

## EARLY ORGANISATIONS AND POLITICAL SITES

The reason that many Aboriginal organisations established themselves in Fitzroy is because it was the heart of the Aboriginal community and where most Aboriginal people either resided or met. It has only been recently that as organisations have moved away from Fitzroy that the Community has become decentralised.

### 1. Aborigines Advancement League Office

A forerunner to the AAL was started in 1932 by William Cooper who came to Melbourne from Cummeragunja and founded the Australian Aborigines League soon after settling in Fitzroy. This organisation later merged with the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League. The VAAL began in 1957 as a result of a report into the appalling conditions suffered by Aborigines in Western Australia's Warburton Ranges as a result of the Maralinga tests. This shocked a group of prominent residents in Melbourne into initiating the League's formal existence. It operated initially from the offices of Mrs Blackburn's peace movement, a small office in 46 Russell St Melbourne. In the early 1960's it moved into a building owned by the Presbyterian Ladies college at 320 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

1a. In 1966 the Doug Nicholls Centre was built in 58 Cunningham St Northcote. It did not move from here until the new Aborigines Advancement League was built at Watt St Thornbury in 1981.

### 2. Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

229 Gertrude St, 1973 -1979

In 1976 the Dental Service moved into 231 which had previously been the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

2a. 136 Gertrude St, 1979 -1992

2b. Currently at 186 Nicholson St

### 3. Koori Information Centre

120 Gertrude St.

Opened in 1982. It was a non-profit organisation born out of the Brisbane Commonwealth Games and the political movement of the time. Set up by Robbie Thorpe, Kelly McGuinness, Alister Thorpe, Mick Edwards, Glenda Thorpe and Gavin Brown. As a non-government funded organisation it was the first organisation to claim Aboriginal Sovereignty through the 'Pay the Rent' scheme. Its aims were to educate the broader Community about

Australian history both pre and post contact. KIC organised concerts, Sounds of Survival, Rock against Racism in the 1980's.

#### **4. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service**

Established by Bruce McGuinness, Stewart Murray, Merle Jackamos, Jim Berg, Geraldine Briggs, Bobby Lovett, Hylis Maris, Sir Douglas Nicholls, D Atkinson, Ron Merkel, Gareth Evans and Ron Casterton and others based on the model of the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service, in 1972 at 231 Gertrude St Fitzroy. Jim Berg was employed as the first field officer in February 1973.

**4a** They moved to in to the First Floor of 173 Gertrude St Fitzroy

**4b** Later moved to the Cnr Brunswick St and Princess St.

**4c** Currently at 6 Alexander Parade.

#### **5. Fitzroy Stars Gymnasium**

184 Gertrude St, Fitzroy, opened in 1988.

The Gym started due to a need for a facility for the Fitzroy Stars Football Club to train. The Fitzroy Stars developed from the Westgarth Football Club in 1977. Because so many Kooris played in the club, they decided to form their own team.

**5b.** Johnno Johnston from WA tried to start the first Gym upstairs at 173 Gertrude St, Fitzroy.

**5a.** The next gym was at 99 George St above Nindebya Workshop. It then moved to 184 Gertrude St, Fitzroy.

#### **6. Victorian Aboriginal Housing Co-op**

108 Smith St – established 1981

Aboriginal Education started here.

Bobby Lovett, Gary Murray and Teddy Lovett ran a Koori Coffee Club.

Koori Kollij also started on the two top floors.

#### **Victorian Aboriginal Housing Board**

**6a** Moved to 79 Gertrude St in 1987

**6b** In 1996 it moved to the corner of Best and Scotchmere St Nth Fitzroy.

#### **7. Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Association**

Brunswick St, next to Eastern Hill Hotel

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Placement Agency was established in 1976, founded within the framework of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

This was later changed to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. It was the first Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Australia.

They moved to 4 Brunswick Place where they were to remain until they moved to 34 Wurruk Ave Preston in 1992.

**8. Victorian Aboriginal Community Service Association Inc.**

Began 1988 and was originally established in the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care office. It moved to St Georges Rd, and then to the corner of Web and Smith St Fitzroy.

**9. Nindebya Workshop**

99 George St

Workshop where people made artefacts like boomerangs.

**10. Nindebya Shop**

179 Gertrude St, Fitzroy

Shop selling aboriginal artefacts made in the Nindebya Workshop

**11. 3CR Radio Station**

Cnr of Little Victoria and Smith St, Fitzroy

Gary Foley ran the first Aboriginal radio program from here in the early 70's. The first ever Koori broadcast was to come out of Swinburne Institute of Technology 4ZZZ, founded by Bruce McGuinness, Gary Foley and Alan Brown.

**12. Exhibition Youth Club**

New Museum Site, Nicholson St, Fitzroy.

Banjo Clarke and Alick Jackomos used to box here in the late 30's. Half a dozen young Aboriginal kids learnt boxing and wrestling here.

**13. Academy of Mary Immaculate School**

School where Aboriginal Children went.

**14. Brotherhood of St Laurence**

67 Brunswick St Fitzroy

A place of importance, especially for the Aboriginal families of the 30's, as it was a place where food and clothing was handed out.

**15. Victorian Aboriginal Funeral Service**

664 – 666 Smith Street, Clifton Hill

**16. Aboriginal Opportunity Shop**

381 Brunswick St (now Complete Buyers)

Shop run by Gladys Nichols and Sissy Onus to raise money for the Advancement League.

**17. Site of the Old Fitzroy Stadium.**

St David St and Brunswick St, (north-east corner)

A place where there were there was a lot of wrestling and boxing happened in the late 30's. Pastor Doug Nicholls fought a twelve round fight here when he was travelling with Jimmy Sharmans boxing troupe in 1932.

**18. Site of the New Fitzroy Stadium**

Cnr of Gore St and Johnston St, Fitzroy

Opened in 1939 as a place where Aboriginal people boxed. A man named Sterley Davis was the manager, he later became the Mayor of Fitzroy. Henry Banjo Clarke, Freddy Bloomfield and Alick Jackomos fought there.

**19. Gladys Nicholls Hostel**

56 Cunningham St, Northcote

The building was built 20-25 years ago to house Aboriginal girls who were coming to Melbourne for employment. The first building was an old Church of England manse that was given to a committee formed in the mid 50's called the Aboriginal Girls Hostel Committee.

**20. Mirimbiak Nations Aboriginal Corporation**

412 Johnston St, Fitzroy

The Mirimbiak Nations Aboriginal Corporation was incorporated as an Aboriginal Association in September 1995 in response to the Native Title Act of 1992. They lodged their first claim in October 1995.

**21. Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation**

5- 7 Smith St, Fitzroy

**22. George Wright Hostel**

George St, Fitzroy

**23. Koori Kollij**

Cambridge St, Collingwood

**24. Old Employment Office**

Cnr Smith St and Langridge

**25. Gertrude St, Fitzroy (no photograph)**

In front of 136 Gertrude St – site of the beginnings of many marches and demonstrations often organised by the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee