

FREEDOM RIDE



1965 **60**th Anniversary 2025

MONDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2025



OPENING CEREMONY

Community March

9.45am

Official Opening Ceremony

10.00am

Freedom Ride Memorial Park

followed by refreshments

Walgett RSL Hall

BBQ & FREE CONCERT

Featuring local entertainers FREE
BBQ

5.30pm - 9.00pm

No1 Oval Walgett





Cultural Warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this report may contain images and names of deceased persons.

THE FREEDOM RIDE

60th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS

1965 – 2025

The 1965 Freedom Ride, led by Charles Perkins, was a pivotal moment in Australia's civil rights history. Where a busload of students from the University of Sydney travelled to rural towns across New South Wales that includes Walgett to draw attention to racial segregation and the treatment of Aboriginal people in rural communities. The ride played a key role in sparking national conversations about racism and inequality. Walgett happened to be one of the first sites where a protest demonstration took place.



PROGRAM

PART 1

Starting with a 'Walk of Respect' along FOX street to the Freedom Ride Memorial Park to honour and respect the students of University of Sydney for their bravery to tackle racism and segregation for Aboriginal people.

This event will also include a smoking ceremony, Aboriginal dancers, guest speakers from Government as well as the original Freedom Ride students of 1965.

PART 2

Due to Walgett's hot weather, the majority of the program shall locate to the local RSL Hall, across from the Park itself where the remaining speeches shall occur. Refreshments shall be available with performances from local school children.

PART 3

There will also be an evening event of entertainment, local and visiting musicians, stalls, and food from 5.30pm. Number 1 Oval

WALK OF RESPECT



SMOKING CEREMONY



GATHERING OF GUESTS



Acknowledgement to Country



Gulbiyaay
Welcome

Yaama Dhiiyaan-gal bula Birralii-gal
— Hello Families and Children

Gamilaraayga guru-mayuu-ga
To Gamilaraay country

Gamilaraay mari-galgaa gayaa-nha
Gamilaraay people are happy that

Nginaay-nya-ga nhalay gaa-gi yanaay
You all to here have come

Welcome Buwaarr, Waan-ildhaay bula
mari-galgaa-bu Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Limited (WAMS) gayaa winangay
nhama ngali waan Traditional Mari-galgaa dhawun-galgaa-da
Bula, WAMS gaay giirruu guwaa-li nhama maaruma-la gabanma-li bula gaba
marigalgaa-bu

The Board, Workers and peoples of Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Limited
(WAMS) proudly remember that we work on Traditional Aboriginal lands Also, WAMS
truthfully says that it will make better healing and well goodness of the people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SONG

PERFORMED BY ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY WALGETT



MILAN DHIYAAN DANCE GROUP



**INTRODUCING MASTER OF CEREMONIES
CULTURE AND HISTORY CO-ORDINATOR
MRS AMY TOWNSEND**





HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE MARGARET BEAZLEY AC KC



Yaama mari-gal Walgett-i
Gaba nginda buudhaa nhalay yaadha
Ngaya yanay baluwaa-baraay
Hello people of Walgett
Thank you for meeting here today
I come with respect
Yaama Gamilaraay mari-gal Walgett-i
Gaba nginda buudhaa nhalay yaadha
Ngaya yanay baluwaa-baraay
Hello Gamilaraay people of Walgett
Thank you for meeting here today
I come with respect



THE HONOURABLE DAVID HARRIS, MP



Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly (NSW Parliament)
Member for Wyong
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty
Minister for Gaming and Racing
Minister for Veterans
Minister for Medical Research
Minister for the Central Coast
Shadow Minister for Jobs, Investment and Tourism
Shadow Minister for Regional Transport

THE HONOURABLE PENNY SHARPE, MLC



Member, Procedure Committee
Minister for Climate Change
Minister for Energy
Minister for Heritage
Minister for the Environment
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Member of the NSW Legislative Council

UNVEILING BLUE PLAQUE



On 17th February, around 500 community members gathered in Walgett alongside some of the original 1965 Freedom Ride participants. They were there to unveil a blue plaque commemorating the historic journey. The event marked 60 years since 30 University of Sydney students took to the road to draw attention to the inequities and mistreatment of Indigenous people.

Quote attributable to Minister for Heritage, Penny Sharpe:

“In Walgett, the Freedom Ride will also be recognised through the addition of a Freedom Ride Pavillion in the Freedom Ride Memorial Park in Walgett, drawing visitors to the town.”

Quote attributable to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, David Harris:

“By listening to Aboriginal voices, supporting Aboriginal-led initiatives, and committing to real action, we can follow in the footsteps of the Freedom Riders to build a more just and equal Australia.”

Source: NSW GOVERNMENT BLUE PLAQUES PROGRAM
<https://blueplaques.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/articles/2025/nsw-government-marks-60-years-since-the-freedom-ride>

FRANCES LITTLE MEMORIAL PLAQUE

The family of the late Frances Peters-Little – Doreen Peters and Jenny Riley unveils a plaque in the memory of Frances who was one of the first people to respond to our invitation, for people who could share their memories and their family's memories of the SAFA bus arriving in Walgett.



In Memory

Frances Peters-Little

To recognise Frances' work in compiling the history of
the Walgett Freedom Ride Collection

17/02/2025

1965 to 2025 - SIXTY YEARS

“ALL SUPERHEROES NEED CAPES”

On Monday 17 February 2025 in Walgett, people came together to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the bus journey of the Freedom Ride. Travelling from the Wayside Chapel in Sydney to Walgett, Moree, Boggabilla, Bowraville and Kempsey. In 1965, students from the University of Sydney, gathered together to travel to remote NSW to embark upon a journey which would change the course of the future for all peoples.

The 2025 commemoration is to honour the 1965 students. To honour the Freedom Ride and the people whose passion made all of this possible. To give thanks to their collective bravery. For standing together. For standing strong. They gave local people an opportunity to find a voice, a determination, to work together for human and social rights. Walgett has its own history today, from 1965 to 2025 – a milestone for the future, a story of perseverance against adversity providing such a poignant message for our future generations.

The morning began with a “Walk of Respect” from the Walgett Shire Chambers offices to the Freedom Ride Memorial Park. School students, agency representatives and community members walked in unity with the five 1965 students who led the way, such as they did 60 years past. On their arrival at the park, several dignitaries had arrived to greet, acknowledge and pay their respects.

Her Excellency Margeret Beazley AC KC Governor of New South Wales and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson, Minister for Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Energy, the Honourable Penny Sharpe, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research the Honourable David Harris. All in attendance, having travelled to Walgett for the morning proceedings and returned to Sydney mid-afternoon.

Also in attendance were representatives of Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Deputy Secretary, Shane Hamilton, NSWALC Councillor Anne Dennis, AECG Raymond Ingre, the office of Roy Butler. MP, Walgett Shire Council Mayor, Councillors, General Manager, health personnel from NSW Health, Western Primary Health Network and funding agencies.

Prior to entering the Park, everyone walked through ceremonial smoke, which was conducted by WLHD staff member, Andy Carroll. Once people were seated, as well as standing, the formal proceedings commenced.

WAMS Culture and History Coordinator, Amy Townsend opened the day, asking for people to be silent for one minute followed by introducing performances and speakers.

The dance group, Milan Dhiyaan performed, the name of the dance group means “One Mob”. The group is run by Fleur Magick Dennis (a Wiradjuri & Ngemba/Wayilwan woman) & Laurance Magick Dennis (a Ngemba/Wayilwan & Yuin man).

The dance group performed four dances with the first dance dedicated to the Freedom Ride event that resembled the chants that the people of Walgett made during the original Freedom Rides. The chants of the people were “Guurramali!! Guurramala!! Guurramali!! Guurramala!!” It means “we are standing strong, and we will continue to stand strong and we won’t be pushed around”.

School Children from St Joseph’s Walgett performed the Acknowledgement to country song sung in both Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay languages, the students stood tall and proud to represent the community and shared culture through their beautiful words in language. It is a testament to the school and the children who represented the community so well, considering the morning heat on the day of the event was rather warm. Thanks also to our wonderful team that kept the children well hydrated and comfortable whilst they performed.

Her Excellency was invited to give the first address to the audience. She spoke several words in Gamilaraay language, giving greeting and thanks. An exemplary display of respect and honour to the Gamilaraay peoples with appreciation and praise to the community to be welcomed. She also extended her gratitude to know, listen and come with respect on an occasion that commemorates a monumental time in Australian history of being 60 years of the Freedom Ride events across NSW.

Today we have the honour of being in the presence of five of the original students from that very bus trip that visited this town in 1965.

Minister Penny Sharpe was next to speak, to unveil the “Blue Plaque”. Providing a history of the “Blue Plaque” program. The program recognises people and events that have shaped NSW. There are two plaques for the events of 1965 - honouring the work of Dr Charles Perkins. AC, displayed at the University of Sydney and another which marks the beginning of the Freedom Ride, at the Wayside Chapel in Sydney’s Potts Point. Hopefully, the three towns of Moree, Bowraville and Kempsey may be fortunate in achieving similar recognition.

Additionally, the Minister announced funding to WAMS for a “Pavillion”. The proposed project has been designed by Constructive Dialogue Architects. It is a 90m² timber and steel structure, with a multipurpose room, office, kitchenette and amenities. With deep window seats, louvered windows and sheltered areas to connect with the gardens. We envisage using the facility to support educational programs and display on site. It will include a timeline that documents key milestones in our journey.

Minster David Harris spoke of the importance of cultural identity, truth-telling, recording history and recognising the people who contributed to advocating for the rights for Aboriginal people that being Charles Perkins and the University of Sydney students known as SAFA on the Freedom Ride.

