



## Commemorative naming form

Background information - proposed geographical name commemorating a person

If any details are unavailable, please explain.

Proposed geographical name

Full name of the person being commemorated

Who suggested this name

Date of birth  Date of death

Occupation

Last residence

Person's association with the feature to be named and main contribution(s) to local community  
(Limit of 1800 characters. If insufficient space please attach separate page to the Commemorative naming form)

SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

Source of above information

SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

SUBMIT

Please attach any supporting documents to your email

# BILLINUDGEL PUBLIC SCHOOL

1893 - 1993

## The First One Hundred Years

Written and Compiled  
By  
Harvey Gardiner and Terry Timms

In association with  
The Billinudgel Centenary Committee  
Spencer Jones, President      Jane Nolan, Secretary  
Margaret Enright, Treasurer



1955

*Back Row (L to R): Wayne Simpkins, Bob Bellear, Darryl Beaumont. Third Row: Dorris Bellear, Janice Gardiner, Margaret Ginger, D. Holder, Yvonne Schweitzer, Pam Walsh, Mavis Cason. Second Row: ———, Dianne Ginger, ———, Roslyn Ginger, Anne Schweitzer, Terry Bellear, ———, Cheryl Simpkins. Front: Barbara Sharpe, Joe Fitzpatrick, Allan Cason, Robyn Gardiner.*

Bob was born at Murwillumbah and grew up at New Brighton (near to the oval) where he went to Billinudgel Public School. When playing rugby league for the school their guernseys were made from corn sacks, his boots being barefeet. (Annex 1 )

During his time at New Brighton he would swim in the local pool (north arm of the Brunswick River) and kick the football in the open area across the road from the present New Brighton shop. He would also collect pipis from New Brighton beach which he used as bait to catch fish in the local area.

Bob went to Mullumbimby High School in 1957 to 1961. He was a good all round sportsman, representing his school in rugby league, cricket and athletics and became house captain (Acacia House). He was in the High School Cadets (rising to the rank of Corporal), and also a member of the Brunswick Heads Surf Life Saving Club. (Annex 2)

In 1960 he represented Mullumbimby Rugby Leagues Club in the Under 18's when the club won all three grade grand finals. ( Annex 3. )

Bob left school in 1961 and joined the Navy in July of that year. He was a stoker and studied Mechanical Engineering where he attained the rank of Petty Officer (he was the first indigenous person to achieve this). He was also qualified in Clearance Diving, Bricking and Lagging.

He was a champion Rugby Union player for the Navy representing establishments H.M.A.S. Cerberus, Kuttabul and the ships H.M.A.S. Anzac, Sydney, Hobart and went on to represent the Navy against Army and Air Force.

Bob married Kaye in 1966, ( the beginning of a formidable team ) that would face head on the many struggles that lay ahead. He left the Navy in 1968.

Whilst working in the Redfern area Bob and Kaye would constantly see the intimidation and harassment of the aboriginal community and he decided he would do something about it. ( Annex . 4 )

While he studied in 1972 he founded the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern and was a director of the Aboriginal Medical and Legal Service through most of the 1970s. He was also a director and chairman of Tranby College.

In 1973 he completed his H.S.C. studies at Sydney Technical College and entered a law course at the University of N.S.W. He graduated in 1978 (second indigenous person after Pat O'Shane) and was admitted to the New South Wales Bar in 1979.

As a barrister he represented many aboriginal people in criminal trials and was often instructed by the Aboriginal Legal Service. In 1987 Bob was appointed as an assisting council to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, this took him all over the country.

In 1990 he won the University of N.S.W. Alumni Award and in 1993 Macquarie University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws in recognition of his services to law, the community and the Aboriginal people.

During this period Bob had been appointed public defender in N.S.W. and would spend what time he had left at the Mathew Talbot Hostel (a home for the homeless) helping out with Kaye in the soup kitchen and offering advice and encouragement.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1996 Bob was appointed a judge of the District Court of N.S.W., the first indigenous person to be appointed to any intermediate court in Australia. He mentored young aboriginal lawyers and encouraged students to attend his courtroom, including, students from Tranby College.

