

TANGENTYERE COUNCIL

GOOD NEWS STORIES AS AT 11 JANUARY 2007

Tangentyere provides recreation programs in 14 remote communities over summer

Tangentyere Council is building on the success of un-sniffable Opal petrol in remote communities by providing an alternative to substance abuse. In partnership with the communities, Tangentyere's CAYLUS program is facilitating recreation programs in 14 remote communities. This initiative, which is jointly funded by the NT and Federal Government, will reduce the tendency of young people to drift into Alice Springs over summer by providing fun activities in their home communities.

The recreation programs are designed to provide a positive alternative to substance abuse, and make life for young people in the remote communities more exciting and interesting. Activities provided include sport, music, discos, art, bike repair training, video making, trips to swimming holes and traditional hunting and gathering with the elders. Local people are involved as much as possible in the planning and provision of these activities.

Tracey Brand, Acting Director of Tangentyere Council stated "It is good to see the NT and Federal government spending some money on providing much needed youth services in the remote communities. Tangentyere Council is proud to support the remote communities in creating a better environment for young people out bush."

Papunya bans sniffable petrol

The Papunya Community has used the NT Government's innovative Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act to ban sniffable petrol in the community. It will now be an offence to possess sniffable petrol in the same way that it is currently an offence to possess alcohol. The NT Government funded Tangentyere Council and Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation to provide education sessions about the community's ability to make laws reducing the supply of petrol in their home community.

Papunya community members were inspired by the education session and the realisation that they had the power to make laws about this problem. They reported that it was refreshing to be able to take direct action to stop the petrol sniffing that had ravaged their community for the previous 10 years.

After the meeting, the community called all their petrol abusers together and told them they were not allowed to sniff any more and to take up alternative activities. The young people were having trouble accessing sniffable petrol by that stage, as Opal had replaced sniffable fuel in the region, so they agreed to stop even before the new law was passed. The young people got involved in alternative activities supported by the Papunya Council, Tangentyere and Waltja, and the local football team went on to win the Country Football League Grand Final. Since the meetings that requested the laws, petrol sniffing has not been a problem in the community. Now that the laws have been enacted, there is another layer of protection against this problem returning in future.

Tracey Brand, Acting Director of Tangentyere stated "This shows that there is a strength in the traditional Indigenous community that can work in partnership with the Government to deal effectively with problems that seemed impossible to solve. Tangentyere is proud to have been instrumental in assisting the communities find their strength and eliminate the scourge of petrol sniffing."

Tangentyere Council recommences Community Day Patrol

There is a sense of joy and optimism in the air at Tangentyere Council. On the 11th December 2006, the revamped Tangentyere Community Patrol, or Day Patrol as most people know it as, recommenced. In the short month that they have been operating they have received a very positive response from the broader Alice Springs community.

Individuals, local businesses and a number of different organisations have expressed how happy they are to see the Community Patrol back on the streets. Rightly so, as the Community Patrol offer an early intervention service targeting the CBD and other public areas. With the team made up of Aboriginal people, Tangentyere Community Patrol is able to talk with people, educate them of their options and defuse situations in an appropriate manner and before things get out of hand.

The patrol runs Monday to Friday from 6am to 2pm, except for Tuesday when the patrol runs from 9am – 5pm. The 6am start allows for an early morning ‘river run’ where the patrollers target people who are illegally camping in Todd River and Charles Creek. On Wednesday and Friday mornings these runs are jointly undertaken by Tangentyere Community Patrol and the Alice Springs Town Council Rangers.

These river runs involve much more than simply moving people on. Among other options, the Community Patrollers are able to refer people onto other services or onto their ‘Return to Home’ program. The ‘Return to Home’ program allows people from remote communities who are stuck in town to purchase a ticket home on the [commercial transport provider](#) and pay through a centrapay arrangement. Already this program has meant a number of people who have been unable to purchase a ticket upfront have been able to get home.

Tangentyere Council is delighted by the progress of the Community Patrol team so far. “We have been extremely lucky to be able to recruit a team who are so passionate and dedicated to their work. They all bring a variety of different skills including knowledge of number of different Aboriginal languages, knowledge of families and diverse work experience.”

Tangentyere is also overwhelmed by the positive response from the community. The word has spread very fast and every day the patrollers are being told by people in the community how good it is to have the service back. These people can see the good work that the patrollers are doing and can see the benefit this work brings to the broader community.

“Tangentyere Community Day Patrol is committed to maintaining our high level of professionalism and respect within the community. This will be achieved by continually building on our relationships with individuals and other services, providing our staff with appropriate training opportunities and maintaining our comprehensive database that allows us to monitor our progress.”