

JILLI BINNA NEWS

50th Anniversary

• Kuranda •

25 September 2025

NGOONBI COMMUNITY SERVICES INDIGENOUS CORPORATION

50TH ANNIVERSARY

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK



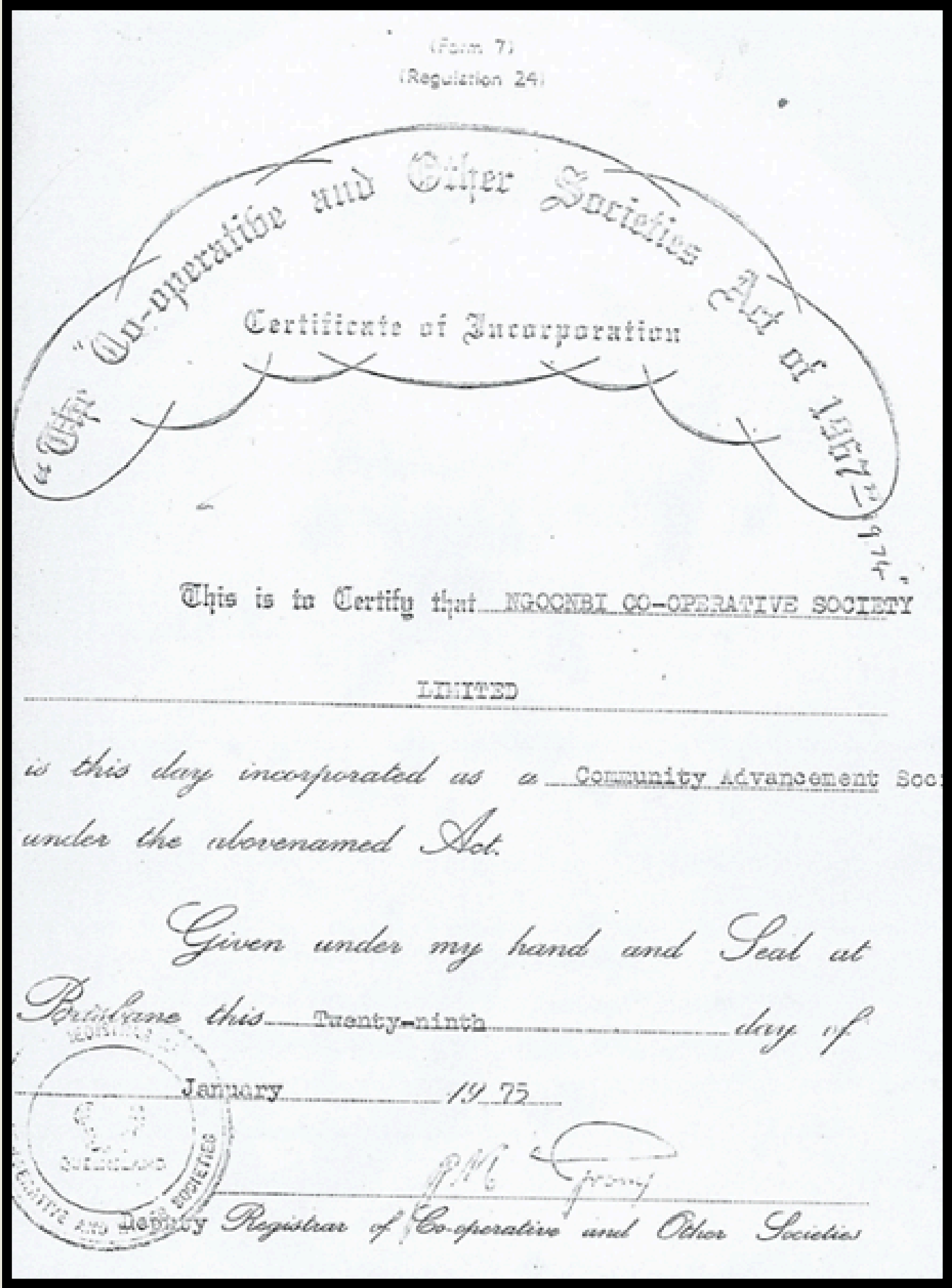
Elders seated outside Jilli Binna-L-R Granny Maggie Donahue, Grandad Cecil Brim, Grandma Lucy Levers
Photo Courtesy: Cairns Historical Society, M. Moore, 1979

