

## DANNY EASTWOOD'S VIEW



## A Yarn With...



### Maureen Newton

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**Favourite bush tucker?**  
Pippies and minjim berries.

**Favourite other food?**  
Any of it.

**Favourite drink?**  
Coffee.

**Favourite music?**  
Golden oldies.

**Favourite sport/leisure?**  
Walking.

**Favourite holiday destination?**  
Anywhere in Australia, in fact I am travelling across Australia in April.

**What are you reading?**  
Anything that comes across my desk.

**What are you watching?**  
I love House and Cold Case. I love mysteries.

**What is your greatest highlight in life?**  
My kids and my grandkids.

**What do you like in life?**  
Pretty much everything. I love the fresh air and whatever nature brings me.

**What don't you like?**  
The traffic and how the Gold Coast has changed and road rage.

**Who would you most like to meet?**  
If he was alive today I would like to meet Albert Namatjira. I'd also like to meet Peter Garrett because he has been passionate about the environment as long as I have.

**Who would you invite for a night around the campfire?**  
Peter Garrett, Al Gore and the Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd.

**Who or what inspires you?**  
My two daughters inspire me. Our conversation always leads me to think more about what I can do.

**What would you do to better the situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?**  
I would like to create partnerships with a couple of schools so that we can give Aboriginal students a chance to look at university because, at this point, finishing is not an option, and going to university is not even on their radar. My issues are about education and the lack of social justice for Indigenous people and the fact that the education system doesn't cater for our people.

## Quote



After five years in the court, the decision is a big disappointment given the unambiguous prior ownership of the country by Aboriginal people and the strength of their evidence of unbroken connection to the lands.

— Goldfields Land and Sea Council Executive Director Brian Wyatt, speaking on the Federal Court judgment dismissing the combined Wongatha native title claim

## Invest properly now or pay later

There are many different reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find it difficult to speak out when bad things like child sexual assault happen in our families and communities.

The reluctance to speak out rarely indicates a lack of courage. Nor does it reflect a traditional culture. As has been said many a time in the current debate: child abuse is not our way.

The picking of a scab always hurts. In the case of child sexual assault, some of the reasons why are applicable in any community. Others are either more applicable or particular to our mob.

For victims, it can be just too painful to say aloud what has happened to them. There can be feelings of guilt or a belief that they are somehow responsible or deserving of the abuse. For non-victims who report abuse, there can be a fear of the possible reaction: anger, denial, ostracism, violence, abuse. All of these do happen.

Whistleblowers, especially white ones, can be told to butt out of private black business. They can worry their suspicions are unfounded and, if spoken about, will cause unnecessary damage within a community already suffering. There can be a belief (with some justification) that nothing will be done even if they do speak out. Black whistleblowers can be blamed for the questions that (hopefully) follow a report, blaming the messenger in effect. They can be made to feel like traitors. They may also hesitate for fear of feeding into stereotypes about Aboriginal people.

Indeed, this was a consideration for the Taskforce, chaired by Marcia Ella-Duncan, which exposed the epidemic



levels of child sexual assault in New South Wales communities. It reported to the NSW Government just a couple of months after Northern Territory Prosecutor Dr Nanette Rogers went public about horrific violence against Aboriginal kids in the NT.

Before handing over its report *Breaking the Silence: Creating the Future*, the Taskforce had two months to observe the demonisation of all Aboriginal men as sexual offenders or predators. Fortunately, though, it did not let fear of stereotyping stop it from telling the truth.

When people do speak out, they need to be listened to – by communities, by government, by police, by the courts.

The problem in NSW at the moment is not that the Government is proposing to do nothing. It is that it is expecting departments and agencies to do more with what has already proved to be inadequate. Ensuring that all monies and resources are used efficiently is one thing but, given the magnitude of the problem, there just can't be that much slack.

If the Government wants the Aboriginal community to trust it with information, much of which would have been painful to extract, and its own public servants to feel that they are being supported in their very important work, this needs to be fixed.

## Unquote

Koori Mail – 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned