

Mediaportal Report

19/11/2007

▶ **'I'll be watching to see who wins. I always do'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18
By: None

Shaurita is an 18-year-old Warlpiri woman who has lived all her life in **Yuendumu**. She has a 19-month-old daughter. Shaurita is an office worker. She wants to start an apprenticeship next year in Business Studies.

Keywords: Yuendumu(2)

Clip Ref: **00031252218**

448 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **'Voting is to give us a chance of saying that we are Australians'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18
By: None

Robbie Watit works for the Mt Theo Program and is a Board Member for WYN Heath. Originantly from the Torres Strait, Robbie has been living in Yuendumu for many years.

Keywords: Aboriginal(1), Howard(3), John(3)

Clip Ref: **00031252222**

434 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **'Yuendumu eager for its polling day'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18
By: Jessica Jeeves

Yuendumu is in the vast federal electorate of Lingiari, which covers more than 1.3 million square kilometres of the Northern Territory and includes the Christmas and Cocos Islands. Lingiari was created in 2001, and held since then by Labor's **Warren Snowdon**.

Keywords: Aboriginal(5), communities(1), community(1), Snowdon(2), Warren(1)

Clip Ref: **00031252220**

484 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **'Someone should come and sit with the people'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18
By: Cecily Granites

I think voting is really important because it's for all of Australia. There's Labor and Liberal party and Greens.

Keywords: Community(3), families(1), Snowdon(1), Warren(1)

Clip Ref: **00031252224**

343 words
Type: Opinion Piece
Photo: Yes

▶ **We don't want the government to take this land that's most important'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18

By: Neville Japangardi Poulson

Neville (known as Cobra) was recently the head of the Baptist Union of the Northern Territory. He has worked in **Yuendumu** as a ranger and school teacher.

Keywords: Aboriginal(2), Families(1), family(3), Yuendumu(2)

Clip Ref: 00031252223

522 words

Type: News Item

Photo: Yes

▶ **It would make a really big difference if there was a yapa political party in Canberra'**

Australian, 19/11/07, General News, Page 18

By: Adrian Jupurruala Nelson

Adrian is the coach of the **Yuendumu** Magpies football team and has been featured in both the Bush Mechanics and **Aboriginal** Rules videos. He is a the **Yuendumu** Council and has lived in **Yuendumu** all his life. He has four children.

Keywords: Aboriginal(1), Government(1), housing(1), welfare(1), Yuendumu(2)

Clip Ref: 00031252225

545 words

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Photo: Yes



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MTWTF

‘I’ll be watching to see who wins. I always do’

SHAURITA is an 18-year-old Warlpiri woman who has lived all her life in Yuendumu. She has a 19-month-old daughter. Shaurita is an office worker. She wants to start an apprenticeship next year in Business Studies.

THIS is the first time I’m going to vote. I’m feeling a bit nervous. It’s really special, important for every yapa people to vote. Maybe vote for someone else, like maybe for ALP or CLP; it counts, every vote.

I’ve seen lots of people voting here before. And they used to push Mum at the Council Office to vote. There’ll be a lot of people going there to vote. People get to choose who they vote for so they tick off one in that person’s box. The excited part is when you write the numbers down on the side of the person. Because you want that person to win, to win the election.

I made up my mind already. It’s really easy to work it out. When I used to see a lot of people voting that one person, so I made my choice long time — when I was around about 16 or 17. That person’s really important to vote for, so I made my decision.

We see a lot of ads on television, in the newspapers, sometimes on the computer. I didn’t change my mind who I’m going to vote for.

What I think about is yapa people. I think that all the yapa people will be in the same vote. Yeah. So sometimes when I go and see my other family they say they’re going to vote for the same person — we all know who that person is.

I really care about yapa people, you know. Maybe if we vote for



First vote: Shaurita Langdon

this person, maybe it’s going to help a little bit.

About permit systems — maybe if we vote for this person maybe it will help to make changes for that permit system so it stays. This intervention, maybe it will help a little bit because of the grog that’s still coming into the community. I really like that part, but not the permit system part.

