

# NGAARRA — Indigenous Australians and the criminal justice system

Ngaarra, a two day forum focussing on indigenous Australians and the criminal justice system, will be held as part of the 3rd Annual Garma Festival of Traditional Culture from August 23 - 24 2001.

Chief Justice Malcolm Black from the Federal Court of Australia will join other prominent members of the legal profession as speakers at the forum, including Mr Paul Chartrand from the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission in Canada, Associate Professor Chris Cunneen from the Institute of Criminology in Sydney and Mr Banambi Wunungmurra, Chair of the Miwatj Aboriginal Legal Service.

Ngaarra is a Yolngu word for a place where law is negotiated. It refers to any high level sacred ceremony or practice. The Ngaarra forum is part of the academic program of the Yothu Yindi Foundation's Garma Festival of Traditional Culture and has been sponsored by the Law Society Public Purposes Trust amongst others. The forum is also part of the ongoing development of the Garma Cultural Studies Institute.

The vision for Ngaarra is a forum for key indigenous and non-indigenous law men and women from across Australia to exchange ideas and understandings of the criminal justice system. Invited guests include Attorneys-General and Shadow Attorneys-General, Chief Justices of the judiciary at all levels of the courts, and Presidents of Law Societies and Bar Associations from all Australian states and territories.

The Ngaarra forum aims to examine some of the key criminal justice issues that affect the lives of Indigenous Australians. The forum will address issues of indigenous prison rates and sentencing patterns, alternative sentencing options, customary law, and the impact of the criminal justice system on indigenous Australians' relationship to country.

Ngaarra will be a sharing of knowledge



between Yolngu and other indigenous community members, indigenous lawyers and legal scholars, and members of the judiciary. The forum will provide an opportunity, in both a community and academic setting, for the sharing of knowledge between people from very different worlds, through a number of workshops, papers from invited speakers and panel discussions.

Yolngu and other indigenous groups will have the opportunity to advance their knowledge of, and to learn more about their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system. The learning process is designed to work two ways:

invited guests from the judiciary will in turn be exposed to Yolngu and other indigenous community views about the criminal justice system, and the way this system impacts on families and communities.

The forum is expected to have short- and long-term impacts at both a local and national level. At a local level it is expected to increase awareness and understanding among Yolngu and other Indigenous communities of their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system. At a national level, it is anticipated that the forum will attract desired long-term impact is to influence governments and the judiciary of reforms to reduce indigenous imprisonment rates, in particular to divert youth offenders from correctional facilities to more suitable programs.

Further details can be obtained from the Garma and Yothu Yindi websites: [www.garma.telstra.com](http://www.garma.telstra.com) or [www.yothuyindi.com](http://www.yothuyindi.com)

## HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR TEAM? NT BAR ASSOCIATION'S 2ND ANNUAL QUIXOTIC CHALLENGE GOLF DAY

1.30pm Friday 10 August 2001

at the

Gardens Park Golf Links, Gardens Rd, Darwin

9 hole shotgun start - Ambrose Rules

Entry fee \$30.00 per person

Non-golfers and families welcome for  
barbeque afterwards.

\$12.50 adults, kids free (Gardens has great  
facilities for kids)



RSVP to Debbie Carr, William Forster Chambers, by 31 July  
enclosing cheque, and advising handicap