

## Ngarrindjeri call for Treaty

On Wednesday afternoon, December 17<sup>th</sup>, a delegation of leaders from the Ngarrindjeri people will present a petition to the Governor. The petition asks that South Australia enter into a treaty with the Ngarrindjeri people, recognising our dominium over our traditional lands and waters. It asks that this treaty be incorporated into a Bill of Rights, enshrining the civil rights of all South Australians.

Our presentation to the Governor is part of a commemoration of another petition eighty years earlier. This petition sought the repeal of an Act authorising the removal of Aboriginal children at fourteen, to be placed in institutions for “training” – until eighteen for males, and twenty-one for females.

The remarkable petition, “*Give us our Children*”, was written by one of our mothers, and brought to Government House by a delegation of three Ngarrindjeri men. *The Register* (forerunner of *The Advertiser*) published a lengthy article, reproducing the petition in full, with some poignant and delightful anecdotes from the “Three Dusky Deputies”, pictured in their three-piece suits. (A Word version of *The Register* article is attached and is worth the read.)

Ngarrindjeri pride in the actions of our forebears led to the decision to stage a re-enactment, with a new petition. Her Excellency, the Governor, has very kindly consented to receive a deputation of four of our community leaders.

Ellen Trevorrow, one member of our deputation, is a great-great-grand-daughter of one of the original petitioners. As a tribute to the Governor, Ellen has woven a “Sister Basket”, in which the petition will be placed. This is a mark of great respect – Ellen has made only five such presentations in her life, one being to Dame Roma Mitchell.

Other members of our deputation include George Trevorrow, Rupelli of the Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Matt Rigney, Chairperson of the Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management Committee, and Tom Trevorrow, Chairperson of the Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee.

Our call for a treaty involves much than the question of land. We Ngarrindjeri want our claim to our land and waters recognised. In particular, we have asked the Government to release fifty hectares across our traditional lands, for the return of our “Old Ones”, whose remains now number in the thousands, being held in museums and other institutions around the world.

But essentially the treaty is about respect, about recognising our claim as the traditional owners to be fully involved in decision making, and setting in place protocols for how this should happen. A similar social contract has already been entered into with the Alexandrina Council, and others are being negotiated with the Murray Bridge and Victor Harbor Councils, the SA Museum and the Migration Museum.

The commemoration will start at Tarndanyangga (Victoria Square) at 4.30 p.m., and march down to Government House, for music, traditional dancing and speeches, including a reading of the original petition, and an outline of our new petition. The four deputies will go into Government House to meet the Governor at 5.25. The event will conclude with a picnic on the lawns.