The Girls tell their sad story

Cootamundra Training Home for Girls

Top right: June Franks, who will open the Lismore screening. Below: Paul and Jeni at the Cootamundra screening
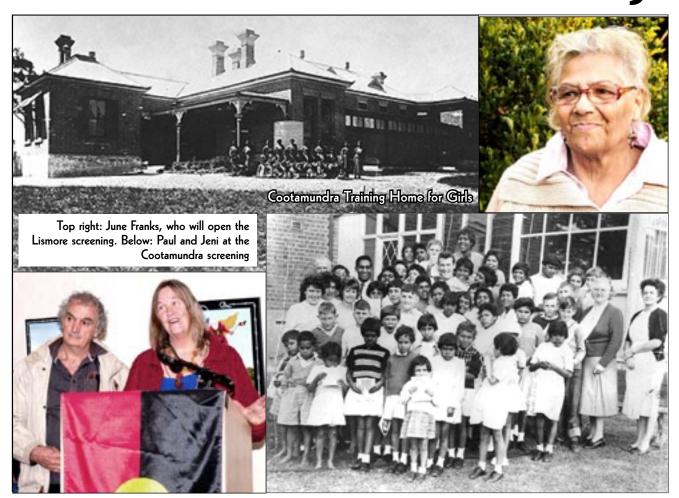
Two documentaries on the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home will be screened at Blue Knob Hall as part of NAIDOC Week.

Jeni Kendell, Paul Tait and Darmin Cameron have been working for three years with the Cootamundra women who were taken as children from their families and put into the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home.

The films are part of a roadshow that has travelled 3,570kms around NSW. They will screen free of charge at Blue Knob Hall at 7pm on Friday 11th July. Bookings are required on 6689-7449 .

There will also be free screenings in Lismore from 1pm-4 pm on Thursday 10th July at Lismore Council Chambers, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah.

The first film is a work in progress called *All One – The Girls*. The women themselves asked Gaia Films to make this documentary, saying, "We want our story told and the truth to come out."

And what is that truth? It is hard to imagine what it might be like as an Aboriginal child to be taken from mother, father, extended family, friends, school, culture, everything familiar. Many families never saw each other again.

Children taken from their homes, school or church, often ended the day together in a dark police cell, crippled with fear and loss. In the first days of the Policy of Assimilation they recorded the reason the children were removed from their homes as "being aboriginal".

Then a journey by train or car to Sydney and to Central Railway where brothers went north to the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home in Kempsey and sisters went south-west to Cootamundra.

For many, that moment was the last time they saw each other. With feelings of emptiness, pain, confusion and despair these Wards of the State were taken up the long road to the home...

There are stories of rape and whippings, escape and recapture. The real strength The Girls had was in being together. They are sisters to one another, they heal each other, offer each other love and support.

The surviving Cootamundra women are strong and proud elders, with a big story to tell.

The second film is a documentary on the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home Centenary Commemoration in 2012.

Lowland rainforest, Huonbrook
Photo: Iain Stych

Park link in public hands

A wildlife corridor between Nightcap and Goonengerry National Parks will be linked and in public hands when NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service acquires private land, Wompoo Gorge, at the end of July.

Wompoo Gorge is located on Coopers Creek near Rosebank. It is a narrow gorge between Nightcap and Goonengerry National Parks and provides habitat for 27 threatened species – including 17 threatened animals and 10 threatened plant species.

Property owner Dailan Pugh said he was delighted that NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service was acquiring the area.

Areas of the property were cleared for agriculture in the 1920s. Parts of the cleared forest regenerated but lantana established in large gaps, and prevented any further rainforest regeneration. NSW Environmental Trust began funding restoration six years ago.

EnviTE has worked since then to control dense areas of lantana by a range of methods, from splatter gun to brush hooks. "The results have been fantastic with regenerating rainforest now over five metres in height," said EnviTE Environment bush regenerator Iain Stych.

Dailan Pugh said lantana had been virtually eliminated from large areas and "the diversity and vigour of the regeneration is remarkable". Rainforest is on the mend, and habitat for rainforest fauna have been enhanced.

A field day will be held at Wompoo Gorge on Friday 25th July, providing an opportunity to see inspiring rainforest regeneration in a beautiful location. For more information and bookings contact Georgina Jones at EnviTE on 6621-9588 or email: *georginaj@envite.org*