



IHH news

Issue 24

March 2008

At a glance:

- The Apology is no empty rhetoric. It makes a real difference, a foundation from which the nation can heal itself.
- Utopia indigenous community shows the way forward for health issues.
- Dave has left us; Renée and Asher have joined us!

Inside this issue:

- Today I woke up 2
- The Apology 3
- Resi news 4
- Utopia health outcomes 5
- Wishlist 5



A letter from Glenn

Hi, my name is Glenn. I'm from Sydney and I would like to tell you about my stay in the IHH house.

First of all I would like to thank IHH and its residents Dave, Sarah, Matt, Samara and Anthony. This would have to be the best place I have stayed in Victoria. I came here after chemo when someone had died in the house where I was living. It made me very uncomfortable as I still hadn't gotten over my treatment which was causing me extra stress. On my arrival I was welcomed with open arms and hearts. This automatically took away my worries and stress.

Over the next few days I

had relaxed so much that I felt as though I was part of this loving, caring family. Everyday everyone would ask me how I was feeling and if I were tired they would tell me to take it easy and relax. I felt so at home here that my recovery was coming along very quickly and I started wanting to do things around the house. I think it was too soon but it didn't stop me. Every little job that I done I would get thank yous from the residents. This made me feel good.

The night I sat down and wrote this letter I found it hard to keep it brief and not write 20 pages, that's how much praise I have for

these people and the organization that they are involved in. So with all my heart and soul I give my deepest thanks and may god give you all my blessing in the future. Keep up all the great work you are doing. Thank you all once again.

Glenn was cheerful and friendly to have around, and told some ripper stories about his family and his work! He made us realize how he and his family have to work extra hard to avoid being stereotyped as lazy and irresponsible. We appreciated how much he shared with us, and wish him health and rest for the future.

Term overview by Matt

Well, another year and another term of guests, hospitality, duty, residents, talks and meetings. Business as usual we might think.

Except it isn't. Not this year. Something has changed. The ground beneath our feet has shifted. A national apology has been made to the Stolen Genera-

tions, some of whom have come through our doors. Some huge steps towards healing have taken place on this new ground upon which we stand.

We have had 27 guests from Orbst, Bairnsdale, Dareton, Swan Hill, Mildura, Warrnambool, Sydney, Deniliquin, Wentworth, Robinvale and

Tongala. Something we noticed this term was how some guests find it hard to understand that the IHH is not a service run by whitefellas who will come down hard if they come in late or don't pay.

Cont. p 5



From Al Jazeera website

“Today was the first day... I woke up knowing my country accepts me for who I am.”

Today I woke up

Today I woke up.

Today I woke up with a bit of headache. Today I woke up, as I do any other day, with either a child or the dog jumping on me. Getting ready for work, finding out who was dropping who at childcare, looking for the car keys and ‘has anyone seen my phone?’

Just like any other day. Except it wasn’t like any other day. Ever.

Today was the first day. The first day I woke up knowing my country accepts me for who I am. The first day I woke up secure in the knowledge that there is no longer a debate about my story, my life, about me.

No, I had not changed overnight. I still have the same feelings I had on Tuesday. I will never be able to speak of a mother I never knew without crying. I still love my adopted Mum and Dad and family, who have made me the good person I am. I still celebrate the joy of finding my birth brothers and sisters and wider family everyday. I still worry about being a good father and husband. I am still proud of being both a Hamm and a James. And always proud of

being a Yorta Yorta man. None of this has changed, nor will it ever.

But today, when I woke up, I felt just a little different – and it just wasn’t because of the couple of beers I had last night. It wasn’t the emotional drain from yesterday. I can tell you by the end of yesterday I don’t think I had a single feeling left untouched inside me. Exhilaration, joy, sadness, worry, happiness – all these and more went through me at some time yesterday. Contentment was probably the constant.

Standing by myself at Federation Square during the lunch time concert, just taking it all in, was a very soul pleasing time. Sitting with my sisters, Cherie and Jane, listening to bands. Thinking about my sister Treahna in Canberra. These and so many other thoughts of people who matter to me and have been part of my life.

