to building resilience and mitigating the impact of trauma for survivors of Stolen Generations and their descendants (Darwin et al, 2023, p vi).

The symposium program has been designed with this in mind.

PROGRAM		
9.15am	Welcome	Dr Robyn Smith, Charles Darwin University
Trauma-informed Legislation, Policy and Practice		
Time	Topic	Presenter
9.30am	Making space for Yolŋu Rom: law two-ways	Mr Yingiya Guyula, MLA, Member for Mulka, Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
10.00am	Using Evidence & Theory to Understand Educational Policy Experiments: Case Studies from the NT	Dr John Guenther, Research Leader, Education & Training, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
10.30am	Indigenous Access to Legislators	Emeritus Professor Rolf Gerritsen, Charles Darwin University
MORNING TEA BREAK 11.00-11.20am		
Intergenerational Trauma and the Law		
Time	Topic	Presenter
11.20am	Trauma-informed Practice in the Domestic Violence Context	Senior Sergeant Cherie Gaffney, Domestic Violence Governance, Northern Territory Police
11.50am	The System is Broken	Mr John Lawrence SC, James Muirhead Chambers, Darwin
LUNCH BREAK 12.20-1.00pm		
Trauma-informed History, Heritage and Interpretation		
Time	Topic	Presenter
1.00pm	Australian Wars and Resistance	Dr Bill Pascoe, Independent Researcher
1.30pm	Trauma-informed Heritage and Interpretation	Dr Charlotte Feakins, Sydney University
Trauma-informed Story Telling		
Time	Topic	Presenters
2.00pm	<i>Brutal Truths</i> : a people- and place-based approach to historical truth telling in Library & Archives NT's new permanent exhibition, <i>Meeting Ground</i> .	Dr Charlie Ward, History Curator, Library & Archives NT and PJ Andrews, First Nations Collections and Content Co-ordinator, Library & Archives NT
2.45-3.30pm	Optional guided tour of the <i>Meeting Ground</i> exhibition, Library & Archives NT, Level 2, CDU Danala campus.	
Symposium Close		

Note: presenters have 20 minutes after which 10 minutes will be allowed for questions.

Meet our Presenters



Yingiya Guyula, MLA

Yingiya Guyula comes from North-East Arnhem Land. He is a Yolŋu man and senior leader for the Liya – Dhaljinyimirr people, of the Djambarrpuyŋu Clan. In 2016 he was elected as the Independent Member for Mulka in the NT Legislative Assembly on the platform of Treaty and Yolŋu Rom Durrŋu (Our Way First). Re-elected in 2020 and 2024, he is serving his third term in parliament.

Prior to entering parliament, he worked as a senior lecturer in Yolŋu studies at Charles Darwin University and is an experienced Indigenous language interpreter. As a young man, he was the first Yolŋu person to gain a pilot license and prior to this, trained as an aircraft mechanic with MAF. Yingiya has pursued justice, fairness and equality throughout his life. He continues to fight for recognition of sovereignty and a Treaty that gives Yolŋu people the space to self-govern and be Yolŋu.



John Guenther

Dr John Guenther the research leader for education and training with the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. For more than 20 years, he has focused on educational research and evaluation in intercultural remote contexts of the Northern Territory. His work increasingly focuses on policy and theory implications that emerge from programs and social issues. He is a Fellow of the Australian Evaluation Society, and Chief Editor of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* and the *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*.



Rolf Gerritsen

Emeritus Professor Rolf Gerritsen is a former Professorial Research Fellow at Charles Darwin University. He has taught at various universities, including a decade at the Australian National University in the Graduate Program in Public Policy. He spent five years as Director of the Australian Centre for Regional and Local Government Studies, worked as a senior Ministerial advisor at both the Commonwealth and territory levels and he ran his own research consultancy for a number of years.

Rolf's research interests are primarily in public policy. He has published in several policy fields with an emphasis on economic and regional development policy, remote and northern Australian development, Indigenous development and community resilience, natural resource and conservation management, and intergovernmental relations, local government and policy management.



