

# Indigenous education in Glebe

## Tranby: National Indigenous Adult Education and Training



### Tranby – the building today

(Above left) Tranby at 13 Mansfield St, Glebe. (Above right) “Buildings out the Back”, a joint design between architects Cracknell and Lonergan, and Tranby. Together, they created a site, which reflects the nature of the College as an Aboriginal learning centre available to all Indigenous communities. The round learning areas were built to reflect Indigenous learning circle practices. The outside space is central to the design. It links the old and the new, the European Heritage and the Aboriginal Living Heritage, the square and the circle. There is a bridge from the old section, the courtyard, to the new Buildings that symbolizes interaction and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.<sup>2</sup>

### About Tranby

Tranby has offered Indigenous people Adult Education and Training in Glebe since 1957, and is a function of the Co-operative for Aborigines Limited. Students come from all over Australia to do courses in legal studies, literacy, community development & governance. As a nationally registered training organisation (RTO), Tranby offers units of competency, full VET qualifications, and non-accredited skill development initiatives to Indigenous adults from across Australia. Thousands of students have graduated from Tranby and returned to their communities empowered with newfound skills and a drive for excellence and self-determination.<sup>1</sup>

### RIGHT: Tranby – the building as it once was

Tranby cottage was built in about 1840 prior to the subdivision of the Toxteth Estate. Its low lines and broad proportions make it an interesting example of an early colonial dwelling. George Allen, an influential solicitor and Wesleyan Methodist who became Mayor of Sydney bought the Toxteth Estate and built Toxteth Park in 1831, a grand mansion for his family. Allen’s daughter married a prominent Sydney architect George Allen Mansfield and they lived in the sandstone cottage on the Toxteth Estate, which is now known as Tranby. Reverend William Binnington Boyce bought Tranby in 1887, The Reverend John Hope of Christchurch St Laurence and the other trustees purchased the cottage in 1946, and used it as a hostel for students from the University of Sydney. In 1957 they donated Tranby to Alf Clint and what was to become the Co-operatives for Aborigines Ltd.<sup>3</sup>



## The Glebe TreeHouse at Glebe Public School

### Kate Brennan’s address to the Glebe Society AGM in 2016 – an extract

We have an increasingly uphill battle on our hands; as wealth distribution remains on a divergent and climbing scale, the gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ is widening and the government purse seems to be shrinking, especially in the area of social housing. And here we are smack bang in the middle of the biggest city in the country, occupying a tiny inner city suburb which holds the interesting title of the most socio-economically diverse suburb in Australia. Yet here lies our extraordinary opportunity ... to build real and equitable relationships across this divide and, through this, truly transform the Community Spirit of Glebe.

Whose responsibility is it to reach out and form these relationships? I feel increasingly, as I have understood my own privilege, to see it as more my responsibility than others. ... To understand privilege we must distinguish between influences of suffering. To be alive is to experience suffering, but there are special categories of suffering reserved for certain groups of people. If we are not a part of that group, it is close to impossible to understand the cumulative effect of the discrimination they experience. ... We can seek to understand what it means to *not* be at risk of this, and through that gain some insight, some humility and create an opportunity to *listen* and *learn* from people who do know. ... And you know, when you really sit in [a] location [of privilege] it still just feels incongruent. It’s just an unpleasant feeling; and because we are human we tend to shy away from discomfort. ... But what is really exciting, if we choose it: this discomfort tells us there something to be done!! It’s a key; it’s a signal for possibility and change. And here is the clincher: simply bringing it into awareness starts dismantling it. It doesn’t leave, it just starts to shift power.

After 20 years in the ‘helping’ sector I have lost most of my conviction that I am here to rescue people; but what I do know, with great rigour, is that I can be present to people. I can be there with them in the struggle and difficulty. I can choose to stand there, with them, at that time, and that alone can be powerful. ... I refuse to turn my gaze and to blame and I stop demanding people overcome such odds, when apparently I can’t even reliably get myself to yoga once a week. ...

When I was getting my thoughts together around this, Robyn Kemmis popped in to my mind, just as she did in real life into my office, and her ability to walk in many worlds; how she seemed just as comfortable at the Old Fire Station as the Sydney Town Hall. She was ‘interested’, ‘curious’, ‘passionate about ...’; she wasn’t ‘worried for ...’ or ‘feeling sorry for ...’. Her concern was not directed toward people but toward systems and, what there was of it she transformed into action. *she was ‘engaged with’, not ‘compassionate toward’*. ... So if we can take a leaf from her book and learn to bridge these gaps we have a job to do; it is to be open to learning about people’s lives, truly learning and being engaged.

So my call out to the Glebe Society is to continue to work deeply into this space of Community Spirit; ... Let’s reconsider DisADVANTAGE in the context of its strong and robust brother, ADVANTAGE. Let’s lean into a bit of discomfort and find that it falls away – as we are roused and shaped by the breadth of relationship we can form across great distance. This is Glebe – only together can we create and protect a space were Community Spirit can truly flourish!<sup>6</sup>



### About The Glebe TreeHouse

“We aim to support families with young children to try and get the best start in those vital early years. The centre has been there for 16 years and is run under the State Government’s Families NSW initiative with the Department of Education.” – Kate Brennan Facilitator, The Glebe TreeHouse.<sup>4</sup>



Kate Brennan, Facilitator of the Glebe TreeHouse<sup>5</sup>

### References

1. About Tranby. [tranby.edu.au/about-us/](http://tranby.edu.au/about-us/)
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3. Glebe Society website; Picture: *Tranby House*, Freda MacDonnell (1975) *The Glebe: Portraits and Places*. Ure Smith, Sydney
4. Image: Glebe TreeHouse Facebook Page
5. Image: *Glebe Bus*. [youtube.com/watch?v=Db2SWr0pK40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db2SWr0pK40)
6. The Glebe Society (2016) Kate Brennan’s Address to the AGM. <https://www.glebesociety.org.au/kate-brennans-address-to-the-glebe-society-agm/>