Where we go from here is an undiscovered country. Certainly, Kevin Rudd has spoken of vision and I for one am signing up. His words, the construct of the Apology and his speech

– surely the gods had blessed me that I was able to witness it, in all its magnificence, at the most important place to me, the Aborigines Advancement League. And when he said “Mr Speaker, I commend this motion to the House”, I cried. I’m crying now as I write, just replaying that moment in my head.

The Prime Minister connected with me personally yesterday in way no other leader has. I am sure he connected with a great many people because he confirmed that he got it, understood it and knew what had to be done.

I have renewed energy, renewed hope, renewed faith and a desire to do. I work in Aboriginal Affairs and some days it can be battle – what are we doing, where to we want to get to? But not today. Today is the first day of the next chapter in the story and path of my people and my country. I want to be part of that journey, to help lead us all to a better place, to build a better future for my children. And it all began this morning.

Today I woke up.

Anon.

The Apology by Matt

I watched the apology at Federation Square in the city. By 8.30 am Fed Square was full to the brim and spilling onto Swanston Street. There was a mix of people ranging from Indigenous, school kids, older people and varying ethnicities. The air was charged with energy, anticipation and emotions only just being held in check.

When the Prime Minister began to talk a hush fell over the crowd. A lot was riding on the next few minutes. Would the apology be done properly? I was very aware that this was history in the making. For 10 years the Stolen Generations had been asking for an apology, for 10 years myself and others like me had supported this call, and for 10 years a stubborn, heartless government had denied this necessary precondition for healing.

It very quickly became evident that this apology was

not a political stunt, nor was it an attempt to push issues aside. This was a genuine, passionate and powerful statement on behalf of a Parliament ready to move forward. This was what our nation had been waiting for with such thirst.

My feelings at the time were powerful. I felt pride in Australia. I mean real pride, in a way I had never felt in my 31 years so far. I felt vindicated. Often I, or the organizations I work for, have felt like we were wasting our time pushing the apology agenda. Now it had been taken up by the Parliament and taken to heart by many Australians I felt like all the work was worth it. Finally, I just felt emotional. Emotions that are hard to articulate but are formed in part by relief, happiness, inspiration, passion and compassion. In short, it was a punching the air kind of feeling.

For me the apology was the

achievement of social and political goal that I had invested heavily in. For Indigenous people this was so much more. A validation of their stories and of them; an acknowledgment of the impact of the Stolen Generations, and a genuinely empathetic response to these truths. Talking to one of the performers who performed a song about stolen members of his family, he felt like he might never play that song again. Its job had been done, the story had been heard, and now it could be let go.

The apology opened doors that had previously been nailed shut, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. What happens when we walk through that door is up to us. My heart's desire is that we walk through the door on a journey of healing that builds on the apology and the huge swell of public support for healing in this country.

"...it was a punching the air kind of feeling..."





“The House is a haven of acceptance and peace for all who come”



After all the hoopla, Dave is moving on...

For some, life is a race to be run or a trial to be endured. For me, life is a journey - a journey walked with a Friend. The Friend is often alongside me and sometimes walks ahead leading the way or behind ready to carry if I fall.

The two years spent living and working at IHH has been another amazing section of the journey. Some of the people met and experiences shared are etched into my memory. After a year in India and a marriage breakup I needed a place to spend time with others. Going solo in a flat somewhere was not a desirable option.

Communal living at IHH provided what I needed - a kind of oasis in the desert wilderness that I was experiencing. I became part of the group of residents and wider community. We became friends. I greatly respect and admire the people within the IHH community. The House is a haven of acceptance and peace for all who come.

The indigenous guests share this place of peace, a home in the city. Some are traumatised by their life experiences. Many have expressed their appreciation of the peaceful homeliness of the place. Their presence and stories greatly enrich us who live there. The

story-telling is often highly entertaining and sometimes, I suspect, healing.

Having not known anyone who was indigenous before I moved in, it has been great to meet so many fantastic aboriginal people. It has been a privilege to live, work, rest, listen, cook, talk, share, sing, love and be transformed at the Indigenous Hospitality House.