As a former teacher Minister Harris highlighted the history and injustices and expressed his words of encouragement to the school students and young people in attendance to aspire and follow their dreams, today we have the key to have access to opportunities and education that you can be whoever you want to be the opportunities are now there and doors are open. It is with the bravery and resilience and actions of those back in 1965 that made this change, for the change that we now know as a better future for our children.

Lastly, Mrs Mary Purse, WAMS Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer Mrs Chirstine Corby.AM, were invited to accompany the family of the late Frances Peters-Little – Doreen Peters, Esther Cohen and Jenny Riley. To unveil a plaque in the memory of Frances who was one of the first people to respond to our invitation, for people who could share their memories and their family's memories of the SAFA bus arriving in Walgett. Doreen and Jenny shared some wonderful words about Frances' achievements and her love for her community and the legacy of work that involved the history of the Freedom Ride to Walgett.

People were then asked to walk over to the RSL Community Hall to continue speeches and enjoy light refreshments away from the summer sun as well as be entertained by the local talents of our local school aged children.

School children from Collarenebri Central School performed a "rap" song about the Freedom Ride. Very entertaining and very poignant. A surprise announcement to call the five 1965 students to receive a cape made by the school children was a very emotional moment for everyone. "All Superheroes Need Capes" was the statement. Gold fabric designed in the shape of a cape with writings about the 1965 Freedom Ride.

Walgett Community College Primary school children and staff members sang the famous Troy Cassar- Daley song titled the Freedom Ride. It certainly fostered that sense of connection of storytelling to connect the audience with the past while also fostering a sense of reflection and conversation around the ongoing issues of reconciliation, racism, and the need for change.

The song resonates with many for its emotional depth and its ability to keep the memory of the Freedom Ride alive for new generations. In a broader context, "The Freedom Ride song" serves as both a tribute to a significant chapter in Australia's civil rights history and a reflection for the children and Walgett community to see the changes that now exist today.

Walgett Community College Senior students also surprised the students with a special certificate and acknowledgement letter with their appreciation and thanks for their bravery and efforts to support Aboriginal people and our community in particular. Freedom Ride Students of 1965; Ann Curthoys and Aidan Foy were nominated to speak on behalf of the students (SAFA). They talked with conviction, with honesty and recall of their time and the conditions of how Walgett and the communities were when they visited back in 1965.

Both Aidan and Ann described the past as being a time that was very hard to comprehend, the living conditions, the racism, the segregation was horrifying, we can say that we are really glad that we were a part of SAFA to see the changes and come back today and see this wonderful community commemorating.

Harry Phillip Hall has been the event Coordinator for the commemorations, working across all the communities that the Freedom Ride visited in 1965. He proudly shared a recollection of his lived experiences through captivating the audience during his truth-telling experience of how life was like for Aboriginal people of Walgett back in 1965 before the Freedom Rides began and to how things began to change after the Freedom Ride visited Walgett.

This heartfelt speech directly informed the audience and drew attention to the students where Mr Hall emphasised their bravery, determination and gratitude towards making change for better outcomes that saw positive change to lead on to many other Aboriginal significant organisations such as AMS's that we have today. These experiences and the conditions that the students encountered during this time was also dangerous and scary as they faced strong hostility particularly as the bus was shot at and run off the road. The students risked their lives for us all.

Michael Anderson also joined the stage with Mr Hall, to share his recollection of growing up in Walgett and witnessing the demonstration at the Walgett RSL, as he hid behind the bushy trees trying to comprehend what all these people were doing, mentioning that it was chaos but also feeling very frightening at the time being so young and the chance of being caught as this was no place for a little Aboriginal child to be on the streets.

This could have been trouble in so many ways considering how the times were back then for our people. As we reflect now we certainly had so many obstacles that we as people have had to overcome and still we face these today but for the early nineteen sixties it's unimaginable to some that these acts of discrimination and segregation occurred.

From the second staged demonstration that occurred later in 1965 that highlighted the discrimination and segregation of the seating at the local cinema 'Luxury theatre' the students returned to Walgett but this time with the Late Mr Ted Fields and the Late Mr Harry Hall with three young Aboriginal women that all purchased tickets to challenge the colour ban on the seating arrangements. This time seeing if Aboriginal people had the equal rights to sit upstairs in the theatre, well unfortunately there wasn't any equal rights during this occasion and the police were called and the three young Aboriginal women were arrested.

These brave women are the late Patrica Crawford nee Hall, the late Marie Cohen nee Peters and Lorna Raymond nee Hall that was in attendance on the day. To honour these ladies and the late Uncle Ted Fields, Ted's grandson Dermott Fields travelled from Tamworth to represent the Fields family where he acknowledged his Dhaadhaa (grandfather) for his strength, passion and culture and his tireless efforts throughout his life that he gave to advocate for the rights of his people.

Dr Laurence Crawford then joined the stage to acknowledge his late wife Patricia Crawford and share the story of this eventful time for his wife and her friends through the stories that were told by his wife over the years. Dr Crawford praised the community for their support and bringing together such a meaningful event that commemorates the Freedom Ride as one of the most significant monumental times in history for human rights for our people.

Ms Esther Cohen represented her late Mum Marie Cohen with a beautiful speech that also acknowledged her mother's experience and gratitude towards the community for the ongoing commemorations and keeping the legacy alive through truth-telling that is displayed in the Freedom Ride Memorial Park, its an important part of history for our community and those that come to visit.

Whilst Lorna stood supported by her sister, Kaylene Hall and cousin, Amy Townsend, Amy shared some words on behalf of acknowledging Aunty Lorna as being very grateful to be back home in Walgett and acknowledging this milestone of sixty years, it's with much sadness that we do remember that it wasn't such a nice time for our people and conditions weren't very good for our people or our community.

Those days were very hard, those are days that will always be remembered, but today we acknowledge that this is a very special day that we remember, we never forget, and we continue to share and always remember those that aren't here today to share this time in history.

During this session we also welcomed, NSWLALC Northwestern Councillor Anne Dennis that represented in the absence of Mr Ray Kelly Chairperson, that acknowledged the leadership of NSWLALC and their work across the communities to support commemorative events as well as a morning tea held at Town Hall followed by a Ball at the International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour.

Councillor Dennis also represents the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group she welcomed and introduced Mr Raymond Ingrey, AECG President to Walgett, Mr Ingrey touched on this important part of history for Walgett, yet also described the strength and resilience of a very staunch community of Aboriginal leaders that have been the leaders in establishing the AECG as well as seeing so many dedicated graduates of education teaching degrees come from this unique community. It's really a testament to the community and something the community should be very proud of.

As we then welcomed local community members that included our local Mayor of Walgett Shire Council, Jason Ramien who spoke of the importance of sustaining community relationships both with agencies and individuals. He also mentioned the importance of recording history and acknowledging the students who made time and effort to attend the commemorations.

Speakers also included Sandie Suey-Thorne from Dharriwaa Elders Group and Garry Trindall Chairperson of the Walgett Community Working Party, followed by WAMS acknowledgments and words of respect were read by Amy in the company of the WAMS Chairperson, Mary Purse and Chief Executive Officer, Christine Corby AM.

At the end of speeches and performances, thank you gifts were provided to dignitaries and special guests

Hand crafted items designed by local Artist Louann Brown and Freedom Ride apparel designed by local Artist Frank Wright.

Appreciation must be afforded to NIAA as well as local and corporate sponsors who had financed the day's events. Recognition must be given to the local agencies of the planning committee – Walgett Shire Council, the Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Dharriwaa Elders Group, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Community Working Party and WAMS. The delegates took the time to plan the event. They now see the results of their work and commitment for bringing such significant history to be seen and heard by all.

As people commenced to disperse, they were reminded of the evening gathering to be held at the local football oval. Entertainment and food. A time to relax, to gather with your friends and family together. Food and beverages provided by locals, Mr Whippy, Brew and a free BBQ by Walgett Dragons Junior Rugby League Football Club. WAMS personnel provided a hydration station ensuring a constant supply of cold water and juice boxes for the Birralii-gal. The evening event occurred at the No. 1 oval, commencing at 5:30pm with entertainment provided by Jon Jon Jones, Chris Hunt, Ducky Dennis and Route 37.

Trevor Simpson also returned to his home community to support the evening music with his expertise and his musical talents, to arrange and organise a spectacular line-up of local musicians. Trevor also happily joined in and assisted with entertaining the crowd with his singing and drumming skills. Trevor described the 60 years to be a momentous time to showcase the local talents and have music as a unique way of bridging generations and honouring this significant part of history.

WAMS honours the 1965 students. Their commitment to our town is demonstrated by their presence today. They believed that a 10 hour or so bus ride to our town was significant to the cause. For themselves. For people they had never met. In a town they had never visited.

COLLARENEBRI CENTRAL SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



ALL SUPERHEROES NEED CAPES



SAFA OUR 1965 SUPERHEROES

WALGETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRIMARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



CAPTURED MOMENTS OF THE COMMEMORATION



1965 STUDENTS



ANN CURTHOYS



AIDAN FOY



PROFESSOR ANN CURTHOYS

Walgett speech 17 February 2025

It is a great honour to be here in Walgett for these commemorations of the Freedom Ride of 1965.

In many ways, if the Freedom Ride made a difference to Walgett, I can say that it is also true the other way around, Walgett helped make the Freedom Ride. When the bus left the University of Sydney on 12 February 1965, it passed through several towns before arriving in Walgett.

