

problems in present day. You can see the difference in them. One good thing for us was that our dad always had work, be it seasonal, or at the paper mill, or even working on the Avon Dam up here (on the Woronora Plateau) when it was first being constructed. Dad was living away from home up in the Windang Caravan Park when he worked on the dam and mum was at Falls Creek (with us kids). Once in a blue moon she'd go up on the steam train to see him. I think we were very lucky not to have been taken when we were kids too because you see the pain and sorrow in all the ones that were. And working with them is very sad and hard.

## I lost my father at seventeen

I wouldn't change a thing from my own childhood. I reckon I had a fantastic childhood, parents and family. Because dad never left us out, he always had time to take us places. Weekends were our time, and dad left that open for us. I lost my father when I was seventeen.

And that was when we also lost contact with the Thomas mob in Victoria (dad's mob). We were only young at the time and mum hadn't been over there that many times with dad. She never had a car and she couldn't drive you see. Mum was from Nowra and her family lived on an 80 acre property that my grandmother and grandfather owned. I remember this one time when we lived there with them, it was just before summer, we had to do these burn-off across all the top of the property because it was just total bush. My mother's brothers were timber cutters and they used to cut logs from the property. But I remember nan would be up there getting the witchetty grubs and throwing them on the coals. Another good thing about living up there was that we could run through the property. We knew what bush food to eat and it was always available in abundance up there. We had the sort of freedom that our kids today haven't got any more. And a lot of them don't know anything about their people either. We've even got a lot to learn ourselves.



## Now I've got grandkids and an extended family

When I got out of fourth form at high school, I met my husband Sonny Brown, he was a Kempsey man. That's when I started coming up to the Wollongong area. I'm still living here now although I'd really like to be in the bush again! I've had to rear all my kids of course. I'd planned on having a big family, so I had five kids and now I've got fifteen grandkids. But then there were all our extra kids; our nieces and nephews and grandnieces and grandnephews, we're still all rearing them between us. That's why it's important to have extended family and kinship systems. And the respect for elders is so important. Our children all went to school here; Bomaderry, Koonawarra, Kemblawarra and Port Kembla (High School). I love all my family and I treasure every moment I have with them.

## We all recycled and it was good

Since I've been at Coomaditchie I've learned to be a recycler<sup>3</sup>. And it's a good area and a good way for our kids to earn pocket money too. In my time we did a lot of seasonal work. But you can't do that here. So while my kids were growing up we used the household council tip and then the steel works tip to look for things to recycle. The recycling work came in handy because our kids were

earning their own pocket money. They grew to know every metal that was worth any money. They didn't have to steal or do anything else to get money because the tips were always there. For the first few years, and right up until nearly 1993, we were working odd jobs at Coomaditchie to keep it clean. We were doing all the recycle work at the tip, that's before it was covered in.

We used to be called all sorts of rough names over at there at the tip too. Other than that little problem, which we ignored, we were just mums or grandmas or aunts, trying to earn a little money and do the right thing. A lot of us women had never done much in the community and we weren't involved with the school at that stage, so cleaning up Coomaditchie was a positive thing.

## Our school principal had vision and it made a difference

When a new principal, Mr. Peters, came to Kemblawarra School, he changed the whole outlook for Aboriginal kids and their mums. He actually walked over to Coomaditchie and said that he'd like to have a yarn to us. Him doing that meant a lot to us and opened the gates to us Kooris to be involved in the school. At the time he visited we were painting our fences at Coomaditchie. After seeing the murals, he said that he'd like us to design murals for a big wall over at the school. So we did the big mural over there at Kemblawarra School and after that our careers as artists really took off.

Mr. Peters has created a school that is an example for people who want to work with Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal kids. Now our kids have got three CDs out, they're getting up and singing. They're not just Koori kids singing they're kids from all different cultures. So our little school is a multi-cultural school and it's fantastic. We also had the best high school. The kids were really close to each other and I've never seen a high school like it since.



