

SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE
IN THE COMMUNITY

DATE: 22 October 2002

TABLED: 22 October 2002

SUBMISSION NUMBER 0063

*RECEIVED FROM:
Rev. Dean Whittaker
Uniting Church Jabiru
Thinking and talking about dry areas.*

Thinking and talking about Dry Areas

4 September 2002

*-Making a **Dry Area***

-The Bininj community is the one who decides an area should be a Dry Area.

All the people 'm the area need to agree that it should be a Dry Area and everyone should agree they will do everything they can to keep it dry.

They should decide **that** they themselves will not bring gunbang into that area.

They should decide to try and stop other people bringing gunbang into that area.

When they have decided-and committed themselves to this they ask the government to make a law for the community or place to become a Dry Area. When the government decides that the place is under that law then a sign gets put up saying the area is a Dry Area.

The Dry Area only works if Bininj going in and out of the Dry Area obey the Dry Area law. **If** people keep bringing Gunbang into the Dry Area then the Dry Area is no -different.

Dry Areas in Kakadu need strong sober Bininj

Here in Kakadu Dry Areas are not working well. For Dry Areas to work there need to be some strong sober Bininj who will stand up for the Dry Area and stand up for sober Bininj who aren't so strong. The Djamun need to know who-the sober Bininj are and be willing to back them up. At the start it might take a lot of work by djamun to back up the sober people and help make the Dry Area strong, but after a while people would start to respect that strong law and not bring gunbang in.

Or maybe the community would need to sit down and sort out what it really wanted. If some in the community didn't want it to be dry maybe they could work out what part should be wet and what part should be dry and agree to keep . gunbang out of the new agreed Dry-Area.

Dry Areas need sober Bininj and djamun to work together like a team. Bininj have to take the lead and Djamun need to back them up.

What about when Bininj bring grog In?

Bininj who want an area to be a Dry Area first of all need to speak to people who don't obey that Dry Area law. They need to say that the Dry Area is a decision of the community and ask the person to obey it.

People in a Dry Area can ask the djamun to work with them to make the Dry Area work.

If drunken people will not listen to Bininj who want an area dry, and will not do the right thing those Bininj can still do something:

- When people bring gunbang in and won't listen to the sober Bininj the sober Bininj can ring the djamun.
- OR-The next time they are in Jabiru they can call at the police station and report to the Djamun about the Bininj who are bringing grog in.
- OR The sober Bininj can let the djamun know when a grog run is happening so the djamun can stop the grog runners when they enter the Dry Area and make them go to court.
- OR Sober people can talk with djamun and Aboriginal organisations about what is working and what is a problem.
- OR Sober people can form a self help sober people's group and work out how they can work amongst themselves to support each other.

There are some other issues that this discussion raises. These issues relate to how Bininj communicate with police about Dry Areas and other alcohol related issues.

Language is an issue for some

No djamun in Jabiru speak Kunwinjku or Gundjehmi. If Bininj ring and speak to with djamun it has to be in English. For some Bininj this is a major problem. If there was a way of talking about these things in Bininj gunwok then there could be better understanding. This is true for djamun and Gunbang Action Group, courts, church etc.

Phone calls to djamun

1. Lack of phones

Many Bininj on communities have no access to a phone. While there is usually a public phone in the community, it often is broken down and not

working. Town camp has not had a public phone for some years. Mudginberri's public phone only works sometimes.

A small number of Bininj have their own household phone but there seems to be many times when these phones are out of order (lightning damage, cable damage etc) or disconnected because of unpaid telephone bills. There have been two private phones in town camp (one is disconnected, the other has had major problems this year). There was one private phone in Mudginberri (it is disconnected).

Some Bininj have purchased prepaid recharge mobile phones. These only provide coverage in limited areas around Jabiru like Town Camp, Kurrajong, and Kangaroo Valley. There is patchy coverage at Mudginberri. At Mudginberri - mobile phones-generally do not work in the houses but sometimes -have coverage over towards the old airstrip.

A mobile phone lets the buyer keep control over phone use by keeping the phone with them. The prepaid recharge method is not cheap with mobile phones. It appears each call costs a minimum of \$1 per call.

Calls going through to Darwin

Many times Bininj need police attendance outside of normal business hours. At these times when a person rings the local police phone number the call is redirected to the Darwin police call centre. When this happens the person answering doesn't know where the call is coming from. They ask many questions. They often ask people to spell out particular names and places. Some -Bininj' hang up because they feel like they don't know how to answer more and more questions or maybe they can't spell very well.

If Bininj' ring the Jabiru Police Station and the call is answered by Alistair or another who djamun they know and who knows the area the Bininj feel like they can talk a bit. If the call is answered by a balanda from out of town who doesn't - know-anything about Kakadu and just keeps asking questions then that's no good.

Because of this or because they have no phone some Bininj will contact a Balanda they trust and ask them to ring Darwin police. Often that person will ring with limited information and find it hard to answer all the questions they are being asked.

Sometimes the Darwin operator **will** ring back after a while and say, "Sorry there are no police on duty right now and we don't believe the situation justifies calling them out." Sometimes the operator will call back and say "Look the police are out the moment we will inform them of your request when they get back".

Sometimes after a person has spoken to the Darwin call centre, and they have contacted the djamun in Jabiru, the Jabiru djamun will then ring the person who reported the incident to clarify what the situation is. Sometimes the djamun chooses not to go out to the incident because the problem can be handled just as well the next day. Other times if it is urgent-they go.

3. *Response times*

The Bininj say there often seems to be a long time lag between the phone call being made asking for police attendance and the djamun arriving. Some Bininj feel that the djamun don't seem to think their problems are important or urgent. Sometimes Djamun sound as though they think that if a Bininj is fighting with another Bininj or hitting a Daluk that somehow its just normal and not something to be worried about. Djamun seem to respond quickly when there is a phone call by Balanda from the Club or Croc but not so quick to Town Camp and other outstations. Yet it is the Bininj who are injured or hurt or dead more often.

4. *When djamun come and talk to Bininj'*

Djamun sometimes seem to want to spend as little time as possible talking with and getting to know Bininj. Often the only contact they have is when there is big trouble. Djamun –often nly really know the community members who have been in trouble and the ones who have been hurt and have only seen them attheir worst or most worried. Djamun often mix with Balana in everyday life but only mix with Bininj when there is a problem. If djamun put more time into getting to know Bininj in non-trouble times then they would have the basis for talking with Bininj but instead they usually only come along when there is a problem and when everyone ffeels upset or worried about talking to them then. If djamun had good relationships with the positive leaders in the Bininj community then they could know who to talk with about particular problems. If they knew who was related to who they might be able to work better with the family.

To make Dry Areas work sober Bininj need to take the lead, and talk to each other and support each other. Djamun need to provide strong back

up, and there needs to be good communication and co-operation between Bininj and djamun~

What things can Bininj do to make Dry Areas work better?

What things can djamun do to make Dry Areas work better?

How can Gunbang Action Group support the Bininj and djamun?