Although we saw shocking living conditions and clear examples of racial discrimination in those towns, we did not conduct demonstration there as Charlie Perkins and the others felt that we didn't have enough connection with local Aboriginal leaders to do so. Walgett was different, -- it did have a strong tradition of Aboriginal protest, resistance, and leadership, with figures like Harry Hall, Ted Fields, Gladys Lake, George Rose, and others. Six months before the freedom ride there had been protests over the police gaoling two young boys for stealing crayons and a table tennis bat, and these protests had helped create links between local and Sydney activists. So, in Walgett we students decided to take action, and held our demonstration outside the RSL, for refusing membership and admission to Aboriginal ex-servicemen. That demonstration, where we held up placards protesting against the RSL exclusion of Aboriginal people, lasted for seven hours, during which time multiple arguments broke out, and Charles Perkins gave a strong speech articulating clearly what we were on about – an end to segregation, discrimination, and inequality. It was very very hot!

Afterwards, when the Reverend Dowe insisted we vacate the church hall in which we had been staying, forcing the bus with its load of students to set off for Collarenebri around 9 pm at night, we were placed in considerable danger when a local truck rammed the bus and forced it off the road. The thing is, the bus at that point contained not only us students but also a cadet reporter from the Sydney Morning Herald, who had just joined us on the spur of the moment that day in Walgett. He was able to give a firsthand account of how our protests against racial discrimination had so angered some of the locals they took seriously dangerous action against us. And with that, the news was out, and the story hit the media, and other journalists and media outlets joined us. The media was there in force when we went to Moree, and then the coastal towns. Walgett was important in another way, too. There wasn't just one Freedom Ride visit to Walgett, there were two. And the second one, in September 1965, saw close liaison between the visiting students and local activists. I was not directly involved but I researched it for my book, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*. When a group of students arrived, Harry Hall gathered together a group of young women to go to the cinema with the students – his daughter, Pattie, his niece, Lorna Hall, and 18-year-old Marie Peters.³¹ That Saturday evening, Harry and Ted Fields, together with Pattie, Lorna and Marie, went along with the four students to seek admittance to the white upstairs section of the theatre.³² The girls were accompanied by three male students, and the female student, Christine, had a male Aboriginal partner. The group bought upstairs tickets but were then not allowed to go upstairs. One of the students, David Pepper, later told me,

PROFESSOR ANN CURTHOYS CONTINUED

We invited these girls to go to the movies, and here we were scruffy students with our old jeans on and t-shirts and the girls had their hair done, wore fantastic gear, and looked fantastic...So the scruffy students were permitted to go in but these girls who were dressed up to the nines and looking fantastic weren't allowed to go in.

Police became involved, which hadn't happened in February, and one of the students was forcibly removed from the theatre. Aidan, David, Christine, Ted and Marie were arrested and charged with obstructing the manager's free passage on the stairway of the Luxury Theatre.³⁸ The two Hall girls were kept in gaol for about four hours, but then—being under 18—were released into the custody of their fathers. Marie remembers that she and Christine were held in a cell together. Charles Perkins later said that this was the first time that Aboriginal people had been arrested for participating in an organised civil rights demonstration.

I have personal links with Walgett, through my great and sadly departed friend Frances Peters-Little. I knew Frances first when she was a student at UTS, and then when I supervised her Masters thesis at ANU. She, my husband John, and I jointly edited a book, *Passionate Histories: Myth, Memory and History in Indigenous Australia*, and later I read drafts of what would become her book on her famous father, Jimmy Little. Her mother was Marjorie Peters and Walgett was very dear to Frances's heart. We spent time together here in 2015, the second time I had visited Walgett that year, for I had been on the 50th anniversary bus which arrived in Walgett from the University of Sydney. Hundreds of people walked through the streets to the RSL, where we gave and heard speeches about the Freedom Ride. That was a remarkable occasion, and probably the first time I realised how much the Freedom Ride meant in the Freedom Ride towns. It would be the same in Moree.

It is hard to comprehend that an event you were engaged in as a 19-year-old student would be so well remembered for so long after. We all know some political actions succeed and others fail, and you never know at the time which it will be. I sometimes wonder exactly why the Freedom ride is so well remembered, especially when times are tough as I think they are in many ways in the world today. I think the reason is that it symbolises for young people now the possibility of change, the importance of action by young people, and the significance of Aboriginal leadership, in this case Charlie Perkins. There are many unresolved issues left for us today, and many things we would want to change, but it is important to recognise the quality of Aboriginal leadership and activism this town has seen for decades now and to take heart from that. We freedom-riders learnt so much from you, your families, and your predecessors, and today we thank you.



PROFESSOR AIDAN FOY

Impressions of Walgett 17th February 2025

In 1965, as an idealistic young man, just turned 18, I joined the Student Action For Aborigines (SAFA) bus tour, now melodramatically called the Freedom Ride. We did a circuit of rural New South Wales, looking at the conditions of Aborigines and staging demonstrations where we found blatant racism, usually shown by various forms of segregation. Walgett was one of the towns we visited, and over the next twelve months, groups of up to four of us re-visited Walgett to help the local Kamilaroi people make their presence felt. I must have decided that Walgett was to be where I would make my contribution, because I went on all of the follow up visits, including the one in August 1965 when we staged a “sit in” at the Luxury Cinema to remove the “colour bar” preventing Aborigines to sit upstairs. After SAFA my involvement in Indigenous matters has been medical, as a specialist in Addiction, Liver disease and Internal Medicine. I gave evidence at the 1988 Royal Commission, did some outreach clinics in Central Australia, and, with colleagues from the Newcastle Mater hospital, ran an outreach service to Moree and Mungindi for eight years.

I have only been back to Walgett twice since 1965, passing through a couple of years ago, then for the 60th anniversary of the bus tour last week.

After 60 years, the first impression of the town is disorientating. The old buildings, including the Art Deco movie theatre are all gone, unlike other towns in the region which have restored and maintained their built character. However, there is more green space than I remember, the old courthouse and the Council chambers are still there, re-purposed as a museum and offices for the local history society, and there is a modern coffee shop and an IGA selling fresh food. On reflection, what are missing are the markers of the old “cocky town” in which First Nations people had no place.

I must admit that I was quite unprepared for the events of the commemoration of the bus tour. I envisioned a catch up with old friends, inspection of the commemorative garden, a cup of tea, and a walk around the town. There were five former bus riders, me, Ann Curthoys, Alec Mills, Beth Hansen, and Chris Page. When we heard that the Governor and some senior politicians were coming, it was apparent that it would be a more formal occasion, and a couple of us agreed to make short speeches, but I was still taken by surprise. Firstly, the garden, on the site of an old Commonwealth Bank building, is modern, well designed and evocative. Large photos of the bus and demonstrations are displayed on a central pavilion which was once the bank’s vault. There are informative plaques all around with places to sit in the shade. The gardens will eventually add colour as they grow. The Governor and politicians spoke about the significance of the Bus Tour and unveiled a blue commemorative plaque on the wall. There were other remembrances of Kamilaroi elders who preceded the events of 1965.

PROFESSOR AIDAN FOY - CONTINUED

Before we got to the garden, we were asked to lead a short march, so that we could arrive and have a smoking ceremony at the entrance. That was the point at which I nearly lost it. We were asked to lead from about a block away, and as we lined up, it became obvious that every school in Walgett, Collarenebri, and Brewarrina had time off to attend because of the historical importance of the event. Most of the adult population had also turned out. Suddenly, standing in the street where we had been threatened and abused in 1965, there were hundreds of people telling us that what we had done had changed their lives. As we reached the garden, about 200m away, I found myself shaking hands with the Governor, then with Amy Townsend, Harry Hall's granddaughter who was running the day's proceedings. Harry, who was President of the Walgett Aboriginal Progress Association in 1965, had been a key figure at the time of the episode at the cinema. I realised that the little march was not a protest, it was a victory parade. As I took Amy's hand the enormity of it hit me and I was close to tears.

Of course, it is never as simple as that. It became clear that the focus of the day was firmly on past achievements, not current issues. A small group of marchers started a "Land Rights" chant and were quickly told to desist. One or two people mentioned in quiet conversation that they were upset by division in the community, and when one visitor mentioned to an older man that they were saddened by the failure of the Voice referendum, he responded by saying that he had voted No because he didn't want "people in Sydney" telling him what to do. I remembered then that the same person had said the same thing in the media during the campaign. Was this wilful ignorance, misinformation or a mix of both? Who knows? A rough analysis of the votes cast suggests that a majority of Walgett's Indigenous voters voted Yes, with a significant minority voting No.

It would be wrong to end on that negative note. Of course, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about a place after having spent just one day there, but I left with a great sense of hope. The competence and sophistication of the young, mostly female leadership; the commitment of families to ensure their children have an education, with the involvement of parents and grandparents; and the well run Medical Service, all indicate a community which has control of its affairs and knows where it is going. The Aboriginal Medical Service is the most impressive I have encountered. Early on, they adopted a non-discriminatory policy, welcoming everyone, so that the AMS is an asset for the whole Walgett community, not just First Nations people. They also have an office of Culture and Heritage which is a stroke of genius because identity and pride are important not just for their own sake, but for good physical and mental health. They will arrange guided visits to the commemorative garden which they intend to become a tourist attraction and, I heard, will organise guided trips to the famous Brewarrina fish traps. At a time when, once again, the world seems dark and hopeless, Walgett shows that the lights are never fully out.

Aidan Foy

MR HARRY PHILLIP HALL

Freedom Ride Event Coordinator



Harry Phillip was an active participant in the 1965 Freedom Ride also the son of the late Harry Hall and brother and cousin to the ladies that were arrested at the local cinema. Contributing to the movement's push to challenge the racial inequalities faced by Indigenous Australians, particularly in rural areas.