## Our kids are learning to make it a better world

When we were going to school, it was just like black fellas-white fellas. To see all the different cultures at Port Kembla school has been really good. A lot of the kids had to fight their way (to acceptance) in there, but they've got there now. The kids got on fantastic and they're still friends today, out of school friends. It's really good for them to understand and respect each other's culture. And it is the youth of today, they are the ones who can break racism down, that's if they're not brainwashed by people who have racist and biased attitudes. Hopefully we'll get some more tolerant adults and we might have a better world.

## Art gave us a new direction

Before we became an artists' group we had our off campus courses. Sue Edmonds, who was working on the book *Noogaleek*, helped us with our art. She was coming around to Koori communities and recording people's stories. Sue came back to our place and started working with us. She came out with paints and brushes because she wanted to know how she could start another kind of conversation with us; she wanted to be here to mix in with us.

**Opposite left:** Coomaditchie Lagoon.

**Above:** Lorraine next to one of her murals at Coomaditchie.



## We regenerated our bush area around Coomaditchie

A friend of Sue's, Tina Bain, was a bush regeneration person who taught the off-campus horticulture course. We asked her about creating jobs for us because none of us were employed at the time. We wanted to create jobs and to keep our horticulture course going. We also wanted to restore the area around Coomaditchie lagoon because it was pretty neglected. We were concerned about a track near the lagoon that everyone, including the kids, used as a short cut, but it was pretty dangerous because you couldn't see snakes. We asked Tina to help us to landscape our own place around the lagoon. All of us Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation (CUAC) women were involved in the design of the park; the cementing, the regeneration of the bush, and the artwork that's on the path. For our bush regeneration classes they took us for walks through the National Parks, to places like Minnamurra, Fitzroy Falls, and all around the Jervis Bay area. They took us on bus tours with TAFE, introduced us to all the different forms of art in Sydney and Aboriginal art in the galleries. These activities opened our eyes to different kinds of art works. We achieved our goals through having two very strong women who stood beside us. They opened our eyes to a lot of different things that we'd never been involved in or interested in before, put time and effort into us and helped us to create CUAC. So I thank them dearly.

## We found support for our work

To create our work and receive grants for the jobs that we wanted to do around our lagoon, our organisation had to become registered. So that's how the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation came to be formed. After we became a registered organisation we hit all the government departments for funding and all the local businesses for in-kind services. BHP designed our mural cover, the

steps and the mural stand, which is really great. Cleary Brothers and Glennos Constructions donated all the cement between them and little buggies to clear the bush. Wollongong City Council has backed us. We became well known as an Aboriginal bush regeneration group, which introduced and connected us to a lot of different people from different parts of business. All that networking over the years has helped us to survive up until now because people have and looked at our work and backed our projects.

## The Aboriginal Advancement League met here

The Port Kembla Heritage Park has involved Aboriginal people in the last few years which is good because a lot of Kooris worked on the wharves and a lot of the miners helped Aboriginal people get their rights. The CUAC hall is where the first South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League<sup>4</sup> had their meetings and started fighting for Koori's rights in the Illawarra. People like Uncle Fred Moore from the Miners and Trades and Labour Unions, Auntie Mary Davis, Uncle Bobby (Brown) and Auntie Linda (Cruse) have all been fighting for the rights of Aboriginal people in this area.

It's been good living in Wollongong. It's been good for us as women. It's been good for us as parents. But for my older life I'd like to go back to the bush.

1 Cootamundra Girl's Home, established in 1911, was the first of the homes for Aboriginal children set up by the Aborigines Protection Board. Cootamundra Girl's Home took Aboriginal Girl's sent there by the Protection and Welfare Boards who were then trained as domestic servants and were sent out to work for middle class white families.

2 In 1924, the Aborigines Protection Board opened the Kinchela Boy's Home. At the home they had the 'official' purpose of providing training for Aboriginal Boy's between the ages of five and fifteen. Boy's were taken from their families by the State from all over New South Wales.