“ For all Aboriginal Australians to achieve the level of self-determination and Justice that is the right of each and every one of us, the Australian community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, must ensure that the enduring principles of democracy be upheld at all times in every community “

Judge Bob Bellear 1997

Bob would go out to the court at Moree and during his time there he became a patron of the Moree Boomerangs Football Club, he was also a committee member of the Redfern All Blacks Rugby Leagues Club a strong supporter of the C.F.M.E.U Aboriginal Construction Industry Trainee Program.

The N.S.W. Premier Bob Carr announced on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005 that Judge Bob Bellear would receive a state funeral next week. He described him as a ‘great Australian and indigenous statesman’ and a ‘man of vision who fought with passion for the rights of his people’.

His state funeral was held at the Sydney Town Hall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2005 ( Annex 5 )

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010, UNSW Law Faculty’s Moot Court was filled with indigenous students Alumni and judges of the High Court for a ceremony honouring the late Bob Bellear ( Annex 6 )

‘He was a successful, well respected criminal barrister who is still remembered and, more importantly was a committed volunteer to working among the displaced and dispossessed.’

'Hopefully Judge Belleair's picture and story can beckon students of this institution towards the path he walked with such great dignity, graciousness and courage.'

The following is a eulogy from his State Funeral held at the Sydney Town Hall on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2005

Tranby Students 2003-2004 Class

National Indigenous Legal Studies

Throughout the centuries there were men who took first  
steps down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision.

You are certainly one of those men.

You have given other Aboriginal people a path to follow

Even though we had only met just once this was enough to inspire us

Our dreams are an index to the future.

Your dream is an index to your greatness

What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to  
what lies within us

**Acknowledgements:**

1. The Billinudgel Public School 1893 - 1993 Harvey Gardiner & Terry Timms
2. The Mullumbimby High School Library, Donna Pearson - School Principal
3. The Mullumbimby Library
4. The Mullumbimby Rugby League Football Club
5. "From the Depths to the Heights" Peter Manning SMH 17<sup>TH</sup> March 2005
6. Honouring Judge Bob Bellear UNSW. Law Faculty's Moot Court  
Address by Judge John Nicholson, SC  
Biography 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944 - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005

NOR' EASTER



CLASS 1B 1957

8st. 7lb. RUGBY LEAGUE - 1957



Back (left to right): R. Davies, G. Browning, J. Netherway, J. Bell, R. Belleair, J. Cockerell, N. Philp.  
Front: Mr. W. Smith (Coach), R. Pidd, K. Yule, N. Mitchell, W. Olive (Capt.), B. Starr, J. Rafion.

8ST 7LB WEIGHT DIVISION

NOR' EASTER



BOB - SITTING 4<sup>th</sup> FROM LEFT  
4<sup>th</sup> YEAR - 1960

## RUGBY LEAGUE



FIRST XIII

1960

Back : R. Belleair, L. Donnelly, G. Wright, R. Thompson, G. McPaul, L. Campbell, K. Wood, B. Robbins, J. Gardner (Capt.).

Front : Mr. W. Smith (Coach), R. Sturmer, M. Marks, E. Selwood, A. Perrin (Coach), G. Pidd, D. New, J. Sturmer, Mr. K. Lansley (Sportsmaster).

Absent : J. Semple.

FIRST 13 - 1960

## RUGBY LEAGUE

### THE FIRST XIII

Coaches : Mr. W. Smith, Mr. T. Perrin.

The 1960 First XIII developed into one of the best teams to ever represent the school. They defeated Ballina twice, Lismore Marist and drew with Murwillumbah and Kyogle.

Unfortunately, early in the season, the team lost their five-eighth and later their half-back through serious injury. Despite these initial setbacks, the team continued to play splendid school football. The team was noted for an extremely strong defence and backing-up in all games.