BEING here in Yuendumu the best thing is for us to keep our culture and law together really strongly, and maybe we need just a little bit of kardiya law. I think both sides are important. From yapa side it’s still important but for the voting it’s really important, because every yapa makes a count on voting.

On the 24th, on the night, I’ll be watching television to see who wins. I always do that everytime.

Everybody, sometimes they get excited about who’s going win in the voting, in the election. So I’ll be in front of the tele watching it.



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ROBBIE JANGALA WALIT

‘Voting is to give us a chance of saying that we are Australians’

Robbie Walit works for the Mt Theo Program and is a Board Member for WYN Health. Originally from the Torres Strait, Robbie has been living in Yuendumu for many years.

MY opinion of voting is to give us a chance of saying that we are Australians — Australian citizens. It gives us that right for whenever governments make a decision on behalf of Aboriginal people.

Yapa know how yapa people live — they understand their way of living, their culture, their tradition and they should make decisions on behalf of their people.

Their (Government) view is not appropriate for our lifestyle. For 40 years it was a waste of time fighting for our rights. All this reconciliation for nothing. We’re going to go back 40 years now instead of going in advance. It’s supposed to be Advance Australia — but no, we’re going backward in our society.

In our culture, the elders, men and women, there is politics because they’re implementing the yapa law, taking it from genera-

tion to generation. (If you want to visit a sacred place or someone else’s country) you see elders of that country, like John Howard is for this country but it’s not really his country. It belongs to the yapa of Australia because we are the first native people in this country.

NO, they (elders) don’t get elected — they are there. When one passes away one takes over in the same line. The law is always the same law. John Howard’s Government is changing the laws. Our law stands as it is in the Bible. The Wapirakurlangu law [God’s law] stands and our law stands. John Howard’s law is changing, every political change he changes the law. Another politics come he changes the law again, never stops changing. Ours, it never changes.

It made me think twice whether to vote or not vote because of this intervention — things are going (back to the) past and not giving a chance for yapa to really think about what they’re going to do. Where are our rights?

They put us into the corner where there is no rights. I want to say enough is enough, we want to abolish that law and have a fresh start. If we have a fresh start we can have consultation between the Government and the yapa. Yapa has his say and the Government has his say.

He’s there to listen to the people of Australia — the citizens of Australia. Are we citizens of Australia or are we just a people of Australia? But remember we are the first people of this nation.



Critical: Robbie Walit



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Yuendumu eager for its polling day

Jessica Jeeves

YUENDUMU is in the vast federal electorate of Lingiari, which covers more than 1.3 million square kilometres of the Northern Territory and includes the Christmas and Cocos Islands.

Lingiari was created in 2001, and held since then by Labor's Warren Snowdon.

In 2004 the remote area mobile polling team who visited Yuendumu registered 80 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote for Snowdon. In the community itself on polling day in 2004, 260 of a total of 498 registered voters actually voted.

This year, Yuendumu has 546 enrolled voters and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) expects a 50-60 per cent turn out on polling day. High levels of mobility in central Australia mean that voters are often living elsewhere.

People in Yuendumu will be lodging their vote days ahead of the rest of the nation when a mobile polling team visits on Wednesday, November 21.

The team will set up booths in the local council office and polling will take place between 8am and 2pm. The AEC has employed two

local women as polling officials to assist the mobile team, and created a DVD in Warlpiri explaining how to fill out a ballot paper.

In the early years after 1962, when all Aboriginal people in Australia were granted the right to vote federally, polling in remote communities in Central Australia was often run by station managers or superintendents.

When he became a presiding officer for elections in Yuendumu in the early 1970s, Frank Baarda saw that most votes were informal, which he blamed on low levels of literacy, lack of Warlpiri resources and translators, and the "shame" of asking for help. He realised language and literacy issues were creating a barrier for Warlpiri. By introducing a series of measures, including employment of local men and women as electoral officers and creating resources in Warlpiri, Baarda dramatically reduced the informal vote.