3 Coomaditchie is an area of Aboriginal owned housing situated at Kemblawarra.

4 The group fought for Aboriginal rights, rights against discriminatory unemployment relief system, the increases in APB powers and the appalling conditions on APB stations and reserves.

*Opposite left: Coomaditchie Lagoon art poles.*





*I've had a long journey. I've toured all around New South Wales for the Health Department doing courses out to Darlington Point, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo.*

## I was born in Casino

The name on my birth certificate is Maryann Kathleen Drumbly. I was born in Casino in 1939. My dad's name was James McGrath and my mother's name was Emily Drumbly McGrath. There were four children in the family. I've been down here for 44 years now and I live out in Flinders, it's a new suburb of Shellharbour. You've got Aboriginal people living every where down here out at Dapto, Koonawarra and as far out as Bulli, Berkeley, Unanderra, Figtree, Barrack Heights and Warilla.

## Starting out in Casino and Nambucca

Our family, mum and dad and my two brothers, moved to Nambucca Heads when I was very young. I can only remember being at Nambucca in those early years. I had a third brother in the Navy and we only lost him about four years ago (2000). We grew up and went to school at Stuart Island, at Nambucca Heads with our McGrath relatives and didn't know anywhere else. But it's like here in Wollongong, a lot of the Kooris living here lived like we did in Nambucca, we all lived on the riverbank and around the

surrounding waterside. In Nambucca Heads we lived under the cutting there, where they made the road into Stuart Island. Cars used to only come across on golf days, but before that there was no traffic. You could walk across the mouth of the Nambucca River at low tide or swim across from where we lived. Our house was built of recycled timber and corrugated iron. I went to school with the Marshalls, Mumblers, Davis', Smiths, Bryants, Lardners, Jarretts and Edwards'. We grew up with the Donovans but they went to the Catholic schools at Nambucca and Macksville.

## Beautesert, Urunga and Cabbage Tree

When I was nine or ten my mother died and for a while I continued to live with my father. But later the Welfare Board made us kids Wards of the State and an Auntie took us to Beautesert (Qld) to live with our Drumbly aunts and grandfather on our mother's side. After that we lived with the Boney family at Urunga<sup>1</sup> for two years. When things got hectic at Urunga I went to live with and care for an elderly lady Granny Kapeen and went to school at Cabbage Tree Island<sup>2</sup>. She got too old for me to be able to look after her so I then went to live with my auntie and uncle Gladys and Henry Kelly (see *Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Nambucca*). It was good living

on Cabbage Tree because the school was there and there was a women's softball team. I finished my schooling at Ballina High School. We would catch a boat across the Richmond River to get to the bus to go to school.

## Housework, milking cows and looking after kids

I left school to go to work when I was just sixteen on a farm outside Casino doing housework, milking cows and looking after kids.

I worked for nothing. I never got paid for it. I went back to Cabbage Tree Island but the (mission) Manager said that there was another job for me at Kogarah (in Sydney). A group of us girls came down to Sydney together and we all worked in North Shore houses as domestic servants. I worked for nearly two years for these Jewish people and then went back to my Auntie's house at Alexandria. I met one of the girls I knew up the street who told me that her boss was looking for someone like me for a job, so I started work at Darling Point.

My brother was taken away to Kinchela Boy's Home after my mother died and then sent to work on a farm at Denman (near Muswellbrook). I hadn't seen him since he was taken away, but my family (dad, auntie and uncle) had found him again. My Auntie didn't say anything about my brother being at their house but she knew that I was coming out to visit for the day. We had an emotional reunion.

## We lived in a car

When I came down to Wollongong I started living with my partner at the Official Camps<sup>3</sup>. My husband, my son and myself, we all lived in a car to begin with. That was how we lived. We were happy in those days. Everyone was happy because there was no money involved. Later we moved to Coomaditchie and then into the bigger houses. But even after you've left the old places, you still call the Official



Camps area your home. I had another two children after we left Coomaditchie. Three boys and two girls altogether. Four of my children were born in the Wollongong Hospital. One boy died and the

eldest girl now lives in Kyogle but the others are still in Wollongong.