50 YEARS OF
SERVICE

NGOONBI
*2 / 40 Coondoo Street,
Kuranda, 4881*

Ngoonbi’s Enduring Impact Since 1975

In the heart of Kuranda, the Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation stands as a living testament to the vision and determination of local political activists and community leaders who laid its foundations in 1975 due to a shortage of housing and social disadvantage. Ngoonbi was established to provide affordable housing, delivering services initially in Kuranda, then across the region. From its inception, Ngoonbi has promoted empowerment, self-reliance, and cultural integrity. Today, it continues to provide housing and delivers programs—from aged care to community and youth empowerment, to social services—serving communities in Kuranda, Mareeba, Atherton and Mt Garnet. With 75% of its workforce made up of local Indigenous staff, Ngoonbi continues to embody the values of representation and community-led development. The organisation’s growth over the decades reflects not only outstanding operational standards but honours the vision of its founders. Their advocacy for equity and inclusion laid the groundwork for a legacy that continues to thrive. Ngoonbi’s commitment to high standards and culturally responsive care has earned its recognition as a model of Indigenous-led service delivery. As Ngoonbi looks forward and looks back in history, it gives acknowledgement to our Elders, Community Members, Board of Directors and Staff, past and present. Honouring Ja (the great creator of the land we gather on) for their strength and guidance to where we are today.



Women of Talent



Lynette Snider, Coralie Wason, 1994 Photo Courtesy: Sept,KPaper

A collage of images and text. At the top left is a photo of a woman sitting at a table with various craft items. To her right is a photo of a boomerang. Below these are several paragraphs of text describing the crafts store and museum. At the bottom left is a sign for 'THE POTTERY PLACE'. At the bottom center is a sign for 'JILLI BINNA CRAFTS AND MUSEUM KURANDA N.O.'. At the bottom right is a sign for 'ENTERTAINMENT EVERY NIGHT' featuring a steamboat.

Photo Courtesy: JilliBinna K.V.News 12.1980 pg13 G. Richards and Crafts



LOOKING
FORWARD,
LOOKING
BACK

Craft
centre
opens

KURANDA. — A new venture by Aboriginal artists and citizens was opened at Kuranda yesterday.

The Jillibinna (eyes and ears) Arts and Crafts Centre was opened in Coondoo St, Kuranda, by the Ngoonbi Co-operative Housing Society.

The centre was the brainchild of Pastor Frank Babongi, who has now left the area, and was continued by Mr Reg Main, business manager of the Ngoombi Co-operative.

With a temporary freezing of the co-operatives's funds, it was put to the directors that remaining funds would be better used if redirected into a project to help the Aboriginal community as a whole.

The centre is that project.

In the time the directors of the co-operative hope to be able to finance homes for Aboriginal people.

Meanwhile genuine Aboriginal art and artifacts will be on sale in the retail section of the shop.

The snack bar section of the shop will continue, with some modifications, such as concentration on health foods and cessation of the sale of cigarettes.

Mr Gordon Grimwade, of the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Cairns, officially opened the centre.

The Member for Barron River, Mr Martin Tenni, also made a speech stressing equality and the reward of effort.

Commemorative T-shirts were presented to Mr Grimwade and Mr Jim Wilkes, accountant for the society.