While the 1948 Nationality and Citizenship Act had made all Australian-born residents citizens, the Commonwealth Electoral Act stated that only Aboriginal people registered to vote in state/territory elections or members of the defence force could vote in federal elections.

Before 1962, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia barred Aboriginal people from state elections — effectively excluding them from voting federally. This week in *Voices from the Heart of the Nation*, people in Yuendumu share their thoughts and feelings about elections, voting and rights. What does the right to vote mean to them? Are yapa represented adequately in federal politics? People also discuss the kinds of politics and law in their lives — yapa and kardiya.

Every fortnight *Voices from the Heart of the Nation* provides readers of *The Australian* with a unique insight into the hopes and concerns of people from Yuendumu. All interviews conducted by PAW Media and Communications, Yuendumu.

Jessica Jeeves works for Reconciliation Australia.

WARLPIRI LEXICON

- Yapa:** Aboriginal people
- Kardiya** (*Kar-dee-ya*): Non-Aboriginal people
- Kirda:** Owner of particular dreamings or ceremonies
- Kurdungurlu:** Manager of particular dreamings and ceremonies
- Yakarra:** Expression of surprise
- Lawa:** Nothing



HEART LAND

ELECTORATE OF LINGIARI

- Named after Vincent Lingiari OAM 1908-88, a member of the Gurindji people from the Victoria River District.
- Lingiari covers an area of approximately 1,347,849sq km of the Northern Territory including Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.
- First proclaimed in 2000 (previously part of the Division of Northern Territory, 1922-2000)
- Member: Warren Snowdon (ALP) since 2001



Decision day: Peter Japaljarri Tex puts up election posters in Yuendumu's main street

Source: Australian Electoral Commission



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CECILY NAPANANGKA GRANITES

‘Someone should come and sit with the people’

CECILY is a senior teacher at Yuendumu School where she has taught for over 21 years. She is also a church elder and an elected member of Yuendumu Community Government Council.

I THINK voting is really important because it's for all of Australia. There's Labor and Liberal party and Greens. I think it's important that it's yapa people who we want to vote for. Labor has been our number 1. Our local member is Warren Snowdon. I haven't actually met him but we would like a person like him to come and see Yuendumu — every organisation, especially the school. We've got rights here at the community — yapa rights. We don't want government people taking things away from us. If there's a problem there we just want them to support us, we would like them to send one of their speakers or something like that to come and explain to us so we can talk face to face with them. In Parliament every year they change rules, laws — that's politics. But in yapa culture, that law stays there, we don't change it. That law's already been made by those elders that are already gone — we stick with those rules.

WE need to see yapa people going into politics, so that person



Angry: Cecily Granites

can see what's happening in politics and when he's there talking he can come back and tell us what he's been listening to or talking about. We need yapa to go in so we can learn.

I don't watch [politics on TV] — because sometimes I'm a bit angry because of this intervention. I've been watching it, but I've stopped watching now. It's just that I feel a little bit angry. Someone from the government should come and sit three or four days with people, with the community, so we can tell them what we really want to help these young people and the families. Sometimes when they come they use that really strong language — in English, and sometimes we don't understand.

Hard language. Sometimes we get confused.



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NEVILLE JAPANGARDI POULSON

‘We don’t want the government to take this land — that’s most important’

NEVILLE (known as Cobra) was recently the head of the Baptist Union of the Northern Territory. He has worked in Yuendumu as a ranger and school teacher. He dreams of one day returning to live in his homeland at Pikilyi, west of Yuendumu.

EVERYBODY in Australia has to vote, to vote for the right person to be in parliament. Voting is for everybody. What I see is very funny, because some people vote for Labor and CLP but they’re still the same when they go to parliament — whoever’s side wins they’ve got kind of a law that everybody follows.

For yapa, if there’s a Mt Theo family that goes for ALP, everybody in Mt Theo will follow. They’ll follow their family. They do that. (Families) talk about it little bit — there’s sort of dominant family who like force to vote for these people like ALP or CLP.