His participation in Walgett is a reminder of the vital role local Aboriginal people played in the struggle for equal rights and social justice during that period. During the Freedom Ride, when the group arrived in Walgett, they were met with hostility from the white community.

Harry Phillip Hall, along with others, was actively involved in trying to break these barriers. It was one of the most intense moments of the trip, as the activists were confronted with violent opposition, and the situation became highly charged.

PROFESSOR GHILLAR, MICHAEL ANDERSON

Convenor of the Sovereign Union States



Michael shares his experience of growing up as a young Aboriginal man from Walgett, not only experienced the racial discrimination firsthand, he was also the proud nephew of the Late Pat Walford who was actively involved in the 1965 Freedom Ride.

After 1965 Michael's later activism led him in establishing the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, being elected as an instructing officer to the Office of Public Prosecutions in criminal Law and his ongoing work in promoting Aboriginal rights continues through his commitment and work as the convenor of the Sovereign Union States.

Mrs LORNA RAYMOND Nee HALL



Lorna was one of the three brave girls that attended the movies with the students and the Late Ted Fields to challenge the colour band of not being able to sit up stairs. Lorna was arrested on this occasion along with the late Patricia Crawford nee Hall and the late Marie Cohen nee Peters.

Amy Townsend her proud cousin acknowledges the words shared by Lorna that It's a privilege and honour to be here today to commemorate and thank you all for acknowledging this special occasion.

It certainly wasn't a great time for those involved in 1965, it certainly took some bravery and resilience and we thank everyone that supported our community that stood up for rights and equality to see the changes we have today. We will always be proud to talk about what us three girls did, that changed things for our people.

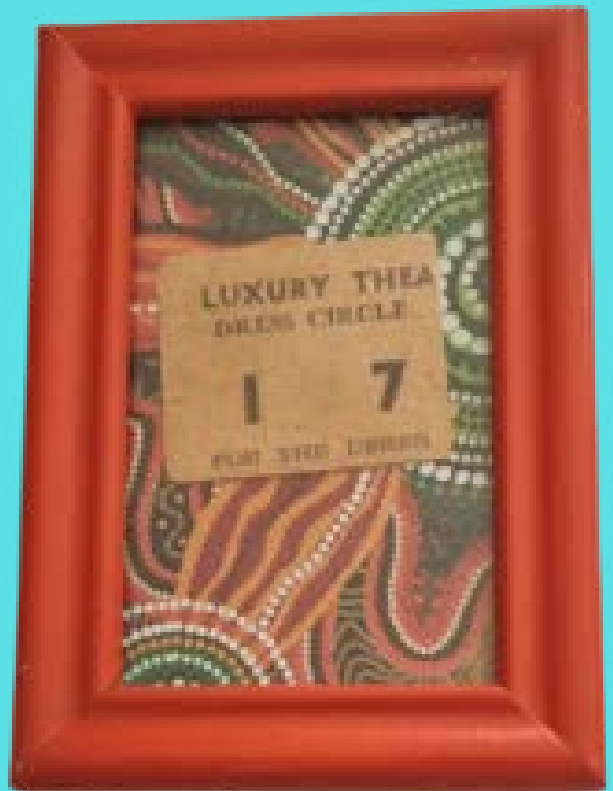


Dr LAURIE CRAWFORD



Dr Laurie is the proud husband of the Late Patricia Crawford Nee Hall, Dr Laurie acknowledged the experience and the stories shared by his late wife.

Dr Laurie described his wife as a person that was always very proud of her actions and would always talk about it with passion and pride. He still has her ticket that holds pride of place in his display cabinet at his home in Bathurst. It is one of his most cherished possessions. And if she was here with us today, she would be extremely proud and honoured that the 60th Freedom Ride celebration is taking place and the recognition and awareness that is given for their actions.



Marie Cohen nee Peters, Lorna Raymond nee Hall, Patricia Crawford nee Hall

Ms ESTHER COHEN



Ms Esther Cohen represented her late Mum Marie Cohen nee Peters with a beautiful speech that also acknowledged her mother's experience and gratitude towards the community for the ongoing commemorations and keeping the legacy alive through truth-telling that is displayed in the Freedom Ride Memorial Park, its an important part of history for our community and those that come to visit



Marie Cohen nee Peters, Lorna Raymond nee Hall, Patricia Crawford nee Hall

DERMOTT FIELDS



Dermott is a proud Grandson of the Late Ted Fields. Dermott represented the Fields family where he acknowledged his Dhaadhaa (grandfather) for his strength, passion and culture and his tireless efforts throughout his life that he gave to advocate for the rights of his people. Dermott concluded his speech by acknowledging the importance of this day as an opportunity for reflection and recognising the history of what happened in Walgett and other towns.



The Late Ted Fields purchasing tickets at the Luxury Theatre



MAYOR JASEN RAMIEN
Representing
Walgett Shire Council



CR ANNE DENNIS
Representing
NSWLALC
North West



MRS SANDIE SUEY-THORNE
Representing
Dharriwaa Elders Group
Speaker for the Elders
Council



MR GARRY TRINDALL

Representing
Walgett Community
Working Party as
Chairperson



MR RAYMOND INGREY

Representing
AECG
As President of the
Aboriginal Education
Consultative Group

CHAIRPERSON OF WAMS

MRS MARY PURSE (NEE HALL)

Yaama. Hello. Gulbiyaay. Welcome. My name is Mary Purse, nee Hall. I am Chairperson of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Limited.

Firstly, I wish to thank; Locky and Fleur for the smoking ceremony, Amy for being MC this morning and our children from the schools for their dance and song. I also give recognition to NIAA and local and corporate sponsors who have financed the day. I sincerely thank our visitors to Walgett in attending such a significant and historical event, not only for our town but for our nation's history.

To your Excellency and Mr Wilson, Treasurer Daniel Mookhey, Minister Penny Sharpe, Minister David Harris, representatives of local member Roy Butler, NSWALC Chairperson Ray Kelly and Councillor Anne Dennis, Harry Phillip Hall Freedom Ride Event Coordinator and many others to mention.

To the 1965 students and their families – thank you Ann and Aiden for speaking on their behalf. Your recall is our history.

For our local people who are here today this is a special moment to be able to come together as a community to honour the Freedom Ride and the people whose passion made all of this possible. Thank you all for continuing to remember, commemorate and respect.

Today, we have commemorated the 60th anniversary of the bus journey of the Freedom Ride to Walgett, Moree, Boggabilla, Bowraville and Kempsey. Young people in 1965 who gathered together and believed that a 10 hour or so bus ride to our town was significant to the cause, to themselves and for people they had never met in a town they had never been.

As the poster indicates, we are here to honour the students. To give thanks to their bravery.

For standing together. For standing strong. They gave local people an opportunity to find a voice, a determination, to work together for human and social rights.

We are also here to see Walgett receive recognition for their role, along with the 1965 students

with the launch of a “Blue Plaque”. Thank you, Minister Sharpe, for your words today. They mean so much for our town. The Blue Plaques program recognises people and events that have shaped NSW.

CHAIRPERSON CONTINUED

There are two plaques for the events of 1965 - honouring the work of Dr Charles Perkins. AC, displayed at the University of Sydney and another which marks the beginning of the Freedom Ride, at the Wayside Chapel in Sydney's Potts Point. Hopefully the other four towns identified in 1965, may receive a plaque as well as part of the "Freedom Ride Trail".

A wonderful surprise we have received today with the announcement by the Treasurer that a grant has been approved to construct an office/pavilion on the space near the fence of the NAB bank.

Our plan is to open the park as a cultural, educational and tourism area. We have been in discussions to submit for a full-time worker as well as including the Park on the tourism sites for NSW and Australia. The website will also be expanded for international information.

Thank you to the local agencies of the planning committee – Walgett Shire Council, the Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Dharriwaa Elders Group, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Community Working Party and WAMS, who all took the time to plan and now see the results of their work and their commitment for bringing such significant history to be seen and heard by all. Walgett has its own history today, from 1965 to 2025 – a milestone for the future.

The day is not over yet. This evening at Number One Oval, there is music and food. A time to relax, gather your friends and family together.

In the meantime, for the visitors who are staying for the evening, we encourage you to visit our town, ask the local people here to show you around Walgett and around our businesses.

Enjoy our town. We have much to offer. I wish every person a safe return journey to your home. Thank you everyone



COMMUNITY EVENT BBQ & CONCERT



Music

Trevor Simson
Jon Jon Jones
Ducky Dennis
Chris Hunt
Route 37
Ricky A Townsend



BBQ

Walgett Junior Rugby League
Committee
Tara Smith
Reburdah Dennis
Jason Horan



Refreshments

Brew Coffee Cart Ashley
Barry
Dunns Icecream Van
Tony & Errolyn Dunn



Giyaali Youth Van

Walgett Police
Graham Ruttley
Donald Cran

MORNING TEA SYDNEY TOWN HALL



FREEDOM RIDE COMMEMORATIVE MORNING TEA *1965-2025*

You're invited to a commemorative morning tea to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride.

Wednesday 12 February 2025
Smoking Ceremony at 9:30AM
Morning Tea 10AM-12PM
Sydney Town Hall 483 George Street Sydney NSW 2000

Join Freedom Ride survivors as they share their historic journey, inspiring future generations to unite for a more just and equitable society.

