

“ITINERANTS” PROJECT IN DARWIN AND PALMERSTON

BACKGROUND BRIEF (Timeline)

May 1999

Community organisations meet at NLC to discuss “itinerants” issues.

August 2000

Territory Housing and ATSIC co-host a stakeholders meeting of 20 organisations at Health House to discuss “itinerants” issues:

The meeting sets up a Project Management Committee – NTG, ATSIC, Larrakia Nation, NAALAS, NLC and AMSANT – to oversee a comprehensive research project

- The research project is set up to “provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the issues facing Indigenous “itinerants” and service providers in the Darwin region and provide recommendations for addressing these issues, including proposals for pilot projects.”
- Terms of reference are developed and approved by PMC
- Funding is provided by Territory Housing, Territory Health Services and ATSIC (\$100,000).

September 2000

Research project tender is advertised.

December 2000

The PMC offered the consultancy to Dr Paul Memmott of Paul Memmott & Associates, a Brisbane-based researcher with extensive specialist expertise in urban itinerancy issues, after the PMC is satisfied that the research team would include local researchers and facilitators.

February 2001

Media conference at ATSIC to officially launch the Research Project with Kim Hill (ATSIC Northern Zone Commissioner), Dr Richard Lim, (the then NT Minister for Housing) and Curtis Roman, (Larrakia Nation).

July 2001

A second stakeholder workshop of 30 organisations at Nungalinga College recommends four key strategic areas with a Working Party of stakeholders for each strategy to provide specialist advice on the implementation of recommendations. The four Working Parties recommended are:

Patrolling

Education and Regional

Alcohol

Accommodation

November 2001

'The Long Grassers' A Strategic Report on Indigenous 'itinerants' in the Darwin and Palmerston Area is received.

- PMC adopts principal recommendations to establish four strategic Working Parties (as above) and develops a PMC Statement and Action Plan in response to the Report:
"The PMC is satisfied that the report is a comprehensive and authoritative document which will underpin the necessary strategic initiatives which now need to be acted on to ensure meaningful change is implemented under the four strategy areas identified in the Report."
- The PMC Action Plan identifies recommendations from the report and determines their status as short, medium or long term initiatives and identifies key stakeholders.
- The PMC Statement identifies defining principles for the project:
 1. **Proactive rather than Punitive Approach** based on informed and considered views.
 2. **Consensus** - achievable outcomes can best be attained by a consensus approach to decision-making and recommendations
 3. **Protection of a Range of Interests** including ensuring the health and safety of itinerants and the protection of their legitimate rights of access to urban areas; as well as addressing the negative impact of "itinerants" behaviour on themselves, on the lives of their relatives and acquaintances that reside in Darwin and Palmerston, and on the wider community.
 4. **Aboriginal Law** - traditional owners have a right to determine what is and is not appropriate behaviour on their traditional country. Larrakia Nation has developed cultural protocols during the project for this purpose.
 5. **Information and Education** campaigns need to be targeted at a range of groups including residents of Darwin and Palmerston, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visitors to Darwin and Palmerston and selected communities in the Top End region.
 6. **Networking and Coordination** - effective communications, networking and coordination between the many organisations and agencies involved will be required.

February to April 2002

- DCC invited to join the PMC for the implementation stage.
- Working Parties established and convened (see attached for Working parties membership and Convenors).

May 2002

- John Ah Kit, MLA, Minister for Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs announces the Government would be funding a Project Coordinator and "will devote substantial funding to the key strategic areas outlined in the report." (14 May 2002).
- Acting Coordinator employed by DCDSCA and outposted to the Larakia Nation as per recommendations of the PMC (20 May 2002).

June 2002

Parliament considers *Public Order and Anti Social Conduct Act Repeal Bill*. The Minister for Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, John Ah Kit, MLA, outlines the status of the project and states that “a budget proposal that outlines the report’s recommendations has received significant cabinet support, and I am pleased to say the strategy will be the subject of a major budget announcement.” (20 June 2002).

July 2002

- Minister announces \$500,000 commitment to the Project (30 July). In a speech to the Stakeholder and Working Party Forum on 31 July, Minister Ah Kit explains that “The role of the NT Government in all of this is NOT to boss people around, or to pretend that Government, and only Government, has the answers. **OUR ROLE IS TO FOSTER A “CULTURE OF COOPERATION”** so that coordination, networking and efficient use of resources is encouraged for both new initiatives and existing programs.”
- PMC sets priorities for Year 1 expenditure as follows:
 - Project Co-ordinator (including on costs and admin support)
 - Education and Regional Strategy (Larrakia Campaign)
 - Expansion of the Darwin Night Patrol
 - Information and Referral Office including proof of identification facility, Outreach Worker/Coordinator and diversionary activities
 - Feasibility studies, land utilisation survey and consultations
- PMC appoints Kelvin Costello and Trish Angus as co-Chairs of the PMC and authorises an invitation to Barry Smith (Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Policy and North Australia Office, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services) to join the PMC.
- PMC appoints co-Chairs and Barbara Cummings (ATSIC) as an Executive Sub-Committee (the same group is authorised as a Selection Committee for the Coordinator position).
- PMC authorises Coordinator position to adopt a public profile as required.
- Forum for Working Parties and Stakeholders held on 31 July at Nungalinya College. The Forum agrees to add a Data Collection and Research Working Party (convened by DFacS) and for the Alcohol and Patrolling Working Parties to be combined. Priorities determined for the Working Parties include service audits, developing terms of reference and strategic directions.

Priority Strategy Initiatives in Year 1

- **Project Coordinator**

Employment of a Project Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the Project Management Committee and four Working Parties and to implement strategy initiatives.

- **Education and Regional**

Larrakia education and information campaign including visits to selected communities

- **Community Patrol and Sobering Up Shelter**

Increasing hours of operation to a 24hour x 6 day service for the Sobering Up Shelter and a 14hour x 6 day service for the Patrol

- **Information and Referrals Office**

- One stop office for information, referrals

- Proof of identification facility

- Outreach Worker/Co-ordinator

- Day time diversionary activities

- **Research and Consultation**

Further research and consultation to underpin medium and long-term strategies

- **Support for Associated Initiatives**

(see following)

Associated Initiatives in Year 1

- **Larrakia Cultural Awareness Project**

Pilot cultural project at NT Museum includes “itinerants”

- **Darwin Ambassadors Project**

Darwin City Promotions proposal for training and employing Larrakia as a cultural service for visitors will include the exercise of cultural influence over inappropriate “itinerant” behaviour.

- **Larrakia Hosts and Rangers**

Casuarina precinct and Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

- **Legal Issues Research Project**

DCLS proposal for two stage project – report and resources kit

- **Yalu**

Galiwinku community members taking responsibility for countrymen in town.

- **Data Collection**

Data Collection Working Party has been established to coordinate effective data collection with secretariat support from DF&CS. A census working party will plan four census exercises over the next 12 months and a workshop for agencies and organisations collecting data will be organised in October.

Other Critical Issues

- **Young children at risk**
 - Requires co-ordinated response from a range of agencies

- **Appropriate Accommodation**
 - Audit of current supply and proposals being
 - Needs identified through the data collection process and by four sub-committees with expertise in the following needs-based areas:
 - Renal & Other Medical
 - Women
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Abuse
 - Land Utilisation Survey
 - existing living areas
 - land needs
 - Crisis accommodation in 2002/2003 Wet season

- **Withdrawal Services**
 - Availability of beds and programs to replace Detox Unit
 - Medium and long term rehabilitation options

- **Structural Disadvantage in Remote Communities**
 - Whole of Government Approach