## Selling scraps from the Port Kembla stack

Before they built the stack out at Port Kembla<sup>4</sup> there was an old quarry there. There where the Kemblawarra soccer field is today was a big tip in the old days. A lot of Koori men worked on the Port Kembla stack too. People used to go where the stack was being built, to the tip, to get the copper and brass scraps to sell. Some men also worked in the mines, with the Water Board, or as wharfies. Now many of those jobs have gone. The miners and the wharfies have all contributed to and helped the Aboriginal people in this area.

## Fighting for our rights

My husband was a wharfie which got him involved with the Trades and Labour Council in Wollongong. The Trade Union did a lot for Aboriginal people especially through the Women's Auxiliary. Their involvement led to the formation of the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League<sup>5</sup>. We did a lot of travelling to Canberra for rights: fishing rights, the right to walk into pubs, the right to even walk into shops, all of that.

Dorothy and Mary Noel used to babysit my son Wal when we went to Canberra. Kooris from all over Australia went there. Auntie Dolly (Elizabeth) Henry, Mary (Noel) and Dorothy's mother were living in a tent at the Official Camps and we lived in a car. There were also



the Browns, McGradys, and Roy Burns and Jack Tattersall living at the Official Camps, they all worked towards forming the Aborigines Advancement League.

## We got the houses there at Coomaditchie

We did lots of agitating and won the right to put up the houses at Coomaditchie. Mr. Rex Connors was the Member for Wollongong and we worked with him. We also

worked with the Lord Mayor Tony Bevan. In the midst of it all we have dealt with five different Lord Mayors. The houses were built and some Aboriginal families were lucky enough to move in. Our family moved to Koonawarra into a bigger place.

## Marching with the unions

We'd have a May Day march in Sydney (to celebrate the eight-hour working day). We'd march down the street with all the Unions here in Wollongong. Our placards used to say 'Land Rights', 'Better Education', 'Housing', 'Health' and 'Employment'. About fifty Aboriginal people used to march kids and all. There were all kinds of people marching with us, coal miners, seamen, all nationalities. We started from the Trades and Labour Council Building on Burelli Street, near Station Street, and then walked into Crown Street and (along Corrimal Street) to Stuart Park. Mary's sister Dorothy, her twin, was our May Day Queen.

**Opposite left:** Port Kembla featuring the Port Kembla stack middle left.

**Above left:** Auntie Mary before her trip to Russia.

**Above right:** Members of the south coast Aboriginies Advancement League in Canberra on the steps of Old Parliament House, Easter 1962. L to R: Fred Moore, Aunty Olga Booth, Jock Delaney, Aunty Elizabeth (Dolly) Henry, Aunty Mary and Uncle Bob Davis.



## Debs in Canberra

Two of the Illawarra girls went to make their debut with Prime Minister Gorton<sup>6</sup>. Their photos were in the *Dawn* magazine. That was an Aborigines Welfare Board magazine that had photographers going about taking pictures of Aboriginal people in the early days.

## The Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation

The Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation (IAC) has been going for 24 years now. It was started by a group of women who wanted to have somewhere to work and where we could help our people. We used to just meet in each other's homes before it was established. The department of Aboriginal Affairs came to the party with money to buy the premises. The building was started in March 2001 and I'm hoping it'll be here for another 100 years. Kooris like things that make it feel like home, so we told the decorators to go for Koori designs in the whole building.

1 Urunga is a northern NSW coastal town situated between Nambucca Heads and Coffs Harbour.

2 Cabbage Tree Island is an island in the Richmond River that was a Government Reserve (52180/81) and is now Aboriginal land.

3 A reserve at Port Kembla between Hill 60 and Coomaditchie.

4 BHP steel work's chimney stack.

5 Aboriginal Advancement League fought for Aboriginal rights in employment and wages and for improved conditions on Aboriginal stations and reserves.

