



**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE
COMMUNITY**

SUBMISSION NUMBER 0051

DATE: *10 September 2002*

TABLED:

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Subject: sub ab. 10/9/02

Submission to: Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community
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From: John Greatorex, Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island, Ph: 89705012, Email: lmiller@octa4.net.au

Date: 10th September 2002

Background:

I have lived and worked in North East Arnhem Land for over twenty years. During this time I have spent many hours with Yolngu learning languages and culture.

During my time on Galiwin'ku I have come to the point of view that funding is not only being wasted but is contributing to the problem of substance abuse. By this I mean the programs funded to prevent substance abuse are indirectly and largely making the problem worse. Further, that the very people who are achieving positive results are not offered any form of assistance.

Issues:

1. The population of Galiwin'ku is not a community, it is a group of communities without clear leadership and direction. Galiwin'ku township is composed of over twenty groups of people who have come to the island over the past sixty years. For the vast bulk of the population their homelands are located on the mainland. Consequently over 90% of the population are living on 'some one else's land', do not feel at home, and accept that their rights are less than the land owners for access to housing, and jobs. Some times it is said by landowners that the other residents should return to their own country, leaving people feeling insecure and 'unsafe'.
2. There have been many programs funded by Territory and Federal governments, including programs for Youth suicide, substance abuse, vandalism, violence, diversionary programs, etc. This money helps the town grow, bring in materials, resources and worst of all attracts those Yolngu living on their traditional lands. But is these people on their homelands who are struggling against all odds to teach their children respect for their culture, heritage, and ancestry. It is these parents who are the most successful in preventing substance abuse, they do this by instilling a strong Yolngu identity in their children.
3. Solutions can be found, but at present there seems little desire to look for the underlying causes of the problems. Of course the landowners are happy to accept more houses, more

community programs to their land, they are more than pleased for their the township on their land to grow wealthy. It appears to me that it is also growing unhealthy, and that worse is coming.

I would appreciate the time to meet with the committee and discuss the contents of the submission.

John Greateorex