



Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community  
GPO Box 3721  
Darwin NT 0821

20 November 2002

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Submission by Officer-in-Charge, Jabiru Police Station**

Firstly, I apologise for not being able to appear before the Committee in person, however, the early birth of a child meant that I had to cancel my appearance to be with my family.

I have now been the Officer-in-Charge of the Jabiru Police Station since February 2000. I submit the following information for the consideration of the Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community based on my knowledge of this police district;

- The biggest licit substance abuse to impact upon the community of Jabiru & Kakadu National Park is alcohol. Intelligence suggests that cannabis is the main illicit substance used in the community. There is also intelligence to suggest that Aboriginal communities in the West Arnhem region are being targeted by drug dealers in relation to the sale and supply of cannabis.
- The impact of cannabis abuse on the community of Jabiru is not as obvious as in other smaller communities in Arnhem Land.
- The greatest group of persons in this community who are adversely affected by alcohol misuse appears to be Aboriginal persons. The representation of Aboriginal persons in alcohol related incidents, alcohol related crimes and offences is much higher than other demographics for this region.
- Jabiru Police are responsible for policing the township of Jabiru and the entire Kakadu National Park area up to and including the Bark Hutt Inn.
- Jabiru Police have Watch House facilities to hold persons in custody, however, the detention of persons in custody is personnel resource intensive and can impact upon the ability to provide other policing functions.
- The Kakadu Community Patrol also has a Sobering-Up shelter building, however, due to staffing limitations and the review of the Kakadu Community Patrol in Jabiru, this facility has not been used in over a year.

- Whilst the Jabiru Police are supported by the Kakadu Community Patrol, since the start of 2002 the Kakadu Community Patrol has been practically unoperational whilst it has undergone a major review of its service and objectives. Nonetheless, the Jabiru Police continue to work closely with the Territory Health Service, Djabuluka Association (Health Services), Djabuluka Kakadu Community Patrol, Djabuluka Drug & Alcohol worker and the Djabuluka Family Violence Worker on substance abuse issues.
- The community of Jabiru is very concerned about the use and abuse of licit and illicit substances. The formation and continued meetings of the Gunbang (Alcohol) Action Group, which is a community group made of up many key community stakeholders including police, is testament to his fact.
- The Gunbang (Alcohol) Action Group meets monthly to discuss many issues directly related to the use and abuse of licit and illicit substances in particular, alcohol.
- The Gunbang (Alcohol) Action Group continues to implement and monitor local agreements with licensees to prevent and restrict the general availability and control of liquor within Jabiru and Kakadu National Park.
- Whilst many of these local alcohol agreements are respected and enforced by licensees, the truth is that their liquor licences provide for greater sales/supply of liquor and it is only really the goodwill that ensures that the wishes of local community members and groups are being respected.
- The Gunbang Action Group is presently investigating ways of having the local restrictions incorporated into the liquor licences via the Licensing Commission. Even though the group is made up of many key representatives including leaders from government agencies, the group is only a community group and doesn't have any true power except that of lobbying and public pressure.
- The sale of alcohol within Jabiru is controlled and limited through local controls, although alcohol can still freely be brought into the community from elsewhere. It is not uncommon to hear of persons travelling to the Bark Hutt Inn, Pine Creek or Humpty Doo to specifically obtain alcohol to bring back to Jabiru to binge drink. Police are often called to incidents resulting from large amounts of liquor that have been brought into the community from elsewhere. These incidents are predominantly related to Aboriginal persons.
- Currently within Jabiru, it is only the Jabiru Gold Club that sells takeaway liquor – and this is only to its club members. The Golf Club imposes limits on the amount of alcohol that can be purchased by club members at any one time.
- The strict controls of liquor within the community could probably be one of the factors affecting the level of abuse relating to alcohol. Whilst alcohol is freely available to community members at all licensed premises, there still seems a strong demand, especially in the some Aboriginal communities, for greater access to alcohol.
- At the present time, there are three liquor restricted areas located within the Kakadu National Park and the Jabiru Police district boundaries. These are Mamukala community, Manabudurma Community and Mudginberri community. All of these communities are on Aboriginal land. Most of Arnhem land is now defined as a liquor restricted area too.
- Whilst police regularly patrol and attempt to enforce liquor restricted areas, the problem of distance, a lack of reporting and a lack of information often prevents the police from apprehending offenders and stopping liquor from being brought illegally into the restricted areas.

- A number of apprehensions have been made by Jabiru police in relation to liquor restricted areas, however, these have been police generated apprehensions rather than resulting from information from the community. Further, the legislation is difficult to police, as police can only apprehend a person once they have entered a restricted area and not before. This creates limitations for police to prevent such offences from being committed. Generally, by the time police become involved, the alcohol has already been brought into the restricted area and is already having a negative impact on that community.
- The impact of the negative effects of alcohol upon the community cannot be understated. Most significantly, the impacts of alcohol abuse in the community most severely impact upon persons from Aboriginal backgrounds. The abuse of alcohol is linked to Domestic and Family Violence, violence in general, public disorder, traffic offences and criminal damage to public and private property.
- For example, when large amounts of monies are brought into the community over a short period of time (such as Royalty Payments), it is not uncommon to see a large upsurge in alcohol use/abuse, increased calls for police assistance to respond to social disorder incidents and drunkenness. It also results in increased arrests and prosecution cases, mostly against Aboriginal persons. Such times normally result in a strain on policing services due to the higher than normal workloads that are caused and the increased number of persons and incidents required to be dealt with by police.
- Most significantly, the link between alcohol abuse and Family & Domestic Violence, especially in the Aboriginal community, cannot be denied. These types of incidents generally impact mostly upon Aboriginal women and their children. Aboriginal women often are the victims in such matters, suffering from physical violence resulting from the actions of their drunken partners. Their children suffer the detrimental consequences of such incidents including observing the violence and being involved in the violence. Jabiru Police regularly intervene in such matters and obtain emergency domestic violence orders on behalf of victims in an attempt to protect them from further violence. Often, many of these domestic violence orders are sought only to prevent further violence and to restrict the alleged offender from being in company of the victim whilst intoxicated; often the victim does not seek to annul or prevent the relationship from continuing despite the concerns of police.
- It is clear from these matters that the victims acknowledge that it is only the affects of alcohol that is negatively impacting upon their relationships and family. Sadly, there have been two domestic homicides at Jabiru in only the past few months in which Aboriginal women were the victims. Both of these deaths are believed to be alcohol related.
- The abuse of alcohol normally means that money that would normally be provided to family members is being wasted on alcohol and lost to licensees. This then adversely impacts upon the family unit, as they are no longer able to properly provide for their family members due to a lack of funds. In most instances, it seems that those most affected by alcohol abuse and excessive consumption are those that can financially least afford to waste monies on alcohol.
- Jabiru is also impacted upon from the restriction of alcohol at Gunbalanya. For example, when the Gunbalanya Social Club closes for a period of time (such as during a funeral event), family groups often then travel to Jabiru to access alcohol outlets.

- In these instances, the primary purpose of their travel is to drink alcohol, which then often results in disturbances and offences being committed in Jabiru. It also causes friction between the differing family groups who normally do not associate closely and are then forced to associate whilst one group is binge drinking or drunk.

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