RSVP by email to events@metrolalc.org.au

Brought to you by the City of Sydney and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

SUPPORTED BY
CITY OF SYDNEY 





L-R Des Hall, Harry Phillip Hall, Eileen Perkins, Amy Townsend, Mary Purse, Tracy Crawford, Laurence Crawford and Michael Purse



L-R Front Ian Corby, Christine Corby, Doreen Peters & Mary Purse
Middle Laurence Crawford, Ricky Townsend, Amy Townsend & Des Hall
Back Tracy Crawford & Michael Purse



L-R Michael Anderson, Eileen Perkins, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, Harry Phillip Hall, Lyall Munro Jnr and Allan Murray

FREEDOM RIDE BALL

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, SYDNEY



HARRY PHILLIP HALL

Cake Cutting



STUDENTS OF 1965





Opening Smoking Ceremony



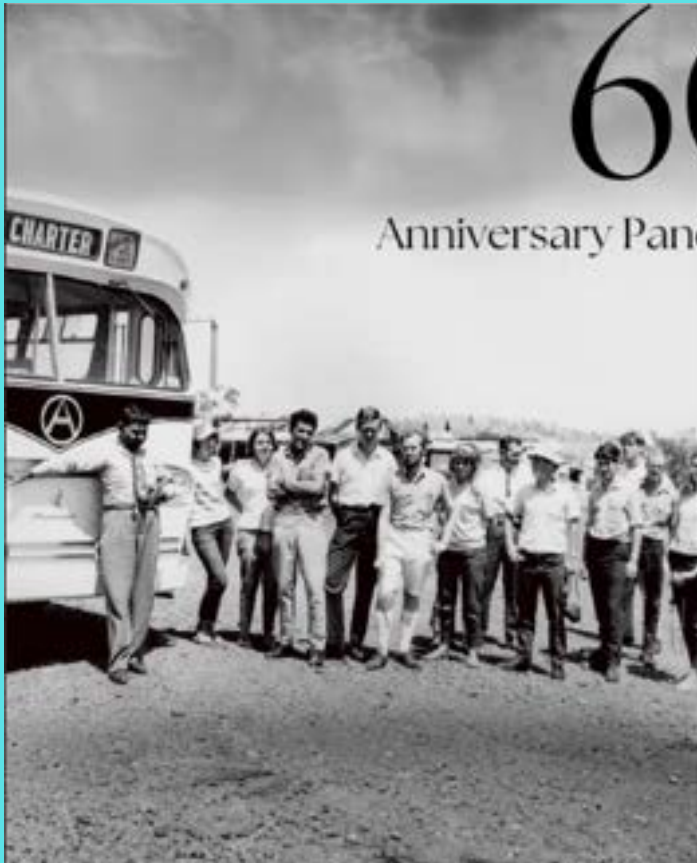
Aboriginal Dance Group Performers



Roger Knox Family Band

60TH ANNIVERSARY PANEL

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, CAMPERDOWN NSW



60th

Anniversary Panel & Morning Tea

SAVE THE DATE

FROM 9:30 AM, WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2025

CHAU CHAK WING MUSEUM

Marking 60 years since the Freedom Ride

Events at Sydney University to commemorate The 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Ride

Chau Chak Wing Museum
University of Sydney
26 February 2025

Dear Friends

We are writing to as many 1965 Freedom Ride participants as we can find, to let you know about two proposed events to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride, to be held at Sydney University in a few weeks, on **Wednesday 26 February 2025**:

- A morning tea and panel discussion being organised by the University itself, then,
- A lunch we are organising for whichever Freedom Ride participants are able to attend.

The university tells us that the panel will "reflect on the Freedom Ride's significance and legacy in advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights." Due to other university commitments and events earlier this February, the university chose Wednesday 26 February, as the date on which the Freedom Ride arrived back at the university in 1965.

We only became aware of the University of Sydney's proposal late last year. Before that, many of us had received an invitation from Christine Corby, CEO of the Waggett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS), tagging an event in Waggett for the 60th anniversary, to be held there on 17 February. This follows the earlier initiative of WAMS to establish a Memorial Park to the Freedom Ride. Three Freedom Ride participants were able to attend the opening of this park in February last year: Alex Mills, Beth Hansen, and Chris Page. The WAMS staff are hoping that at least a few of us will be able to get to their 60th anniversary event this year.

In discussing the Waggett event, a few of us thought that it would also be nice, and fitting, to organise a quiet lunch in Sydney of whichever participants are still with us and can make it. We thought it might well prove to be the last opportunity for most of us to get together.

Subsequently, we heard about Sydney University's proposed event. As it turns out, the morning tea and panel discussion is proposed to take place from 9:30 am till around noon, which would fit in well with a lunch to follow at a nearby café.

The university's event will be held in the auditorium of the Chau Chak Wing Museum. The museum is directly across from the Quad and Great Hall – a very fitting location, as the university staff member who contacted us commented. She also says that there is a nice café in this same building, where we could hold the lunch. We will check this out.

The university confirmed all the details of their event late last week, following a meeting of relevant staff, and they have provided the attached invitation "Save the Date" invitation. The university expects to finalise an official invitation this week, with an Eventbrite link for registrations, and will send it out to this same list as well as to others they plan to invite. We will work with them to compile as complete a contact list for Freedom Ride participants as proves possible. You might be able to help – see separate email cover note.

In the meantime, the university has provided the following details:

Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Location: Chau Chak Wing Museum, University Place, Camperdown, NSW. Directions can be found [here](#).

Time: 9:30am arrival. Morning tea will be served 9:30am – 10:20am. Panel discussion to commence from 10:30am and finish no later than 12 noon.

Then: Our own lunch from around 12:15 pm till 2 pm – or whenever!

The university is setting up the Eventbrite link for registrations for their catering purposes. Likewise, could people please let us know in due course by return email if they will attend the lunch, so that we can book an appropriate table at the café. It goes without saying that partners and other family would be welcome too.

With best wishes

Gary Williams Brian Aarons Ann Curthoys Jim Spigelman



Mary Purse, Adam Perkins,
Eileen Perkins and Amy
Townsend



Students catching-up



Students signing the
60th Anniversary
commemoration poster



1965 Students pictured with Eileen Perkins



**LETTERS
ARTICLES
&
MESSAGES
RECIEVED**

Her Excellency the Honorable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Yaama mari-gal Walgett-i
Gaba nginda buudhaa nhalay yaadha
Ngaya Yanay baluwaa-baraay

Thank you for your welcome here on the lands of the Gamilaraay Nation. I pay my respects, to Elders, past, present and emerging and all First Nations people here present.

There are two expressions in the Gamilaraay language which so aptly describe why we are meeting here today. The first is: 'Winanga-li' which, I understand, means 'to hear, listen, know and remember'.^[2] The second is 'guwaa-li': 'to engage, to speak, to share stories' which is etched into one of the sandstone blocks here, in this beautiful memorial park.

As well as describing why we are here, in many ways these two expressions capture the essence of how one learns and understands history – revealing the big stories and unfolding the personal stories of those who have lived and breathed that history, indeed, who are that history.

Today is a commemoration of a big story - the Freedom Ride that came to this and 15 other towns in February 1965. It was that big event, 60 years ago, that told the stories to the nation that needed to be heard, the stories that were already in plain sight – but which needed to be listened to – and acted upon; the stories of this and the other communities in New South Wales.

Inspired by the US civil rights movement and spurred into action by racism and discrimination on home soil - on country - the Freedom Ride bus set off from Sydney on 12 February 1965.

Its stated aims were to:

- 1.To arouse public attention to fundamental Aboriginal problems in health, education, housing;
- 2.To challenge and break down social discriminatory barriers to the extent possible by student action; and
- 3.To stimulate the interest of Aboriginal people themselves in resisting discrimination;
4. It was action underpinned by the principles of passive (non-violent) resistance, as laid down by Martin Luther King Jr.^[3]

This was not a group of students looking for notoriety. It was a focused challenge to a status quo which had allowed and tolerated the shocking racism and conditions experienced by many Aboriginal communities.

Her Excellency Continued

Thirty-three students from Sydney University took part, including:
>the renowned Aboriginal leader Charles Perkins;
>Ann Curthoys, Emeritus Professor of Australian History at ANU, whose diaries provided a record of the trip and the conditions of the towns that were visited. We are honoured by her presence and that of other Freedom Riders today; and
>the Honourable James Spigelman, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, who recorded many of the events on his 8mm home movie camera.

Today Ann and five of her fellow Freedom Riders are back here with the Walgett community today. Thank you for what you did then and for being here today. The Ride also had the support of Sydney's Wayside Chapel.

The student's contemporaneous reports of what they found in the towns they visited on the Freedom Ride told the nation the stories of overt racism and discrimination they observed and also of the abuse that was directed at them personally. But they had made their point.

As former Chief Justice Jim Spigelman reflected in 2011, shortly after his retirement from the Court:

"This was the first time Indigenous affairs had been front-page news in Australia ... It was an event that received attention and raised consciousness in a way that nothing had before." [4]

By the time the Freedom Ride set out, the treatment of Aboriginal peoples as equal citizens was already under intense scrutiny, leading to the passing of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962 which gave to all Aboriginal Australians the right to vote. By 1965, all were enfranchised in each Australian state.

The Freedom Ride thus came at a significant time when things were ripe for change. But it was the huge cultural impact it had and the national attention it drew to the conditions under which Aboriginal peoples lived that marks its importance. In particular two years later, an overwhelming 90.77% of the Australian population voted 'Yes' in the 1967 Referendum, whereby all Aboriginal Australians were counted in the national census.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council also recognises the Freedom Ride as one of the precursors that led to the recognition of Aboriginal land rights and by extension to the passing of the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. [5]

Her Excellency the Honorable Margaret Beazley AC KC

Sixty years on, what can we learn from the Freedom Ride?