6 Sir John Grey Gorton was the 19th Prime Minister of Australia serving from December 1967 to March 1971.





*From the age of five years I was harvesting the shellfish.  
And I collected pippis, mussells, and oysters too.*

## There was so much sea food around

I am the eldest of the five Davis girls. My father, Jim Davis, taught me to dive. I was about the age of eleven when Dad taught me how to get the abalone from around the rocks, out around Hill 60. He taught me to use a mask and snorkel.

## Nowadays you have to go way out to get a feed

We used to get our pipis and mutton fish (abalone) from out at Hill 60 too.

There's hardly any mutton fish around here at all now. Now you have to go right out to sea. We also collected conks and periwinkles from around the shoreline.

From the age of five years I was harvesting the shellfish and I collected pipis, mussels, and oysters too.



## We'd take a boat out to Koonawarra

I can remember we'd go out in the boat towards Koonawarra to get the bimbles. They're really big down there. You get heaps of bimbles along the shore. You can feel for them with your feet among the weeds. We had a lot of good times.

**Opposite left:** Back left clockwise; Kim, Louise, Karen, Sharmaine and Sheryl.  
**Right:** Louise's Father, Jim Davis.





## Nowadays there are restrictions

You have to go further away now to get a good feed and to get to your special harvesting spot. And there are also restrictions. You're only allowed thirty pipis per person per day. When we were young we'd only ever take as much as we needed for that night's feed or as a feed for the next day.

My eldest two kids are really good divers now days. So I've passed that knowledge on to them.

**Opposite left:** Rock Platform at Hill 60, one of the places where Louise's family harvested seafood.

**Above left:** Muriel, Jim holding Louise, Terry Bell and Margaret Wilson holding Kim.

**Above right:** Louise and her sister Kim.





*I love Wollongong and I love the sea. When I was really little I didn't play with dolls,  
I pushed live lobsters around in a doll's pram.*

## My grandmother was Violet Carriage

I was born in Wollongong Hospital in 1958. The address on my birth certificate is 14 Official Camps, Port Kembla.

On my grandmother Olga's side of the family there is a tradition of Aboriginal customs passed down through the generations to the eldest daughter of the family. My grandmother, Violet Carriage was a Queen and she passed that down to Olga Stewart, from there it went to Thelma Brown and hopefully it'll be passed down to me, Susan Henry.

## Nan Dolly Campbell

I was told that all dad's sisters were wagging school, in the bean paddocks and at the seasonal camps. But my young uncle dobbed them all in to the truancy officer. Apparently the kids hid under mattresses and got kapok stuck all over their faces. When the truancy officer came looking for them my nan, Dolly Campbell, fired a shotgun into the air. From then on everyone went to school but at the time everyone just ran.

**Opposite left:** Baby Sue at Official Camps, c. 1959.

**Right:** Lake Illawarra at Kemblawarra, looking accross at Primbee.



## Grandfather Brown

I was told that my Grandfather Brown would walk all the way from Nowra to Windang at low tide. That's Windang, where the Commonwealth Development Employment program is today. That was a traditional meeting place in traditional times. Before Windang Bridge was built, the men used to watch the sharks come in the channel at the entrance (of Lake Illawarra) and they'd time the sharks so that they could swim across and no-one would get eaten. My grandfather used to do a lot of seafood fishing. Windang used to be crystal clear back then. You could see the sand and everything.



## Dad was a worker

Dad used to go out cutting trees. One time a whole heap of logs rolled down the hill and he was pinned under one. There was a big tiger snake next to him and he held that in one hand. He must have passed out and when he woke up again the snake was still in his hand. It never bit him. He ended up having plates put into his ribs. That happened down the coast somewhere.

## Seasonal work

My grandmother Dolly Henry (nee Campbell) was the leader. If she was moving to go to a place to do seasonal work then the whole lot followed. It's the way it was for years. The family all travelled together. My parents used to go after seasonal work because it was hard for them to get jobs in those days. Our families had a big camp oven and we used to cook everything in the camp oven on the open fire. They cooked up meals for everybody. The women all took it in turns to do the cooking for the lot in one hit. We mainly headed down to Bega pea picking and bean picking. I think they went over to Port Augusta (South Australia) and did some picking over there too.

