

BIOGRAPHIES

Pastor Sir Douglas Ralph Nicholls (1906-1988) was born on Cummeragunga Aboriginal Station in New South Wales on 9 December 1906 in Yorta Yorta Country, the land of his Mother and the totemic long neck turtle and emu. His heritage is well recorded and his Ancestors made their own marks in history. Doug Nicholls is a multi-clanned descendant of the Yorta Yorta, Baraparapa, Dja Dja Wurrung, Jupagalk, and Wergaia Nations through his mother and father.

On the patrilineal side of the family, Doug Nicholls was the son of Herbert Nicholls (born St. Arnaud 1875-1947) who was the son of Augusta Robinson (born Richardson River, near Donald 1859-1886) of the Jupagalk/Wergaia and Walpanumin John Logan (born Charlton 1840-1911) of the Dja Dja Wurrung/Baraparapa. Walpanumin was the son of Lerimburneen or King Billy (c.1830-1865) who died on the Loddon River near Serpentine) of the Dja Dja Wurrung/Baraparapa. Lerimburneen was the son of *King* Girribong (c.1790-1860) of the Dja Dja Wurrung/Baraparapa and Matty of the Wergaia (c.1800-1886). The Nicholls Family regards the Boort, Charlton and Donald districts as the heartland of their Dja Dja Wurrung connection to Country. The Barks at Boort and the Jaara Baby at Charlton are events in our history that mark our connection to Country and our collective authority to Speak for Country. The Nicholls families are native title holders in Wergaia country and are awaiting similar outcomes in other Country subject to native title claim outcomes.

Doug's mother was Florence Nicholls (1876-1932) the daughter of Aaron Atkinson (1854-1913) who was the son of Kitty Atkinson (1834-1885) of the

Yorta Yorta. Florence's mother was Louisa Frost of the Baraparapa/Wamba. Louisa was the daughter of Thomas Frost a stockman on Mathoura station and Topsey of the Baraparapa. Doug was the youngest of six siblings. His brothers and sisters included Ernest (1897-1897), Minnie Nora (1898-1988), Hilda Melita (1901-1926), Walter Ernest (b.1902-1963) and Howard Herbert (1905-1942). Doug was captain of the Cummeragunga school football team a sport he loved and which would carry him through his life. He left school at 14 years of age. In the 1920's he worked as a tar-boy, channel scooper and general hand on sheep stations. As well as being quite capable of making a living, Doug was a gifted athlete. Doug was recruited by the Carlton Football Club but the racism he experienced at the Club sent him to join the Northcote Football Club in the VFA. He joined the *Brickfielders* at the Northcote Football Club in 1927 and played in three grand finals including a premiership team in 1929 and runners up in 1930 and 1931. His brother Howard also played with Northcote for one season. Doug not only played football, but won the Warracknabeal Gift in Wergaia/Jupagalk Country in 1928 and the Nyah Gift in Wadi Wadi Country as a sprinter. He came second in the Wangaratta and Shepparton Gifts and fourth in the Melbourne Thousand. In 1932 he joined the Fitzroy Football Club and in 1935 he represented the VFL as a state player – an extraordinary achievement. He went on to play 53 games with Fitzroy from 1932 to 1937. In the 1930s during the Great Depression, Doug became a Christian. He conducted church and hymn services at the Gore Street Mission Centre in Fitzroy and in 1938, he gave the National Day of Mourning Speech. It was in 1939 he became the first Pastor of the Aboriginal Church of Christ in Australia in Gore Street Fitzroy.

As an indication of the significance of this influence, his religious priorities and knee injuries, he retired from football and became the non-playing coach of Northcote in 1940. In another extraordinary chapter of his life, in 1941 he received a call-up notice and joined the AIF 29th Battalion. But the next year, police in Fitzroy requested the discharge of Pastor Doug to help with problems in the lives of Aborigines in Fitzroy. Support for this remarkable man crossed cultural boundaries. Pastor Doug and his supporters would go to the Yarra Riverbank and speak publicly about Aboriginal citizenship rights and support for Aboriginal communities. It was at this time that his brother, Howard, the husband of Gladys Naby Muriel Nicholls, passed away at Mooroopna in April 1942. Eight months later, Pastor Doug married Gladys on 26 December 1942. Pastor Doug set up the Gore Street Fitzroy Church of Christ Aboriginal Mission in 1943. They lived at 29 Fergie Street Fitzroy and at 98 Westgarth Street in Northcote besides the Northcote football ground. Both residences were a hive of community and religious activities with a diverse range of visitors, guests and People. A decade after his marriage, Pastor Doug and supporters organised a concert called 'Out of the Darkness, an Aboriginal Moomba' which was staged at the Princess Theatre. By this time, his good work was very well-known. He was appointed to a Western Australian Parliamentary Committee to investigate the atrocious conditions Aboriginal People were subjected to at Warburton ranges. In 1956 Pastor Doug became the first field officer for the Aboriginal Advancement League. He also edited the Aboriginal Advancement League journal, Smoke Signal. His political influence continued to grow when he was elected as secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. He also joined the Masonic Lodge and