As a nation we have learned much, and we have much more to learn and to do.

Importantly, we have learned from a peoples whose strength, resilience and gentleness continues to speak to us all just as that Freedom Ride spoke to the nation 60 years ago.

The phrase ‘Winanga-li’: ‘to hear, listen, know and remember’ tells us that we can’t change history, nor should we hide from it. However, the point of knowing our history is so that we can change the present and the future. As Charles Perkins put it “History is a guide but (it is) still a memory”. It “must not be a cross we ...carry as a nation, into the future. Our children must inherit a society better than the one we inherited.”^[6]

I pay tribute to the courage and resoluteness of local leaders, the women and the men of Walgett who challenged discrimination to integrate and unite this community, both before and long after the bus had left town, so that we do live in a better Australia.

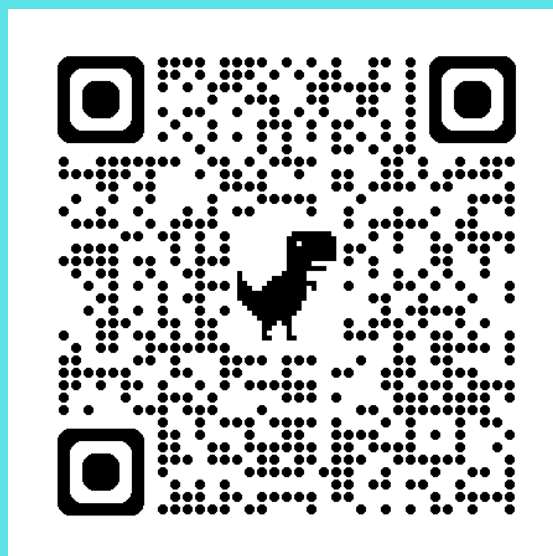
Communities are stronger when they work together. I thank the community of Walgett - Walgett Shire Council, the Local Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Community Working Party, Dharriwaa Elders Group, and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service – for bringing us together to share in this ceremony and mark this important milestone.

[1]. “Hello, people of Walgett. Thank you for meeting here today. I come with respect.”

[2] https://www.dnathan.com/language/gamilaraay/dictionary/GAM_TWY.HTM

[3] Charles Perkins: Student Action for Aborigines Report 16-18 April 1965: Reports and Resolutions of 8th Annual Conference on Aboriginal Affairs

[4] Your paragraph text



OFFICIAL

The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy,
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage,
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council



HMD25/19

Ms Christine Corby AM
Chief Executive Officer
Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Ltd

By email: christinec@walgettams.com.au

Dear Ms Corby *Christine,*

Thank you for your invitation to attend the 60th anniversary of the 1965 Freedom Ride event in Walgett on 17 February. It was an honour to take part in this event and to unveil the blue plaque within the Freedom Ride Memorial Park – the second in NSW dedicated to the 1965 Freedom Ride – ensuring this historic movement remains a permanent part of our shared history.

As mentioned at the event, the NSW Government remains committed to recognising and commemorating the significant legacy of the 1965 Freedom Ride Bus Tour. In support of this, we are pleased to provide \$900,000 in grant funding to the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service to assist with the construction of a pavilion in Freedom Ride Memorial Park.

Heritage NSW will contact you directly regarding the administration of funding.

Please contact Renae Patterson, Acting Director Customer Service at Heritage NSW at renae.patterson@environment.nsw.gov.au should you need further assistance.

I look forward to seeing this important project come to life and contribute to preserving the legacy of the Freedom Ride.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Penny Sharpe".

Penny Sharpe MLC

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy,
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage

5/3/25

Dear Aunty Christine,

Thank you so much for sending these. I hope you have had a chance to rest after Monday!

Penny said it was simply an amazing day.

Thank you for everything you and Aunty Mary Purse did to organise the event and make sure the anniversary was properly celebrated. I was so sad I could not be there.

Penny gave a speech in parliament yesterday about the anniversary and I will send you the clip later this week.

All best and stay in touch

Tamsin Lloyd

chief of staff/Minister Penny Sharpe

CHRIS PAGE

Sixty years AGO, today was the first time Freedom Rider Chris Page
“EXPERIENCED HATE”

Mr. Page was one of 34 University students on the 1965 FREEDOM RIDE, a 15-day bus journey through NSW that supercharged the fight for Aboriginal Australian rights.

When the ride stopped at Moree’s Bore Baths (now part of Moree Artesian Aquatic Centre) to protest a council by-law that prohibited aboriginal people from entering, the students were met with slurs, spit, and flying bottles. from his antique shop on the corner of derby and Apley streets the one-time student activist told the leader it took 25 years for him to be his actions on the ride actually did some good.” A complaint a lot of people said, ‘you students are not doing the right thing because you’re going to a country town, you’re creating problems for the locals, you leave and the locals have to put up with the damage,’ Mr. page said. “It took me a long time to understand whether what the freedom ride did 60 years ago was actually beneficial to my local community.”
progress and prejudice

at the speech in Canberra following the freedom ride, organizer and activist Charlie Perkins famously said, “the is out in the open now” referencing the intense media spotlight on the students. the ride helped inspire the 1967 referendum, where Australia voted to include aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the census. these days, however, Mr. page says the problem is no longer out in the open. “a lot of the same problems from years ago are still around with the same regard to ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT RACES,” he said.

CHRIS PAGE - CONTINUED

“what’s different now is that it’s not as blatant:” university of Canberra launched the virtual Freedom ride as a information source for students and staff. it pays tribute to the 1965 freedom ride where about 30 university of Sydney students rode a bus through regional NSW to highlight the marginalization of aboriginal and Torres strait islander people. pro vice-chancellor professor Maree Meredith and vice-chancellor Professor Paddy Nixon spoke at the launch on august 2, 2023. while Indigenous Australians now have the same legal protections and civil liberties as white Australians, data from the productivity commission shows aboriginal and Torres strait islander people have lower life expectancies, higher rates of suicide, and are less likely to finish school than non-indigenous Australians. Mr. page says these outcomes are less immediately obvious than outright discrimination, but the fog around the issue can also be seen as a measure of progress.

He recalls fights breaking out during the freedom ride protest in Moree and how police had to call in reinforcements just to get the students back on their bus safely.

“That sort of thing doesn’t happen now,” Mr. page said “but that doesn’t mean that there’s no RACISM. It just became subtle.” When asked if he thinks another FREEDOM RIDE-STYLE camping is needed to call attention to the “subtle” RACISM, Mr. Page said it's a “DIFFICULT QUESTION TO ANSWER”. ultimately, he pointed to community groups making active efforts to be more inclusive as one of the best ways, in his view, to change social attitudes and tackle modern Racism.

He says that kind of Grassroots approach brings people together, which over time helps breaks down unconscious biases and prejudicial beliefs. “If you meet people and don’t make room for blatant type of racism, which still occurs in Australia, you’ll find yourself more welcoming to different opinions” he said.

Mr. Page recently returned to Walgett, another stops on the FREEDOM RIDE, where the NSW Ministers celebrated the Rides 60th anniversary by the unveiling of the first of many Blue Plaques installed along the Ride’s route. The last Commemoration Mr. Page will take part in will be held in Sydney on Wednesday, February 26, the anniversary if the end of the 1965 freedom ride.

MACHTELD HALI

In 1965, university student Machteld Hali joined an activist group called Student Action for Aborigines and went on a history-defining bus journey across outback New South Wales.

The 15-day trip changed her life forever – as well as the lives of tens of thousands of indigenous people around Australia.

Machteld was 18 when 29-year-old Charlie Perkins and 19-year-old Jim Spigelman got a group of 29 students together – known as SAFA – and visited towns across New South Wales and southern Queensland.

The purpose of the trip was to expose the squalid living conditions of Aboriginal people and the appalling racism and discrimination they suffered.

SAFA's goal was to create public awareness in the broader population and, as the bus travelled from one country town to the next, the group witnessed incredible hardship and systemic racism and segregation – and they told the world about it.

Machteld Hali, a lino and woodblock printmaker, was born in Holland, raised in Indonesia, and now lives at Kiama on the south coast of New South Wales with her husband, Shane.

Machteld's family came to Australia in 1956 and suffered racism – they were from Holland, were considered 'different' and could barely speak English. They were outcasts in a strange country. Machteld Hali and her husband, Shane Gardner, in Moree on Wednesday for the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride.

Machteld and Shane were in Moree on Wednesday to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1965 Freedom Ride.

They joined hundreds of locals as well as visitors from across Australia on the steps of Moree War Memorial Hall to pause and remember a journey that changed – and saved – the lives of Aborigines nationwide.

“Part of the reason I was there (in 1965) was because I'm a migrant myself and was seeing quite a lot of discrimination when I first came to this country,” Machteld said.

MACHTELD HALI - CONTINUED

“That gave me empathy for the plight of the Aboriginal people. I was basically a tag-along on the bus. I wasn’t one of the organizers. I was very young but went along because I believed in justice. The spirit of the 1960s was that we believed in justice, but we had no idea about what we were to encounter. “It was a shock to see the way some of the Aboriginal people were living in some of the shanty towns,” she said.

Machteld Hali chats with Moree Plains Shire mayor Susannah at the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride at Moree War Memorial Hall on Wednesday. Machteld said the highpoint of the trip happened in Moree, at the local swimming pool. A bylaw established 10 years earlier by Moree Municipal Council stated Aboriginal people were not permitted to enter to complex, known then as Moree Bore Baths.