Results of the season's matches are:—

V. Lismore Marist, won 8-6—Vagg and Belleair tries, Gardner goal.

V. Murwillumbah, lost 8-11—Gardner two tries and one goal.

V. Ballina, won 13-5—Vagg three tries, Gardner 2 goals.

V. Murwillumbah, draw 2-2—Gardner 1 goal.

V. Grafton, lost 5-23—Marks try, Belleair goal.

V. Ballina, won 8-5 (Kearney Cup)—McPaul and Campbell tries, Belleair goal.

V. Kyogle, draw 5-5 (Kearney Cup)—Wright try, Belleair goal.

V. Lismore B, lost 7-0.

V. Murwillumbah, lost 12-0.

The Team: John Gardner, captain and five-eighth until injured; brilliant in attack and defence. Bob Belleair, vice-capt. and half-back; an elusive player who never tired. Ian Vagg, winger; very fast, scored some splendid tries. Les Donnelly, winger and half; showed great improvement during the season. Ted Selwood, centre; very fast, moved up quickly in defence, should do well in 1961. Jon Semple, winger; fast and elusive, should concentrate on strengthening his tackling. Robert Sturmer, centre and half; small but a very strong defender. Gary Wright, centre; first year in school football, strong in tackling. Richard Thompson, full-back; showed improvement in backing-up with his backs. Greg. Pidd, hooker; small but a very determined forward. Doug. New, front row; excellent in rucks. Lance Campbell, front row; gave a consistently good performance. M. Marks, second row; an up-and-coming forward, very hard runner. John Sturmer, second row; new member to the school team, a keen and conscientious forward. Gordon McPaul, lock; good potential, keep using that weight to advantage. Keith Wood, second row; very keen, overcoming his lack of experience. Barry Robbins, front row; a keen player, uses weight to advantage.

### 20. SCHOOL CADETS - 1960 Nor' Easter

On Anzac Day we saw the first public appearance of the Cadets, who marched in two parties, one at Byron Bay and one at Mullumbimby.

Courses were attended as shown—all at Singleton:—

December, 1959 : C.U.O — Corporals Robbins, Beckinsale and Belleair.

May, 1960 : C.Q.M.S. — Corporal Priest.  
Band — Cadet Gibson.

Next year there will be a greater allocation on courses — C.U.O., C.Q.M.S., N.C.O., Infantry, Specialist Weapons, Band, Medical and Signals.

C.U.O. Woods, C.S.M. Gardner and I will be resigning before Camp, and our replacements will be taking you to Southport.

Finally, Lieut. Perrin has replaced Mr. Marrinon on resignation.  
D. NEW.

## - - House Reports - -

### ACACIA HOUSE - 1960

House Master : MR. T. PERRIN.

House Mistress : MISS R. ALLABURTON.

House Captains : Bob Bellear, Lorraine Coutts.

House Vice-Captains : Lance Campbell.

The pupils of Acacia House are to be congratulated for their fighting spirit. As this report goes to the Press, Acacia is in second position in the House Point Score, with Kurrajong, while Jacaranda has a lead of 5 points. With the cricket competition to be completed, we have a good chance of taking the lead from Jacaranda.

All members worked hard for their House this year, but particular thanks must go to captains Bob and Lorraine.

Acacia was well represented in the various school teams :

#### BOYS

First XIII : B. Bellear, L. Campbell.

7st. 7lb. : B. Crompton, L. Crandell.

8st. 7lb. : H. Beckinsale, R. Bulmer.

6st. 7lb. : J. Brown, T. Bellear, P. Bailey.

Tennis : J. Brownless, J. Archer, R. Anderson.

Cricket : J. Brownless, R. Bulmer, H. Beckinsale, B. Bellear.

#### GIRLS

A Hockey : E. Alidenes, L. Barrett.

A Basketball : D. Brown.

Tennis : L. Coutts, R. Bedford, M. Alcorn, M. Campbell.

A Softball : Janelle Brown.

Athletics : D. Christopherson, M. Cason, L. Bridgland, B. Baker.

Congratulations to our athletic champions, Dawn Christopherson and Robert Barnes.

Acacia was also well to the fore in the academic field :

David Bowers—1st in 4th year.

Vivienne Callister—3rd in 3A.

Betty Baker—1st in 3B.

Joy Bryant—2nd in 3D.

Rosemarie Bridgland—2nd in 2B.

Janice Beer—3rd in 1A.

Gay Cavanagh—1st in 1B.

Dawn Christopherson—1st in 1C.

\* \* \* \*

### JACARANDA HOUSE

House Master : MR. J. BEVAN.

House Mistress : MISS L. ROLLINS.

Captains : Ian Vagg, Shirley Wheatley.

Vice-Captains : Ted Selwood, Pat Tarlington.

Jacaranda House continued its leadership of the school this year. In all fields of school activity, the members of the House were prominent.

