

into mental health services but it is hard to see where they are and what difference they are making. We internally fund and support some mental health groups for people with depression and anxiety, as they make up quite a significant part of our service provision. These are the most significant needs and of course they are not confined to this area alone.

The VISION of the JNC is to contribute to, and be part of a community that works together for Reconciliation, Fairness, Justice, Acceptance and Tolerance for all. Do you think The JNC is successful in this vision?

Yes I do think we are successful in striving to meet our vision. Really, that is the most important thing we can do – continually strive to reach this goal because it means we are all focused on trying to get there and that means things like quality in our services, respect for our clients, committed workers, energy and creativity, support and encouragement and other aspirations. It is a fantastic vision to have and it came about as a result of lots of team discussions and a very strong desire from the JNC workers to have a vision that wasn't just about the organisation, it was about the ideal community that we all wanted to be part of. Because we "own" our vision, we work hard to see it realised.



Barb at the "Help Save Our Services" Rally in 2002

You have been at the helm of the JNC for a decade, how does it feel?

First of all, it's hard to believe – that time has just passed by in a flash. The JNC has been a big part of my life and so it is important for me to reflect on the past 10 years, and the many changes this organisation has gone through, and the hard decisions we all have had to make at various times. It feels both exciting and regretful to be leaving, but the timing is perfect and I feel that I have finished what I set out to do. However, no matter where I am in the future, I will always be checking out the JNC website to find out what's going on!

What are the highlights and successes of your decade?

a.) Undoubtedly being involved in campaigning and lobbying for our new Industrial Award (SACS) in 2002 was a huge highlight. Not just for workers at The JNC but for all community workers in the state. It was fantastic to get this organisation involved in these issues in an activist way, probably for the first time, and actually be part of a strong push for government and community recognition for the job that we do.

b.) Finally getting a permanent home for The JNC was probably the single biggest achievement to ensure the long term security of the organisation. Not having permanent premises for several years affected everyone in the organisation, and the lobbying we undertook to finally secure long term premises was exhausting and at times, demoralising. When we finally achieved this hard won goal, we were ecstatic.

c.) Publicly and significantly recognising the work volunteers do in our centre. Volunteers are often invisible people and it's very hard to get publicity about them, other than when something exceptional happens. No community organisation in the state, and certainly not this one, could deliver half of its services without the help of volunteers. Volunteers are on management committees, they're driving people to doctor's appointments, taking English classes, helping out on the front desk in the centre, providing tax help assistance, facilitating groups, and many other roles and duties - the list is endless.

In recognition of the support that volunteers give to this organisation, we instituted the Grace Runnerstrum Award,

to publicly thank a selected volunteer, each year at our AGM. We have a Roll of Honour Board above our reception desk on which their name is recorded. Grace was a long-term volunteer for almost 30 years, from the early days of the organisation and we thought it fitting that the annual JNC Volunteer of The Year Award should be named after her.

d) On February 13th 2008, we publicly said SORRY, on the front page of The JNC News, acknowledging and apologising for past and present injustices suffered by the Indigenous Community in this local area. We also recognised their right to achieve social justice. We

celebrated this commitment with the young kids and their teachers at La Perouse Public School. It was both a tearful and joyous occasion and one I will never forget.

Any regrets or things you would have changed?

Not being able to secure a community work traineeship for a female Indigenous Worker in 2009, was disheartening. I spent many long hours trying to lobby the federal government to fund such a position here at The JNC. However, we have just received funding in the last 2 months, to employ a part time Indigenous community development worker. I guess that is a great ending to be able to relate.

What do you see as the future of JNC?

I see a fantastic future for The JNC. I'm leaving at a very good time. The organisation is secure, it's got a fantastic reputation and profile, a strong and committed management committee, and a very talented team of workers. Part of the work that I have been very passionate about here is making sure the whole organisation works from a social justice perspective. This sounds fancy but really, it's just about recognising the reasons for disadvantage, understanding the inequalities in our society, and empowering people and helping them to take control of their own destiny. If that is what a "grassroots" community worker can do, then that is plenty.

I can't finish without quoting Rob Riley on working towards achieving social justice. Rob was a Western Australian indigenous community worker, whom I never had the privilege of meeting, but will always wish I did, "you can't be wrong when you are right."