“The climax of the whole trip was here, at the Moree swimming pool when we encountered so much anger,” Machteld said.

“There was a huge crowd of very, very angry people with boxes of eggs and tomatoes. We were pelted and driven out of town.

“But looking back, it caused a paradigm shift and there are Aboriginal women now who throw their arms around me and SAY, ‘you changed our lives, and you told us we mattered’.

“I’ve heard that so many times,” Machteld smiled.

“The Freedom Ride was instrumental in helping Aboriginal people gain some sort of identity. And, of course, there was the referendum two years later and the whole situation snowballed.”

Wednesday’s ceremony on the steps of Moree War Memorial Hall – a building Aborigines were not permitted to enter 60 years ago – brought back memories, tears and reflections of a time when Moree was divided by colour.

“Today is very much a celebration of what has been achieved. Aboriginal people have this strong sense of belonging,” Machteld said.

“But we’re not there yet. There are a lot of things that are not right, that we have to make right, and I want to be a part of that,” she said.

BETH HANSEN

Thank you & congratulations for all the organizing you've been doing to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride. The activities in Walgett & Moree were a credit to you & to the local organizing groups.

I felt very moved & at times, overwhelmed by the stories that were being told about the impact of the 1965 Freedom Ride. I really appreciate all the work that has been done since that time by local families & their friends. That's where the credit should be directed!

I'm really sorry I can't be at Bowraville on Monday. I would particularly like to acknowledge the impact on us as students of having local Aboriginal people coming out to support our peaceful protest in the street opposite the cinema. I remember so well how Ann Holten spoke out against the men who were trying to shout us down. That took strength.

That was courage. We could leave town, but she & all the others had to stay in that racist environment.

I hope you & the Bowraville Aboriginal community have successful & enjoyable times on Monday... & into the future.

Best wishes

Beth Hansen

DR LAURIE CRAWFORD

Dear Christine, Mary, and Amy,

I hope this letter finds you well and still basking in the afterglow of your most deadly, successful, and extraordinary 60th anniversary of the Freedom Ride celebrations.

I want to on behalf of me and my family, to sincerely express to you, our complete appreciation and gratitude for the care and kindness you extend to us.

What you and your band of helpers did in organising and presenting the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Ride celebration was extraordinary and deserves a full tribute of recognition, acknowledgement and appreciation. It was an outstanding accomplishment and one that you can be extremely proud of.

I know that organising and putting together an event like this takes an enormous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes that people do not see, but your admirable qualities, exceptional discipline and dedication directly contributed to presenting a deadly, successful, and impressive event.

Congratulations

Laurie Crawford

COMMENTS

MARY PURSE CHAIRPERSON OF WAMS

“The Board of Directors wish to extend their sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the work that was undertaken to ensure that the Freedom Ride commemoration was a successful event of 17 February 2025 for Walgett. Recognising the 1965 students, local people and other people involved at that time, to have a very emotional and memorable day”.

PROFESSOR AIDAN FOY 1965 STUDENT

“I was very moved by our experience yesterday and by the kindness we were shown by the WAMS team. Please thank everyone involved. My grandchildren are now agitating for a trip to Walgett to see the Garden and the town. I don't know when that will be possible, but it would be nice to have an informal visit. We took some pictures also, and we will circulate any that seem of reasonable quality.
Warm Regards,”

PROFESSOR ANN CURTHOYS 1965 STUDENT

Thank you for the brilliant photos but most of all for your role in making Monday's wonderful event happen. It was so stunning in every way, very moving, a highlight of my life.
So pleased to have met you,

ON BEHALF OF ROY BUTLER John Clements

“Great day and the Children's performances at the hall was fantastic”

CHRISTINE CORBY AM CEO OF WAMS

“I sincerely wish to thank you for your teamwork, your early starts, weekend work.

What an amazing result we had yesterday. Our hospitality was of a high quality. Our teamwork was amazing.

Your prompt responses to ensure all age groups of people to remain hydrated was commendable.

Thank you to those who prepared and packed at each of the three sites, who stood for several hours to serve.

I believe it was a lovely day. Our living history – 1965 students – their strength and determination all those years ago has shaped our community, our businesses and our people – to achieve – to leave a legacy for our future generations.
Well, done to all”

LOUANN BROWN WAMS HEALTHY FOR LIFE CO-ORDINATOR

“Just want to congratulate you on today's success,
and thanks for allowing me to be apart of the 60th anniversary.”

AMY TOWNSEND CULTURE AND HISTORY CO- ORDINATOR

“Absolutely grateful to all my colleagues for all your hard work our teams were absolutely amazing!!”

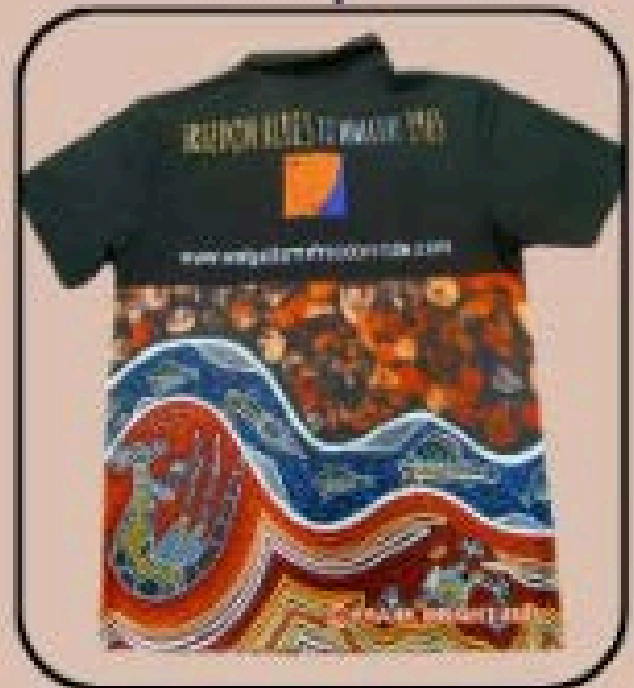
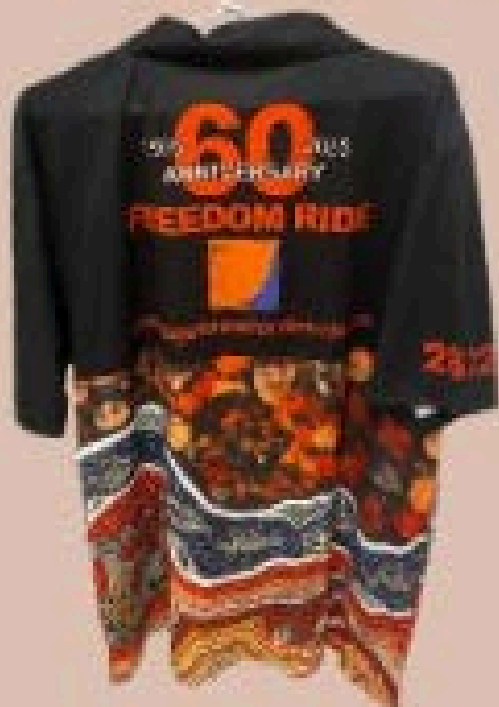
FREEDOM RIDE

Shirts for Sale!



60TH
SPECIAL
ADDITION
\$50.00

ORIGINAL
DESIGN
\$30.00

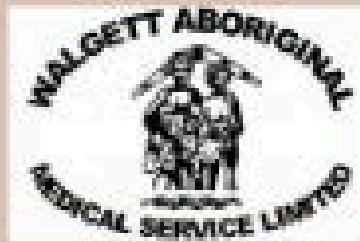


**PAYMENT OPTIONS
AVAILABLE:
EFTPOS
CASH**

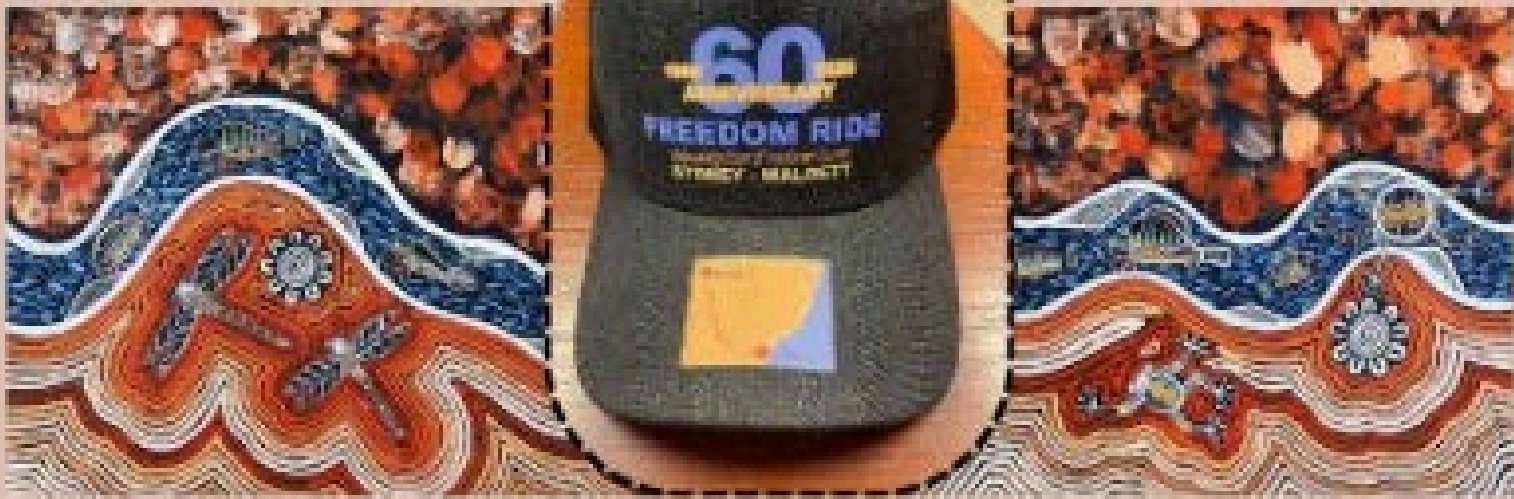
THESE UNIQUE, ONE OF A KIND DESIGNS, ARE
MACHINE WASHABLE AND MADE FROM 100%
POLYESTER NON-CREASE FABRIC.
FOR PAYMENT OPTIONS, SEND US A MESSAGE VIA
THE 'CONTACT US' PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE.
(COST IS GST INCLUSIVE)

