

*Reconciliation*



"Mel's generation understand that indigenous people have something of value to offer," says Uncle Bob Randall (with film-maker Melanie Hogan).

# 'WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER'

*Beyond Sorry, what next? This pair can show us how to build bridges*

**F**ive years ago, former investment banker and New York Film Academy graduate Melanie Hogan had never met an Aboriginal. To correct this, the Sydney-sider travelled to the Northern Territory, where she befriended elder and Stolen Generations member "Uncle" Bob Randall, who explains his philosophy through his life story in her award-winning 2006 documentary, *Kanyini*. Now, the director works towards closing the gulf between the two cultures—she and Randall (songwriter, father of six, inspirational speaker and 1999's Indigenous Person of the Year) are spreading their message through such projects as Yarnup, in which students become friends with their local Aboriginal community and make an artwork about the experience. With National Sorry Day on May 26, Hogan, 30, and Randall, 70-odd, talked to WHO's Annette Dasey.

## What were your impressions of each other when you met in 2003?

**Randall:** I've met an angel with a backpack.

**Hogan:** Uncle Bob's presence was very, very powerful in a soft, gentle, wise way.

**Randall:** That night there was a shooting star. My daughter asked why and I said, "Something special is going to happen." I was singing the creation song and it was during the verse, "From the sun and the moon and the stars, you are part of all that there is." It's about that connection between all of us in the whole universe.

## Did you feel guilty to be privileged when many Aboriginals live in poverty?

**Hogan:** Not guilt but a huge responsibility to walk your talk. If you know greed and inequality has taken us to that point, keep your intentions every time. It's about distributing the wealth. If every individual was more aware and only took what they needed we wouldn't have the situation we have. What got us to this place? I'd better make sure I'm not continuing the same way as my ancestors.

## What have you learnt from each other?

**Hogan:** He has taught me the gift of service. If you try to do something with your life to the benefit of all beings it makes your life

very magical. Uncle Bob's lived like that.

**Randall:** We have enormous hope in our young people. She's reinforced that. To make changes, it's our young' uns that are going to do that as they don't see the barriers. They see us as one Australian people. The old attitude was affecting our older generations. Their children are starting to walk with us and we're reaching out to each other. We're walking together.

## Do you see that with the kids you're working with on the Yarnup program?

**Hogan:** Yes. The kids want to invite Aboriginal people into their schools. People are very hungry to learn from Aboriginal people. As this generation has to live under the pressure of the environmental crisis and try to work out different ways of being because we've been so destructive, there's a natural fit with our indigenous people and their way of connecting in to all things and living in harmony.

## How would you describe your relationship?

**Randall:** I see her as a granddaughter. In our culture the granddaughter is closer to the *Jamou*, grandfather, than the children.

**Hogan:** Bob is one of my closest *Kurumpa*,

spirit friends. I know where my mob are at and he knows where his mob are at and together we can walk in a white world and a black world.

## How did you both feel about PM Kevin Rudd apologising to the Stolen Generations?

**Randall:** After waiting so long at last it's here—now we can start doing things.

**Hogan:** Proud to be Australian. I finally saw a man who had a heart connection with people.

## What can we do to help?

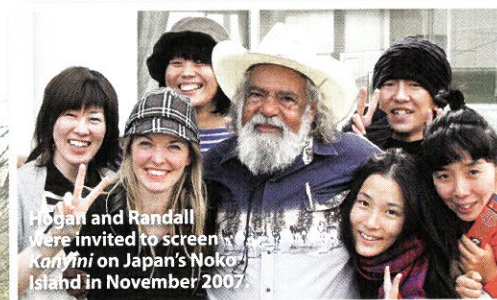
**Randall:** You've got to love yourself the way you are, then establish a relationship with all the people you meet. Practise on your loved ones, then extend that to your neighbours and everything including the environment.

**Hogan:** Aboriginal people have unique ways of looking at the world. Whitefellas should open their minds to see that it's time for us to learn. Action without understanding is hopeless.

For more information see [kanyini.com](http://kanyini.com)



Hogan hunted for honey ants with the women and children from Mutitjulu at Uluru in July 2007.



Hogan and Randall were invited to screen *Kanyini* on Japan's Noko Island in November 2007.

Filming *Kanyini* in May 2005.