## I was puzzled on how Santa found us

I've been all over the place. As kids we slept in the back of an old ute and I'd wake up every morning at a different town. It was always a surprise. When we were travelling we used to play with our dolls. You used to push a button on the doll and it would bend over. They didn't have clothes when you got them and so my nan used to make little dresses for them on an old pedal sewing machine. She used to make our clothes with that sewing machine too. I can remember waking up one morning early when we were on the road and found that I had a Christmas stocking full of lollies. It really puzzled me that Santa could have known that we were camped there on the side of the road.

I was taught to swim in the Bega River. It was ankle deep and they threw me in to swim or drown. I could have stood up. All that panicking over nothing! At Bega we were camped all the time in the bush. We ate little red berries no bigger than your thumbnail that come out in October and went right through to December. They are the most beautiful fruit I ever tried. I did see some at them in the back of Shellharbour hospital. A couple of trees grow there and I'm waiting on them to see if they get fruit.

## Official Camps

My grandmother Olga was born at Durras Lake. She was on the old camps at Kemblawarra and had a really nice old place near the lagoon. We loved taking peaches from her peach tree and she would be continually hunting us away from it with a straw broom. Her address is stated on my birth certificate, 14 Official Camps, Port Kembla.

## I pushed lobsters around in my little pram

When I was very young I didn't play with dolls. I pushed live lobsters around in a pram. Dad used to walk behind me and say that he had to bath them now. I remember the big sand hills at Coomaditchie. We used to get old car bonnets and fly down the hills there.



They were like big slippery dips. I used to sit for hours with dad up there. I used to help him knit the fishing nets too. He taught me all of that.

I used to have to go to Mrs. Carlin's store, which used to be the old Post Office at Kemblawarra. I went up with a coupon book and got it stamped for the sugar, the bread and the milk and half a pound of dripping so our parents could make candles because we had no electricity then. I went to the corner shop when the five and twenty cent pieces came in and they were changing money over; pennies

for one-cent pieces and I didn't want to part with mine<sup>1</sup>. I thought she was ripping me off! I remember when *David Jones* was built and they had the fountain at the back. We used to go over on weekends and swim in it. People used it as a wishing well so we always had plenty of pocket money! We used to put faces on the old dolly pegs<sup>2</sup> and wrap a little bit of material round them. Mum would be asking where all her pegs were and we'd have them all made into little dolls! And we had the best bonfires

on Cracker Night<sup>3</sup>. Everyone would put in food and fireworks and all the Aboriginal people would get together for one big fire.



## We had a natural spring at Coomaditchie

One of the lagoons around Coomaditchie has a natural spring and that's where we got all our fresh water from. To reach the island, we used to make canoes out of an old sheet of tin, just folded up at the sides and the holes filled in with soap. We'd row there and back with a bit of wood real quick before it sunk! I was brought up on rabbit, but I won't eat it today! And kangaroo is a bit too rich for

**Opposite left:** Sue's Parents, Herbert 'Dickie' and Thelma Henry.

**Above left:** Sue with her cousin Allen Gowan and Father Christmas, first Official Camps Christmas Party.

**Above right:** Sue's Grandfather William Brown at Barrack Heights.

me too. We had damper all the time, cooked in the ashes, which is the best way to have it. I love it with treacle. We used to have that running down our faces all the time. We were forever into the condensed milk, sucking on the can. And I was brought up on seafood. I've never grown out of loving to eat seafood. I still love it. My favourite is pipis.