SCHOOL HOUSES

ACACIA

JACARANDA

KURRAJONG

YARRABIN

# **Our first Aboriginal judge remembered**



**Mullumbimby High School Welfare Officer Lesley Sayers with the photo of school patron Judge Belleair which hangs on the school wall of fame**

# MULLUMBIMBY RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB



## **1960 UNDER 18 YEARS PREMIERS**

BACK ROW: P O'Donnell, I Grant, F James, R Bellea, N McDonald, N Philp

CENTRE: B Gallen, K McMorrow (Coach) R McIlwain, J Williams, A Philp (Manager)

FRONT ROW: R Mudge, R Selwood (C) N Mitchell

# This Life

Edited by  
Suzy Baldwin

## From the depths to the heights

Bob Bellear  
Judge  
1944-2005

Australia is called a classless society. But Bob Bellear, who has died at 60, did what few other Australians have done: he rose from the very bottom rung to the very top. Not just from working-class and rural origins but from Aboriginal deprivation to become Australia's first indigenous judge.

Raised in the far North Coast town of Billinudgel, near Mullumbimby, he was the grandson of a Vanuatu sugar-cutting slave and an Aboriginal woman from the Noonuccal people of Stradbroke Island. One of nine children, he knew poverty, hunger and a widespread culture of alcoholism as he grew to manhood. He told an interviewer in 1978: "Drunkenness was our only refuge. But when you emerged from the haze of drunkenness, there was always the harsh reality of racism to face."

He left school early, he said, and "I couldn't even get a job as a bank teller, attitudes being what they were then."

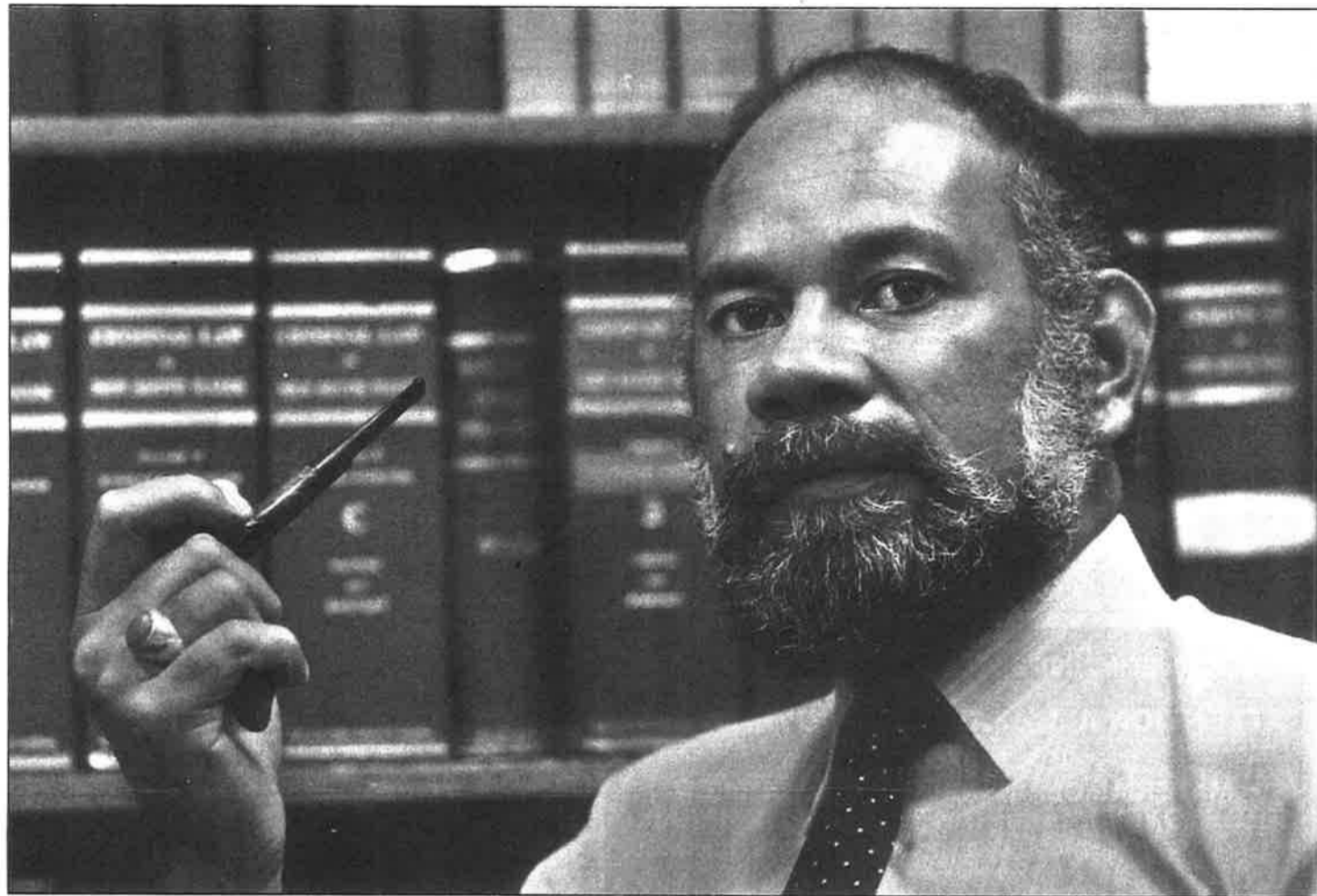
Bellear joined the navy. He learned mechanical engineering and clearance diving, and loved his time at sea. He became a champion rugby player for the navy. Tall and lean, he was an outstanding and talented centre. In the navy he met his wife and life partner Kaye Williams, the daughter of a Ballarat trade unionist. At the time, she was going out with one of Bellear's shipmates and was in the process of moving house from Bondi to Kings Cross. Bellear helped her move - in every sense of the word.