Cherie Gaffney

Senior Sergeant Cherie Gaffney is the Officer in Charge of the Northern Territory Police Domestic Violence Training Cell, the Palmerston Domestic and Family Violence Co-Responder Early Intervention Program and Chair of the Darwin Family Safety Framework.

She leads the development and delivery of trauma-informed multi-agency collaboration and early-intervention initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for victim-survivors and children impacted by domestic and family violence.

She is widely respected for her leadership, compassion, and dedication to advancing trauma-responsive, evidence-based approaches within the context of remote policing and domestic and family violence prevention and response.



John Lawrence SC

John Lawrence is a Darwin barrister. He was admitted to practice in the Northern Territory Supreme Court in 1987 and appointed Senior Counsel in 2010. He has worked as a Crown prosecutor in Darwin and solicitor in charge of the Northern Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service. John is a past president of the Northern Bar Association and of the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory. He was a Director of the Law Council of Australia from 2013 to 2015.

He has been a vocal advocate for reform of the criminal and juvenile justice systems in the Northern Territory for many years.

Image: Guardian Australia



Bill Pascoe

Dr Bill Pascoe is a Digital Humanities specialist currently initiating a collaborative effort to map Australian Wars and Resistance. He is the System Architect for Time Layered Cultural Map, a national digital humanities mapping infrastructure project, and has worked with the Melbourne Institute and at the University of Newcastle with the Centre For 21st Century Humanities and the Centre for Literary and Linguistic Computing. He was the humanities technologist and researcher on the Walkley award winning *Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930* map database and website. He has been a leader and contributor on other innovative digital humanities and eResearch projects in a variety of disciplines, including the EMWRN archive, ELDTA endangered languages, IA stylometry software, Virtual Biobank 3D medical image processing and eWater.



Charlotte Feakins

Dr Charlotte Feakins is an internationally recognised heritage researcher, practitioner and lecturer whose work sits at the intersection of heritage studies, historical and contemporary archaeology, and mental health sciences. Her interdisciplinary and future-focused research explores the emotional and affective dimensions of heritage—objects, places and practices—to advance social justice, healing, and resilience, particularly in contexts shaped by trauma, marginalisation, and climate-driven environmental change.

Charlotte specialises in trauma-informed and healing-centred approaches to heritage, with a strong emphasis on co-designed, community-led methods and culturally grounded understandings of care and wellbeing. Her work engages with trauma-heritage, critical folklore, climate and social justice, and the role of everyday objects in recovery and resilience. She has influenced heritage practice and has led nationally significant engagement projects across Australia.



Charlie Ward

Dr Charlie Ward is the Library & Archives NT (LANT) History Curator and a non-Indigenous historian and writer, based in the Northern Territory. Charlie is curator of LANT's permanent exhibition *Meeting Ground: Territory Encounters* and has contributed to LANT's collection activation, public programming and development since 2017.

Charlie has collaborated in recording and co-presenting First Nations stories and histories in film, audio, live performance, oral histories and text over two decades. He lived in the Gurindji communities of Kalkaringi and Daguragu between 2004 and 2006 and then worked as a caseworker and researcher with the Stolen Generations' Link-Up program in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). His book *A Handful of Sand: the Gurindji Struggle After the Walk-off* was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award in 2017.



PJ Andrews

PJ is the Library & Archives NT (LANT) First Nations Collections and Content Coordinator, and a Central Arrernte man from Alice Springs. PJ works within LANT's Collection Development team, appraising and reviewing new donations and legacy collections that contain various forms of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, as well as working closely with communities and First Nations people in the preservation and protection of sacred and sensitive cultural information and material.

Reference

Darwin L, Vervoort S, Vollert E and Blustein S (2023) *Intergenerational trauma and mental health*, Catalogue No IMH 18, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australian Government, Canberra.

<https://nacchocommunique.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/PAPER-AIHW-Intergen-trauma-mental-health-26.5.23.pdf>