became an active Freemason. He lectured about Indigenous rights at schools, universities Lions and Rotary Clubs, and other community groups on many occasions. In 1962 he was awarded a Member of the British Empire [M.B.E.] award. In the same year Pastor Doug was awarded the Victorian Father of the Year – the first Indigenous man to be given the honor in mainstream Australian society. During 1963 Pastor Doug Nicholls was appointed as a Justice of the Peace by the State of Victoria. The accolades continued and in 1968 he was awarded an Order of the British Empire [O.B.E.]. During NADOC 1969 Pastor Doug Nicholls presented a petition calling for a better deal for Aboriginal People to the Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in an emotional ceremony at the City Square. He was appointed as a member of the Victorian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal Advisory Committee and he met the Pope at the Melbourne Ecumenical Conference. He was appointed as the inaugural Chairman of the National Aboriginal Sports Foundation in 1969 and was invited to meet Queen Elizabeth II on her Australian Tour. In 1972, the Queen gave him a knighthood. He traveled to London with Lady Gladys to receive the Knight Commander of the Royal Victoria Order [K.C.V.O.]. At this time, he was also awarded the title Bapa Mamus or Headman of the Indigenous Nations by the Torres Strait Islander communities at a major Ceremony at the old Aborigines Advancement League in Northcote. On 1 December 1976 Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls MBE; O.B.E.; K.C.V.O. was appointed the twenty eighth Governor of South Australia. Sadly, his governorship ended due to ill-health on 30 April 1977. He lost his beloved Lady Gladys in 1981 after 39 years of marriage. In 1988 Pastor Sir Douglas passed away at Mooroopna in Victoria. He was given a state funeral at the Aboriginal Advancement League in

Thornbury and buried at Cummeragunga Mission cemetery on the Murray River in Yorta Yorta country where his wife, siblings and extended family were interred. Pastor Sir Douglas was very vocal about Indigenous rights and the advancement of the underprivileged. He was a strong, highly principled Indigenous man, husband, father of two sons (Bevan and Ralph) and three daughters (Nora, Lilian and Pamela), uncle, grandfather and great grandfather to many. He was a man with power and principles well before his time and a world leader in Indigenous Peoples' rights. History will continue to record that Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls is a great example of a strong Yorta Yorta, Baraparapa, Dja Dja Wurrung, Jupagalk and Wergaia man of principle and integrity.

Gladys Naby Muriel Bux (1906-1981) was born on 21 October 1906 at Cummeragunga Aboriginal Station New South Wales near Moama in Yorta Yorta Country. Gladys was the daughter of Meera Naby Baksch or Meera Bux, a Punjab Sikh Indian merchant hawker and Alice Campbell (1875-1953), a Dja Dja Wurrung and Baraparapa woman, the daughter of Koombra Alexander Campbell (1851-1923) from Gannawarra Station of the Baraparapa, the son of a Scottish pastoralist named Donald Campbell and a Baraparapa woman. Gladys is descended from the platypus People of Baraparapa and the crow people of the Dja Dja Wurrung. Alice Campbell's mother was a crow woman, Emma Campbell nee Kerr (1859-1886) from Kelly's Station, Bendigo Creek in Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Emma Campbell was buried in 1886 at Barham Station in Baraparapa country fourteen kilometers north of the township of Barham in New South Wales. Gladys' father Meera Bux settled at Barmah established and owned the Barmah general store from the early 1900's. He died and was buried at sea

in 1932. Mehra and Alice had six children including Myrtle Annette Naby (1903-1903), Abraham Theodore Naby (b.1904), Gladys Muriel Naby (1906-1981), Budder Deen Naby (1909-1909), Jeevie Naby (1910-1910) and Nazamdeen Naby (1914-1967). Gladys and her siblings attended primary school at Cummeragunga Aboriginal Station to grade three level and worked in their father's store. In the 1920's she convinced her father to let her go to Melbourne to learn to become a seamstress and make suits for the family store. Gladys married Howard Herbert Nicholls (1905-1942) a deeply religious man and footballer on 7 October 1927 at St Martins Church, Carlton. She spent much time with her beloved mother-in-law Florence Atkinson at Cummeragunga before she passed away in 1932. Sadly, Gladys also lost her husband who died at Mooroopna in April 1942 from injuries sustained in a car accident at Murchison. The then widowed Gladys, with three children under the age of twelve, married Howard's brother, Doug Nicholls, in December of 1942 in Moama – a partnership that was to last for 39 years. Gladys inherited her father's business acumen. In the 1950's, she established a tuckshop in a food caravan selling fresh sandwiches and pies to workers and schoolchildren near the Victorian Housing Commission's rent office in Glenroy. She then established several opportunity shops for the poor and needy in Fitzroy and North Fitzroy. Gladys owned land in her own right or with her husband several times in her life which was rare for an Indigenous woman of her time. On the death of her father she inherited, owned and managed land at Barmah which taught her the value of landownership and property acquisition. In the 1960's she was involved in the Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, a national body set up to raise awareness about the rights and plight of

Indigenous people. She was a serious charity worker and fundraiser, often undertaking sewing projects for the needy and disadvantaged. She helped to organise the Christmas Carols at Cummeragunga each year. She was the Secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Council and the Victorian State President in the 1970's. She worked towards ensuring her people were not homeless and along with others established the Gladys Nicholls Hostel. Despite being a woman of small stature, she commanded authority and was held in high esteem by all levels of society. Lady Gladys was a compassionate worker with the Harold Blair Holiday scheme which assisted Indigenous children with school holiday exchanges throughout Victoria. The Tandarra Holiday flats on the beach at Queenscliff near Geelong and the annual Aborigines Advancement League Christmas Tree for Indigenous children were also favorite community

projects she worked tirelessly to support. She was very vocal about women's rights and the underprivileged. She was a strong, stern, highly principled Indigenous woman; a wife, mother of two sons (Bevan and Ralph d.) and four daughters (Beryl d., Nora, Lilian and Pamela), aunty to many, grandmother and great grandmother. Lady Gladys is buried next to her husband Doug in Yorta Yorta Country at the Cummeragunga cemetery in New South Wales near Barmah. She was a woman well before her time and confident about her role in the world. History will record that Lady Gladys Nicholls a Baraparapa and Dja Dja Wurrung was a strong disciplined woman who believed in the rights of her People and led the way in women's rights.

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