Within six weeks the couple had fallen in love and married. They became inseparable and a devastating combination. Kaye saw in Bellear the qualities of a natural leader: a man of charm, conviction, humanity, common sense, humour and ambition.

Bellear became the first Aborigine to rise to the level of petty officer in the navy. By the time he left in 1968, he was a qualified diver, bricklayer, furnace fitter, and fitter and turner. He gained jobs at the Clyde oil refinery and elsewhere on the strength of his trade skills. He was already a man on the march.

But this was also the time in Sydney of rising Aboriginal consciousness about civil rights. The use of the hated Summary Offences Act on Aboriginal people in Redfern became a kind of police sport. Bellear watched with horror as friends suffered not for being criminal but for being black. The overt racism of the police actions every Friday and Saturday night appalled him.

The former attorney-general who welcomed Bellear to the bench, Jeff Shaw, said at the time: "It was easy for police to arrest Aboriginal people. They had a formula. It was the trifecta, 'unseemly words', 'resist arrest' and 'assault police'. Seeing this injustice repeated week after week hit



hard, and there was no way that Bob Bellear was going to sit back and watch it happening."

One evening in 1972, Kaye and Bellear were sitting in the Clifton Hotel, Redfern, when the paddy wagons dragged away another clutch of local blacks. Together they decided he would study law.

Bellear went to Sydney Technical College to finish his high school studies, getting his HSC in 1973. The next year he joined the University of NSW law school. He gained his degree in 1978 and was admitted to the bar the next year. In less than 10 years from taking that decision at the Clifton Hotel, he had become a barrister.

Bellear founded the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern in

**One evening in 1972, Kaye and Bellear were sitting in the Clifton Hotel, Redfern, when the paddy wagons dragged away another clutch of local blacks. Together they decided he would study law.**

1972, was a director of the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service through most of the 1970s, and was a director and chairman of Tranby College. He was a key South Sydney community activist and a close adviser to the remarkable Father Ted Kennedy of St Vincent's Church, Redfern. He was also on myriad Labor committees advising on Aboriginal policy.

In the 1980s there was no stopping this man of quiet determi-

nation, affable humour and unaffected friendliness. He represented Aboriginal people (and whites) in a wide range of courts. The main emphasis of his practice, however, was criminal trials, instructed by the Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid Commission or private practitioners. He was constantly working on the side of the poor. He also successfully represented traditional owners in three important land claims, and was appointed as counsel assisting to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1987.

Meanwhile, he was a committee member of the Redfern All Blacks rugby league club and patron of the Moree Boomerang Football Club.

In 1990 he won the University of NSW Alumni Award and in 1993 Macquarie University awarded him an honorary doctor of laws in recognition of his services to law, the community and the Aboriginal people. By then he had been appointed public defender in NSW and could be found at the Matthew Talbot Hostel dispensing free legal advice to the homeless in his spare time.

