**Waverley Library Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture Club**

Waverley has been running the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture Club since the first lockdown of 2020. During our sessions we discuss books, films, and art by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, exploring the history and culture of Australia’s First Nations People, using library resources including books, eResources, and films from Kanopy and Beamafilm.

During lockdown we ran sessions fortnightly, then monthly once back onsite. We prepare suggested reading lists of books, articles, webinars and talks but everyone is free to bring their ideas for discussion. There is no formal structure; just a friendly group of regular members who attend and new people all the time. The purpose of the club is learning about First Nations cultures. Our members admitted that there are big gaps in their knowledge. Most of the club members are middle-aged people and they said that they were not taught much about aboriginal history of Australia at school and would like to fill those gaps.

Waverley Councillor Bondi Ward and Deputy Mayor Dominic WY Kanak attended our sessions and participated in discussion.

We had ideas to invite special guests to our sessions. But we decided to invite interesting people for talk/events run in the library so everyone can attend, not only member of the group.

We invited the historian Michael Bennett to talk about his book “Pathfinders: A history of Aboriginal trackers in NSW” where he revealed that there were more than one thousand Aboriginal men and women employed as police trackers in New South Wales between 1862 and 1973.

Another guest was Peter Rees, a journalist for more than forty years, working as federal political correspondent for the *Melbourne Sun*, the *West Australian* and the *Sunday Telegraph*. He talked about his book “The Missing Man: From the outback to Tarakan”. It is the powerful story of Len Waters, the Royal Australian Air Force's only WWII Aboriginal fighter pilot”. His wife Gladys and other relatives attended the book launch.

Ray Ingrey, the Chairman of the Gujaga Foundation, was our special guest and talked about the Aboriginal history of La Perouse. The Gujaga Foundation is the peak organisation leading language, cultural and research activities within the La Perouse Aboriginal community. Gujaga provides services to educational, cultural and corporate organisations relating to our cultural area within eastern, southern and south western Sydney.

We invited Sydney food writer and gastronome Paul van Reyk to talk about his book “True to the land”.  Paul’s book provides a history of food in Australia from its beginnings, with the arrival of the first peoples and their stewardship of the land, to a present. He talked about the multicultural cuisine in modern Australia.

Another interesting guest was John Newton, the author of *The Oldest Foods on Earth: A History of Australian Native Foods.* We invited members of both culture groups – The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture club and Multicultural Cooking club for those talks*.*

Last year we went with members of culture group to the Sydney Writer festival Gala event together, this year to Sydney Festival Barra concert (Nardi Simpson). Some of our members developed friendship and socialise outside of the class. Some participants have since enrolled in universities and TAFE to further their Aboriginal Studies.

The members of our club are the library users, and they constantly place book recommendations which helps to build the library collection. I wish we had more younger people in our group.