Ngukurr Community Celebrates 100 Years

The rich history of Arnhem Land’s first mission – Ngukurr – will be celebrated throughout the weekend as the community marks its 100 year anniversary, Member for Arnhem Malarndirri McCarthy said today.

The week-long of celebrations culminate this weekend with bush raft racing, sporting grand finals and a Battle of the Bands.

Ngukurr, on the Roper River in southern Arnhem Land, was started as the first mission in the area after three Indigenous and three white missionaries sailed up the Roper River 100 years ago.

“The Roper River Mission was established in 1908 as a refuge for Aboriginal people, and has always been a close knit community with a strong and rich cultural heritage,” Ms McCarthy said.

“This is a special milestone for the community and all those who have been connected to its history over the past century, and is an opportunity for us all to remember some of the positive people and events to come out of Ngukurr.”

Ms McCarthy said the community is home to many people who have been recognised for great achievements, including Neighbour, who is one of only 27 Australians to be awarded the Albert Medal in 1912 for saving the life of a policeman caught in the flooded Wilton River.

“What made this feat even more remarkable was that Neighbour was a prisoner of the Police officer at the time and shackled in chains, yet still managed to rescue him from the swollen waters,” Ms McCarthy said.

Many other Ngukurr identities have received high honours, including:

- Constance Bush OBE;
- Allison Bush AO, only Australian mid-wife to be honorary fellow of Royal Australian College of Obstetricians;
- Phillip Roberts OBE, worked for the Department of Health and was advisor to successive Federal Governments on Aboriginal Affairs;
- Silas Roberts AO; Dexter Daniels, union organiser and land rights activist.
- Rev. Michael Gumbali, one of the first Aboriginal ordained Anglican Ministers in the NT.

Ms McCarthy said a book and DVD set “We Are Aboriginal – Our 100 Years” has been produced by the Community to mark the celebrations and is an historical account of the Roper River region, with all profits going to support literacy at Ngukurr School. The book and accompanying DVD is available from Scripture Union and Bible Society Resource Centre, Casuarina.

No permits are required to visit Ngukurr this weekend.

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