For me, if I want to vote I will choose myself. I wouldn’t go to someone and say, ‘this fellow’s a good fellow, he keeps giving us money’. Aboriginal people, always in their mind they will think about land. We don’t want Government to take this land — that’s most important. So whether two governments get into power they

must do good things with land.

I reckon yapa should have their own government in parliament. The Government’s idea of being the boss, of being on top, is like a triangle. There’s one boss or one king there, and people on the bottom and in the middle we work for a big boss.

But if you tip that over upside down, that’s yapa law. Elder people make decisions, talk and it comes down to everybody agreeing on it, not this sharp one on top — it has to be upside down.

We’ll be sort of a circle — everybody agreeing — all the skin groups. Because that’s the way Aboriginal people used to operate in olden days. We had a government, but in different setting.

I RECKON some (yapa) laws should fit in with kardiya law — fit both laws. We had laws before Captain Cook came along. We had rules and different kinds of laws. They (Government) should come in and sit around the circle and talk. You don’t need some high boss, no uniforms to show that you are major or lieutenant or a golden watch. These kind of ideas came from way back England days — taking over this land and conquering this country. It’s a bit

like Alexander trying to conquer all the world. We’re not looking at that. You can just come in free and talk to people.

We just want to be together, just talking one another in a big room for sharing time. We can talk together — get people from different parts of Australia to meet and talk. With urban yapa too — they can come in too.

We’re all the tribal people living in Central Australia. They must study yapa way to learn more about how yapa lives. Yapa can listen, too, but we want to sort of bring one another things that should work in Australia.



Voting: everyone’s right, says Neville Poulson



ADRIAN JUPURRURLA NELSON

'It would make a really big difference if there was a yapa political party in Canberra'

ADRIAN is the coach of the Yuendumu Magpies football team and has been featured in both the *Bush Mechanics* and *Aboriginal Rules* videos. He is a councillor on the Yuendumu Council and has lived in Yuendumu all his life. He has four children.

YAPA people have the right to vote for over 40 years now. They had to fight to have the right to vote. Voting is important these days for yapa people.

We've got to keep on going with our own culture — yapa culture — and at the same time we've got to keep up with the kardiya law as well.

These days every person — Yapa, Kardiya, Chinese, Japanese, Italian — they have the right to vote. Once you turn 18 you've got to have your say so that the Government can listen to your local member, listen to what yapa have got to say and then take that message back to the big house in Canberra so that the bigger bosses can listen to what yapa said back in their communities.

Well, it would make a really big difference if there was a yapa political party in Canberra. That way the yapa political party and Labor, the Liberals, the Democrats — we would all have a say

about what sort of Australia we need for everything like education, housing, children's welfare.

Outside of politics we have a yapa law. It's been here with us for over 40 000 years. We've got yapa law for man and law for woman. If you want to do things in the yapa way you have to go and see the right people.

Like in our way we've got kirda and kurdungurlu — we've got the keepers and the guardians — it goes both ways. Like if we want to go to certain places — like sacred places — we've got to see them. They tell you when you go and when not to go, where to go, which way — we really need to see these law people — both men and women — so that they can direct you to the right side of the place and all that. And yeah these law people — the elders of the community — they don't get elected like kardiya.

Kardiya get elected and they go on for three-year terms and then they get elected again, but yapa law is different. Once you're an elder you just go automatically — there's no voting system in yapa law. Once you are an elder you just go straight in and you're there to make decisions, we don't vote yapa in to these positions.

They are there for good until

the next lot comes up and they take it on for the future.

WE have kardiya politics — it's been there since Captain Cook or Governor Phillip invaded Australia. Yapa law has been here since before the white man came. And yeah, we need both. In these modern times we've got to keep up with both laws.

So as I said, we've got to keep up with these times — both yapa and kardiya law. It's going to keep on going until our children's children grow up and learn about all these things — keep it going both yapa and kardiya law.



Two laws: Adrian Nelson