FREEDOM RIDE

Hats
for
Sale

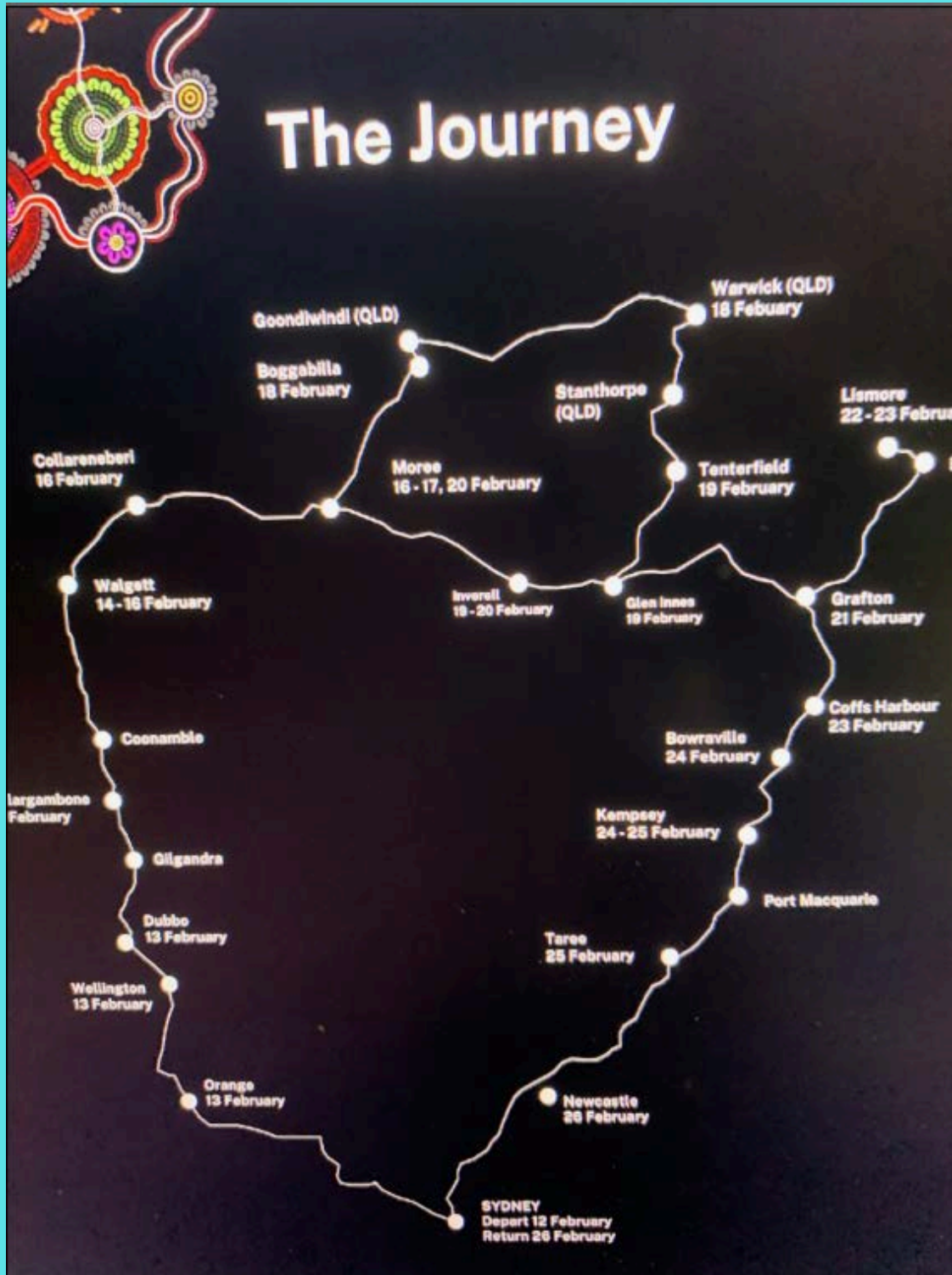


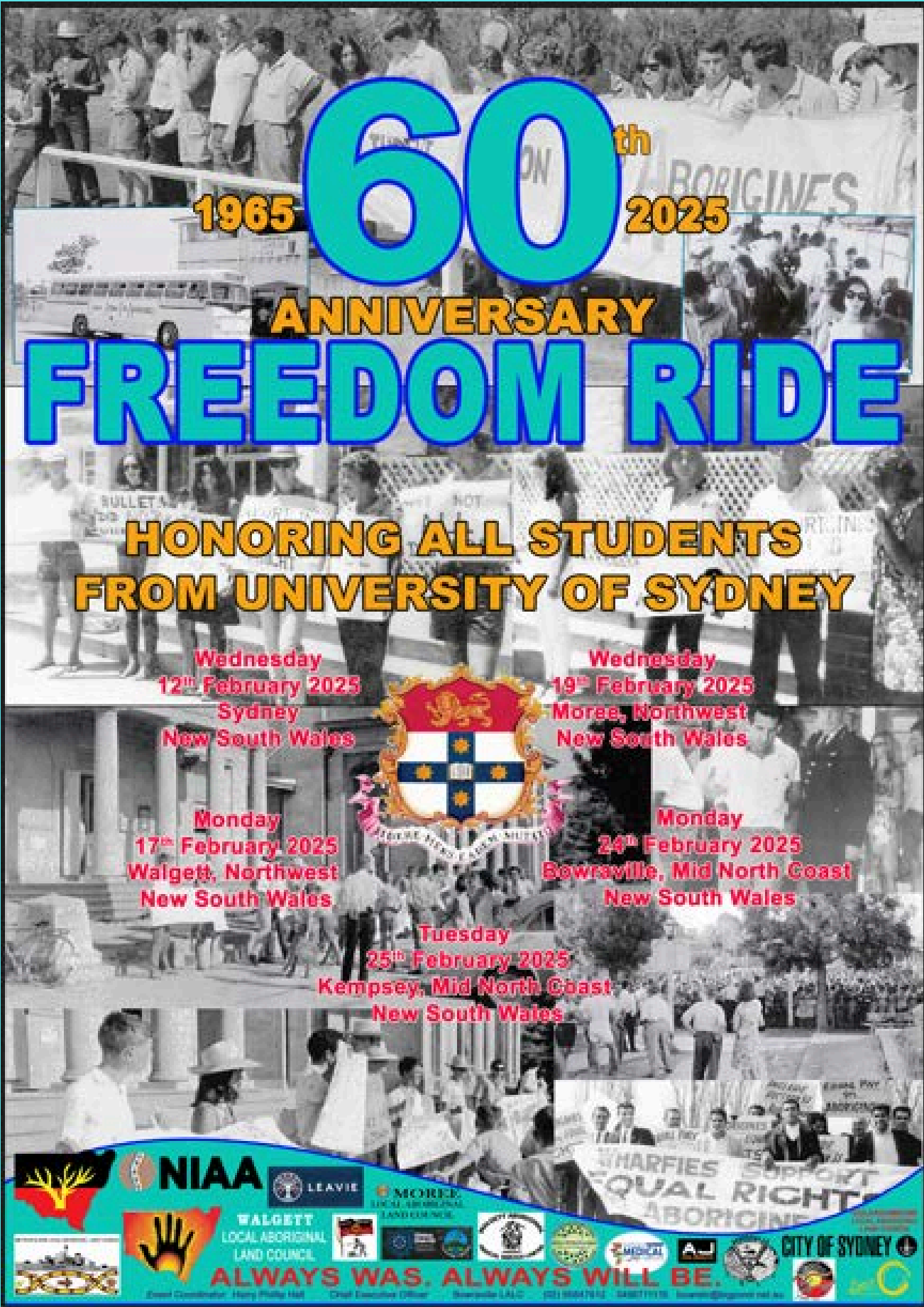
\$20.00
Each



PAYMENT OPTIONS
AVAILABLE:
EFTPOS
CASH

THE JOURNEY FROM 1965





1965 **60**th 2025

ANNIVERSARY FREEDOM RIDE

HONORING ALL STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Wednesday
12th February 2025
Sydney
New South Wales

Wednesday
19th February 2025
Murrumbidgee
New South Wales

Monday
17th February 2025
Walgett, Northwest
New South Wales

Monday
24th February 2025
Bowraville, Mid North Coast
New South Wales

Tuesday
25th February 2025
Kempsey, Mid North Coast
New South Wales

NIAA **LEAVIE** **MURUMBIDGEE LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL** **WALGETT LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL** **CITY OF SYDNEY**

ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE.

Event Coordinator: Henry Phillip Hall | Chief Executive Officer: [Name] | [Address] | [Phone] | [Email]