In 1996, he became the first Aborigine to be appointed a judge. From the benches of District Courts around NSW, Bellear worked for eight years bringing fair and compassionate justice to those before him.

He also worked without stint for young Aboriginal people thinking of studying law. He was a mentor to young black lawyers and law students, and encouraged Aboriginal high school students to join him in his court. He opened the people to national



Committed activist ... Bob Bellear, above, brought humour and compassion to his work. Bellear, left, with his wife, Kaye, on his admission to the bar in 1979.

indigenous legal studies students from Tranby. He was a strong supporter of the construction union, and was patron of the Construction Industry Drug and Alcohol Foundation.

He had a special place in his heart for his son Malu, who died young. At his appointment as a judge in 1996, Bellear said: "My son Malu, for all his short life, loved me unconditionally and taught me the value of compassion and courage. He will be with me for the entire journey both on and off the bench."

When Bellear's son, Kali, had a boy last year, he was named Tanna Jamarra Bellear - Tanna for his grandfather's ancestral Vanuatu home and Jamarra for kangaroo

(the same meaning as Mahu). And when Bellear died in his bed, wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt, Kaye's last words were to invite him to rejoin his beloved Mahu.

Bellear has been a role model for his people, a source of enormous pride and joy to his family, especially his wife, and a beacon of hope in dark times for all those who believe in Aboriginal rights and justice. He wore his extraordinary achievements with great humility. A great friend, an easy mate, he never lost his ordinary touch. He will remain strong in the hearts of all he touched.

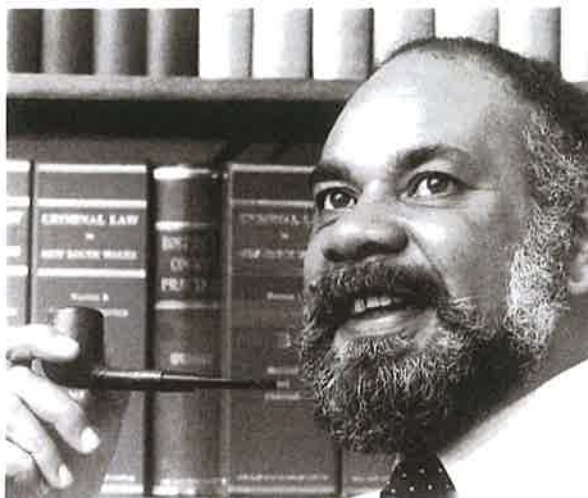
He is survived by Kaye, his children, Joanne and Kali, and four grandchildren. Peter Manning



STATE FUNERAL

## JUDGE BOB BELLEAR

*27 June 1944 – 15 March 2005*



‘For all Aboriginal Australians to achieve the level of self-determination and justice that is the right of each and every one of us, the Australian community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, must ensure that the enduring principles of democracy be upheld at all times in every community.’

**Judge Bob Bellear 1997**



## ORDER OF SERVICE

**Blue Groove**

*Arrival Music*

**Father Richard Pascoe**

*MC*

**Sol Bellear**

**Justice Geoff Eames**

**Kali Bellear and Jo Perrett**

**Justice Virginia Bell**

**Andrew Refshauge MP**

*Deputy Premier of New South Wales*

**Terry Tobin QC**

**Linda Burney MP**

**Kaye Bellear**

**Guard of Honour**

*Moree Boomerangs Football Club and  
CFMEU Aboriginal Construction Industry Trainee Program*



'Throughout the centuries there were men who took first  
steps down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision.  
You are certainly one of those men.

You have given other Aboriginal people a path to follow.  
Even though we had only met just once this was  
enough to inspire us.

Our dreams are an index to the future.  
Your dream is an index to your greatness.

What lies behind us and what lies before us  
are small matters compared to what lies within us.

You are a man of greatness.'

**Tranby Students**  
*National Indigenous Legal Studies*  
*2003-2004 Class*


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[Honouring Judge Bob Bellear, Australia's 1st Aboriginal judge and UNSW Law Alumnus](#)

# ANNEX 6

## Honouring Judge Bob Bellear, Australia's 1st Aboriginal judge and UNSW Law Alumnus

.Posted Monday, 23rd August 2010



On Thursday 19 August 2010, UNSW Law Faculty's Moot Court was filled with Indigenous students, alumni, and judges of the High Court for a ceremony honouring the late Bob Bellear.