## My childhood years were pretty full

I used to always go over to the Moore's house at Dapto. I attached myself to them and they used to treat me like their daughter. They would pick me up from Coomaditchie and take me to their house. They got everything running and put on Christmas parties for the kids at Coomaditchie. When we were kids we used to want to be singers. I can remember standing on the old cars up the hill at the back of Coomaditchie with tin drums. We probably sounded like a bunch of cats crying. I spent most of my time at Port Kembla pool. We were there from the time we got out of bed until nearly dark. We didn't have to pay back then. The manager was really good to all the Koori kids. He'd even bring us some food during the day if we had nothing to eat. The health nurse, Old Mrs. Davis used to come around to Coomaditchie and she'd have us all lined up for our medicines and worming tablets. We used to see the car coming and we'd run for the hills because we knew what was coming.

## My grandmother did shell work

Grandmother Elizabeth (Henry) was always into the shell work. She made some beautiful stuff out of shells; little shoes, maps of Australia and a big Sydney Harbour Bridge. We learned to sew from her. My other grandmother Olga (Brown) taught us how to cook; pineapple pies and fruit salad pies. I've just recently given the recipe to my sister and to my son, passing it down in the family. Mum's father's mother was Lena Hoskins and she lived down the track a bit further from Nanna Olga. I remember her from when I was a little girl. I've never seen a photo of her but there's a picture of her face still in my memories.



## I went to three different primary schools

I went to three different primary schools; Bega public school, Eden public school and Kemblawarra from first year right up to when I went to Port Kembla High when mum and dad settled on Coomaditchie. We were there right up until I turned 16. There was a lot of racism in school.

## The facts of life

Mum never told us about the facts of life. The only thing she ever said was, "Stay away from boys, they do bad things." So I used to dress like a boy, in jeans and big jumpers so you couldn't see my breasts, and with a beanie over my head. I was really scruffy and I used to be always playing cricket, doing boys things for that reason. She had us so terrified of them.

## Employment

My first job was in the glove factory at Port Kembla. I went from there to Crystals clothes factory in Wollongong. Then to Mitfords in Berkeley, which is a Bingo hall now. From there I went to the Bonds factory down at Warilla. After that I did brickie's labouring. I helped

at the Keiraville Women's Refuge for six months too. The last job I had was nursing at Mayflower Nursing Home. I was there for four years.

## Going bush

My father was really good friends with tribal people from way out west. They attended his funeral service and played the didgeridoo and gave him a proper traditional funeral when he died. They put head beads on top of his coffin and said something in language that I couldn't understand. When they lowered the coffin two black crows came out screaming at each other. To me that was my father leaving because he always said he'd come back as a bird. You always go away from your own place but there's something about it that draws you back. I love Wollongong and I love the sea. When I lost my father, I had to get away to grieve and the only way I could do my grieving was in the bush. We lived at Tanja for four years in an old tin humpy on 205 acres. I was washing by hand in the creek. It was great. You're better off in the bush. I didn't want to come back but my illness brought me back. I got Ross River fever while I was in Bega, and after I came back home I got lupus (a month ago). I've also had a pituitary gland operation but that's all fine now. But now I'm on the Koori medicine and I feel one hundred percent better.

My dream now is to live on a farm. I've got seven dogs. When I was living in the bush I found a sugar glider that was no bigger than my thumb, so I took it to the vet and they told me that it was too small to survive because there was no teat small enough to feed it. But I raised it until it had its last look at us and left. He ate nothing but Nutrigrain breakfast cereal for the whole time we raised him and not the no-name brand either, it was the expensive one! I'd love to work for WIRES<sup>4</sup> with animals.



1 Decimal currency was introduced to Australia on 14 February 1966 to simplify monetary calculations, dollars and cents replacing pounds, shillings and pence.

2 Old fashioned wooden clothes pegs having two prongs and no spring.

3 5th November, Guy Fawkes Night in memory of Guy Fawkes attempt to blow up the British Houses of Parliament in 1605.

4 WIRES stands for the NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service and provides a network of volunteers to rescue and rehabilitate native animals when they are injured or orphaned.

*Opposite left: Sue's Grandmother Olga Brown (nee Stuart).*

*Above: Sue and sister Tracey at Barrack Heights.*

