

Mam-gun Mungguy-wun  
Ierr-nyarrang M...uk



Mia Christophersen, Preston Lee and Jamie Ah Fat

# 20 years of the Barunga Statement: Barunga Festival

It's on again!... Preparations for the annual Barunga Festival are in full swing, with 2008 marking the 23rd anniversary of one of the Northern Territory's biggest and most historic cultural festivals.

To ensure the event goes off with a minimum of fuss, the Jawoyn Association in Katherine has engaged the services of a full time festival coordinator to oversee this year's event.

"What makes this year's festival even more special than most is the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Barunga Statement\*, Lisa Mumbin, Chairperson of the Jawoyn Association said.

"It's one of the Territory's premier festivals, its being going for 23-years, [and] this year is the 20th anniversary of the Barunga Statement which was presented to former Prime Minister, Bob Hawke."

As always, there will be plenty of sporting and cultural events to involve visitors and locals alike.

Enjoying success at last year's event, festival organisers have

once again joined forces with the Road Safety Division Drink Safe coordinators to encourage local, regional and interstate bands to compose a song promoting safe driving and road safety and to enter these songs into the Road Safety Song Competition warning of and encouraging people not to drink and drive.

This year will also see the introduction of a bungul competition for traditional dance troupes.

The introduction of a community forum in 2008 is a new initiative by the organising team, but one festival coordinator, Mia Christophersen, believes may be relevant given events in the Northern Territory during the past 10-months.

"Considering that last year Northern Territory communities were placed under the intervention, we are having a forum this year that will look at the past 20-years; what has been achieved; what has been lost; what has been gained; and what has been removed from Aboriginal communities," Mia

said.

"Considering what was written in the [Barunga] Statement, I think it is going to be a pretty interesting forum."

This year's festival is dedicated to Ngamutjulu Ngal Bagala (Wynjorrotj) and Ngapunun Bokmarnde (Andrews), two senior Jawoyn elders who have passed away since the 2007 festival.

[\* ... The Barunga Statement is a document presented in 1988 to the then Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, outlining Aboriginal peoples desires to have their rights recognised formally within the Australian Constitution. The document also called on the Australian Government to support Aborigines in the development of an International Declaration of Principles for Indigenous Rights, leading to an International Covenant. It also called on the Commonwealth Parliament to negotiate a Treaty or Compact recognising prior ownership; continued occupation and sovereignty; and affirming human rights and freedoms.]

**23<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL BARUNGA FESTIVAL**  
**6-9 JUNE 2008**