Judge Bellear's portrait, pictured here, was unveiled by his son Kali and two grandchildren.

- [Read the keynote address delivered by Judge John Nicholson SC](#)
- [Read Judge Bob Bellear's biography](#)

### ACADEMIC BLOGS

**Law School Vibe**

<http://lawschoolvibe.wordpress.com/>

**Sean Brennan**

[http://twitter.com/\\_sbrennan](http://twitter.com/_sbrennan)

**Fergal Davis**

[http://twitter.com/fergal\\_davis](http://twitter.com/fergal_davis)

**Megan Davis**

[http://twitter.com/ILC\\_UNSW](http://twitter.com/ILC_UNSW)

**David Dixon**

<https://twitter.com/DavidCreweDixon>

**Fleur Johns**

<https://twitter.com/FleurEJ>

**Paul Kildea**

<http://twitter.com/paukildea>

**Michael Legg**

<http://twitter.com/LitigatorLegg>

**Lucas Lixinski**

<https://twitter.com/IntHeritageLaw>

**Andrew Lynch**

<http://twitter.com/AndrewLynchUNSW>

**Edwina MacDonald**

<http://twitter.com/edwinamacdonald>

**Jane McAdam**

<https://twitter.com/KaldorCentre>

**Luke McNamara**

<https://twitter.com/mcnamaral/>

**Alex Steel**

<http://twitter.com/crimlawunsw>

**George Williams**

<http://twitter.com/ProfGWilliams>

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**On the Occasion of the unveiling of the picture of Judge Robert  
Bellar in the Moot Court of UNSW Faculty of Law  
19 August 2010**

Address by Judge John Nicholson, SC

It is right, fitting and proper that Judge Robert Bellar's picture should be hung in this place of learning where many young men and women are studying law and planning their careers.

It is to hang in this Moot Court Room where they will learn to practice advocacy skills that they will put to use in future years.

Many will still be young enough to recall childhood innocence and its great companion "idealism" – but close enough to an age where career and life style choices are to be made. Bob Bellar will fit very comfortably among such young students, especially those who have not yet put aside or lost their idealism, hopes and aspirations.

The picture that will shortly be unveiled was taken when Bob had already reached 50. There are three earlier pictures that put this picture into context.

The earliest in time is of a young, athletic, good-looking Aboriginal man being dragged by two burly police sergeants to a nearby paddy wagon; moments before he had been arrested as one of a group protesting an Aboriginal cause – lacking of proper Aboriginal housing I believe – but it could equally have been in respect of any of a number of other Aboriginal causes he was passionate about.

The picture first in time highlights not only Bellar's strong sense of social justice, but also a willingness to be active to the point of real confrontation with authority. I suspect he is the only judge to have an event like this in his early life. His cause he believed just – his actions were those of a strong man determined to pursue his vision of justice.

When he heard Kaye Bellar, his wife, at the police station later that day, he called out he did not want bail if those arrested with him were not also granted

bail. Here he presents as a leader who understood the importance of supporting and comforting those also committed to the cause he was so passionately advocating.

The second picture exists only in my mind's eye. But it is a picture of an actual event. Bob, with Kaye and others, was drinking at a Redfern pub well known for its Aboriginal clientele. Frequently on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights police visited it, apparently interested in little more than a spot of racial sport as they arrested and charged Aboriginal drinkers with what became known as the trifecta – offensive behaviour, resist arrest and assault police.

That topic (and likely the then Summary Offences Act) and the frequency of unrepresented Aboriginal drinkers finding themselves before the courts on Friday, Saturday and Monday morning so charged, caused Bob Belleard at that drinking session to announce he would study law to become an advocate in Court for these disadvantaged and discriminated people.

This picture of the would-be mature age student and his wife making a momentous decision of this kind says much about Bob Belleard's idealism in seeking to serve the "knock-about", the disadvantaged and his own Aboriginal brothers and sisters by obtaining justice for them.

As events turned out, he studied law at this University, and he did serve his people – most particularly in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and at the Public Defenders where I first met him.