Our much loved Dave Scott has moved out after two years. He has moved to work with the Indigenous people of Mornington Island. We wish him the best of luck in his new adventure.

Renée:

Renée will introduce herself next time, but we thought we'd show you her smiling face! She has not only moved in, but will be getting married to Ant in November! Lots to smile about. We reckon she's marrying him for his quality housemates!

Ash is back!

Hi everyone!

I'm BACK! For those that don't remember me, I first moved into the IHH early 2006, around the same time as Dave. I've just come back from a wonderful and challenging 10 months backpacking around Europe - setting

lots of people straight about the things they hear about Indigenous Australians. So, now Dave's off, and I'm back in - looking forwards to a great year - with the IHH and my Honours studies. So, hope to see you soon - come drop by and say 'hi!', Ash.

Utopia health outcomes

Dear Friends

I thought I would take the opportunity to draw your attention to a significant study published in the Medical Journal of Australia that reports on the health outcomes for a 10 year cohort study drawn from the remote community of Utopia. The findings demonstrate that mortality rates for this community are 40% better than the average outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory...

This study has significant implications for policy terms. It shows that not all remote communities are uniformly bad in terms of health outcomes. We suggest that the reasons for the better than expected health outcomes

relate to factors in the social organization of this community: its decentralization, the effectiveness of its primary health care services, the quality of diet and physical activity and the degree to which people in this community have historically been able to exert forms of social 'mastery'. In terms of macro social indicators, such as housing or employment, Utopia is similar to other Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. This suggests that investing in housing and local economic development has the potential to further extend the health gain that we have already documented.

This is a multi-centre collaborative study in which the Utopia community

has been a key partner. Yours truly,

Professor Ian Anderson

Research Director of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and Director of the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit

6 March, 2008

Ant added: 'Since Utopia has been Indigenous freehold since 1976 and this study shows that the population is in good health, there can be no justification for the government to acquire township land on the basis of health concerns.'

For more comment see:

http://www.aussmc.org.au/Utopia_aboriginal_health.php

"...mortality rates for [Utopia] are 40% better than the average outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory..."

→ From p.1, **Term Overview**

This has made us realize the depth and ongoing nature of the impact of colonisation and disempowerment. Another guest shared her envy of people up north who retain their language, her sorrow at what has been lost for her family who have had their Aboriginality questioned because they don't 'look black',

but also her pride in family members who have been activists in the struggle for rights.

In resident news, Dave has moved on, and we welcome Asher back after a year overseas (this makes four residents who have moved out for a time, then moved back in). Renée joined us recently, and another couple,

Shobie and Luffy, are coming on board from April. Welcome one and all!

The IHH looks forward to another great year exploring what it means to be people of faith in this land, with our history and with a commitment to hospitality. We look forward to sharing this journey with you all.

Wishlist

- Instant coffee (no Nestle please)
- Tea
- Toilet paper
- Tinned tomatoes
- White rice
- Pasta
- Weetbix
- Grocery vouchers (these help us to supplement our supplies of vegetables, fruit and other goods as needed)
- Pillows



If undelivered, please return to:

Indigenous Hospitality House

1/907 Drummond Street

Carlton North 3054

Indigenous Hospitality House

1/907 Drummond Street
Carlton North 3054
Victoria
Australia

Phone: 03 9387 7557

Website coming soon!!

- Farewell to **Evan**, our long term volunteer who is heading over to Perth to live. We'll miss you!!
- Thanks to the **Church of All Nations** for their ongoing financial and practical support
- Thanks to the staff of **Cabrini** for all their support and encouragement

Indigenous Hospitality House (IHH) residents Sarah, Matt, Samara, Anthony, Renee and Asher offer a peaceful, homely atmosphere for Indigenous people supporting a family member in Melbourne's hospitals. IHH is a project of the Church of All Nations, is overseen by Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, and is supported by Christians of various denominations, other groups, individuals and volunteers.

Since its birth in 2001, the Indigenous Hospitality House has received 736 guests from across Australia via Aboriginal Liaison Officers in a range of hospital and communities.

If you are able to receive this newsletter via email rather than post,
please let us know so we can save some trees!

Email **indigenous_hospitality_house@yahoo.com.au**