Photo Courtesy: Robin Dodds family



Ceramic tile mural designed by Edward Deemera (Yarrabah Pottery) under potter Peter van der Helda, Kuranda



Ngoonbi photo: Ngoonbi Staff 2025 in front of the office building (now under demolition)

Craft Centre Opens article -
photo (Cairns Post, Jillli Binna Opening on
Sunday 21 December 1975

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK



Mick Miller



Clarrie Grogan



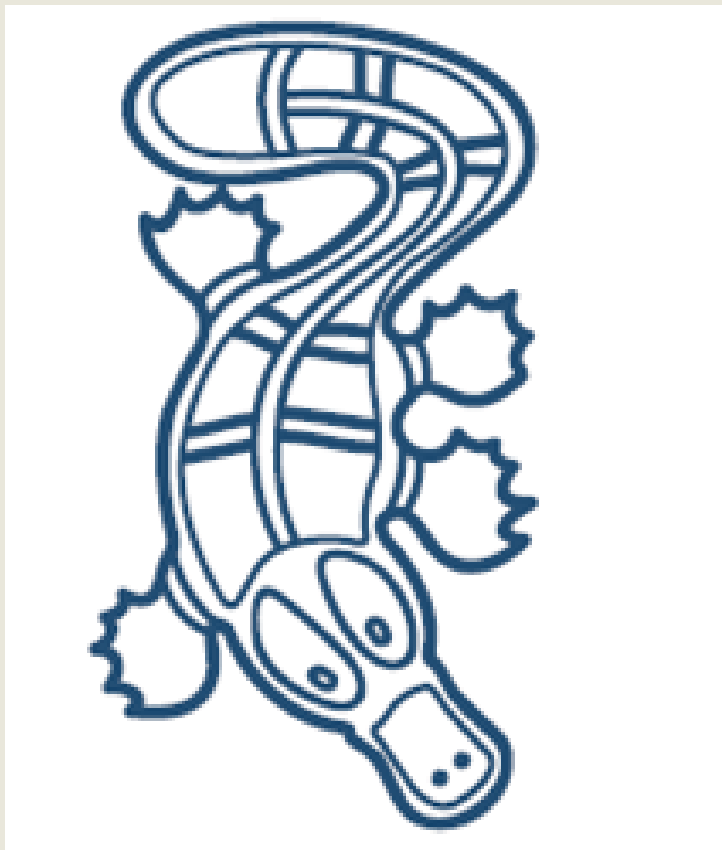
Joe McGuinness



Logo Designed by Enoch Tranby



Kozlan Assan



Logo Designed by Leandra Cannon

Origins of Ngoonbi and Acknowledgement

Ngoonbi (pronounced nun-by), means “home of the platypus,” and traces its beginnings to 1974 when Kuranda Seventh-day Adventist Elders and former residents of Mona Mona Mission, and Aboriginal activists including; Clarrie Grogan, Mick Miller and Joe McGuinness rallied the men and women in the Kuranda Seventh-day Adventist Church to form a housing co-operative to establish one of the nation’s first Aboriginal housing cooperative. This initiative marked the establishment of Ngoonbi as a place of an Aboriginal owned and managed community service hub that laid the foundations for 50 years of community service operations.

In 1975, our founding Ngoonbi Board of Management include:

President: Kozlan Assan

Secretary: Frank Bobongie

Directors: Mervyn Riley, Lyn Hobbler, Sarah Hunter, Steven Fagan, Wilfred Levers, June Grogan, Earl Levers, Val Green

Ngoonbi extends its heartfelt thanks to all who joined us in celebrating our 50th Anniversary milestone. Your presence has made this occasion truly memorable, and we are deeply grateful for the support and commitment shared throughout the event.

As we honour the legacy of our Elders, may their wisdom and strength continue to inspire you, your families, and the generations to come. Let us carry forward their vision with pride, purpose, and respect.

Our plan is to compile a history of Ngoonbi. All articles, photos are especially sought after. Please contact for contributions ngoonbi@ngoonbi.org.au and 0740937177.