Judge Zahra – present tonight, also a past Public Defender, has described the third picture to me. Judge Zahra was instrumental in the early discussions as to the hanging of Bob Belleard's picture at the Law School.

It was not unusual for Public Defenders to work back in chambers after 5 or 6pm. One winter's Monday evening around 6 o'clock or so, Peter Zahra was heading home. The light was on in Belleard's chambers. Peter thought he would say good night to the man. As he entered, Bob was changing from his suit to jeans, casual shirt and runners. Bob Belleard was heading to the Matt Talbert Hostel, where apparently he spent each Monday night working among Sydney's

homeless. Here was a successful, well-respected criminal barrister who still remembered and, more importantly was a committed volunteer to working among the displaced and dispossessed.

Pictures of notable men and women may be hung in public places for many reasons. This picture of Bob Bellea should not hang here simply because he was the first Aborigine to become a District Court judge, nor simply because this institution was his alma mater. Such a situation would undervalue the man. His picture deserves its place in this Moot Court because he was a man who achieved much, including those two important accomplishments, in his desire to serve others through the law.

Those who choose the law so that they may use it to serve others, will not only follow a path trod by Judge Bellea, but will walk among the giants who believe justice is a commodity to which all are equally entitled and know the poor, displaced, disposed and disadvantaged may well be so, because they are presently and already victims of injustice. Hopefully, Judge Bellea's picture and story can beckon students of this institution towards that path he walked with such great dignity, graciousness and courage.

*Judge John Nicholson SC*  
*NSW District Court*

## **Bob Bellear (27 June 1944 – 15 March 2005)**

Bob Bellear, born in northern New South Wales, one of nine children, grew up near Mullumbimby. Both his grandfathers, one from Vanuatu, the other a Solomon Islander, had been “black-birded” to Australia. His grandmother was a Noonuccal woman of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island). He grew up knowing poverty, hunger and a widespread culture of alcoholism.

He left school early, but had difficulties finding employment. He joined the Australian Navy, attaining the rank of Petty Officer, the first Aborigine to do so. He left the Navy in 1968.

After marrying Kaye Williams in 1966, the couple worked in Redfern, an area with a substantial Aboriginal population. This was a time of rising Aboriginal consciousness of the intertwined injustices - related to displacement, housing, health, police victimisation and non-Aboriginal community rejection - that impacted upon their lives. Their common theme was race.

Bob Bellear established the Aboriginal Housing Company in 1972. He led a campaign to prevent Redfern landlords from evicting Aboriginal tenants. This work led to the Whitlam government transferring ownership of The Block to the Aboriginal Housing Company. Throughout the 1970s, he was also director of both the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

In 1972, he decided to become a lawyer. He completed his HSC at Sydney Technical College, and enrolled in law at the University of New South Wales. He graduated BJuris and LLB in 1978 and was admitted to the Bar in 1979 as NSW's second Aboriginal barrister.

In 1987 he was the first Aborigine to be appointed as counsel assisting a Royal Commissioner when he was appointed to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. In 1991, he was appointed a Public Defender – again the first Aboriginal to be so appointed. He received an honorary Doctorate of Laws in 1993, the first member of the public bar so honoured. In 1996, Bob Bellear was appointed a judge of the District Court of New South Wales, the first Aborigine to be appointed to any intermediate court in Australia.

This photograph was taken as Bob Bellear stood to make his judicial promises. He stands striking in appearance; formidable, humble, gracious and, as always, immensely dignified. He served as a judge for nine years. He showed himself to be a man of learning, compassion and humanity. During this time he mentored young Aboriginal lawyers, and encouraged students to attend his courtroom, including students from Tranby College, where he was a Director. The 2003-2004 Tranby College class wrote of him:

*You have given other Aboriginal people a path to follow. Even though we had only met just once, this was enough to inspire us.*

Bob Bellear died at his home on March 15, 2005.

**Acknowledgements:**

1. The Billinudgel Public School 1893 - 1993
2. The Mullumbimby High School Library
3. The Mullumbimby Library
4. The Mullumbimby Rugby League Football Club
5. "From the Depths to the Heights" SMH 17<sup>TH</sup> March 2005
6. Honouring Judge Bob Bellear UNSW. Law Faculty's Moot Court  
Addressed by Judge John Nicholson, SC  
Biography 27<sup>th</sup> June 1944 - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005