

SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE
IN THE COMMUNITY

DATE: 10 July 2002

TABLED:

SUBMISSION NUMBER 0044

*RECEIVED FROM:
Naiyu Nambiyu Community
Government Council., Daly River NT*

NAUIYU NAMBIYU COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT COUNCIL

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10 July, 2002

Secretariat,
Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community,
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory,
GPO Box 3 72 1,
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Sirs,

In response to your call for general submissions, Council would seek to submit the following comments for your consideration.

In so doing, it should be accepted that our comments relate only to the community of Nauiyu. Nauiyu is located at Daly River some 230 kilometres south west of Darwin. It is an Aboriginal community with a population of approximately 450 people and is contained within the larger district of Daly River.

The designated local government area administered by this Council covers primarily the community of Nauiyu together with a small area mainly used by the Traditional Owners, the Malak Malak people at the western end of Woolianna Road within the district. The community operates a successful CDEP programme, airstrip and other facilities including the Nauiyu Club, the Daly River Roadside Inn, a civil works programme that extends by contract with the NT Government on major roads in the area, a housing programme, a sports and recreation programme and other related activities. The community school and child care centre is operated by the Catholic Education Office.

Generally petrol sniffing does not appear to be a major problem in this community although there are incidents from time to time. Consequently our comments are directed towards alcohol abuse and cannabis use.

The community, by community request, is a designated restricted area for alcohol under the terms of the *NT Liquor Act*. Personal permits under Section 83 of the Act have been

approved for personal consumption. Applications for these are prior approved by Council and local Police before being submitted to the NT Liquor Commission for final approval. Such permits are

subject to the conditions specified in the Act and mainly are for personal social consumption of alcohol within the confines of the holders' home. Should a holder be guilty of an offence within the community that is alcohol related, the permit is immediately withdrawn. There have been no adverse incidents generally with holders and Council is happy to continue this policy.

(a) Community concern about the use and abuse of licit and illicit substances. From an anecdotal viewpoint, there appears to be a definite upward trend in the incidence of cannabis and other substance usage. Alcohol problems have always beset the community. There are definitely more incidents of anti-social behaviour in recent years and the trend appears to be increasing.

Over recent years there have been many behavioural changes noticed. For example, there is a growing tendency of participants under the community's CDEP scheme to opt out of participation and seek welfare assistance. This has led to difficulties in maintaining a suitable workforce to carry out community functions such as parks and garden maintenance, rubbish control and general community cleaning.

As an indication of community concerns, recently Council requested assistance from counsellors at Banyan House to instruct older members of the community in how to deal with people affected by drugs. This an indication of a trend of increasing drug usage in the community in that to many people dealing appropriately with people influenced by drugs is an unknown skill.

The community has successfully solicited funding to operate a Night Patrol service. Although this has operated in a somewhat ad hoc fashion in past years, the incidence of drunks and those affected by drugs has meant Council has had to employ a Co-Ordinator for its Night Patrol and provide a more efficient and regular service.

There have been incidents of community residents moving away from the community to more remote outstations to avoid the effects of alcohol and drug abuse. This has led to a greater strain on those residents remaining.

(b) Current trends in the use and abuse of licit and illicit substances in the Northern Territory and, as far as possible, taking into account regional, age, gender, other demographic characteristics and ethnic factors.

The community purchased the Daly River Roadside Inn in late 1998. This is a hotel, motel, restaurant, shop, fuel outlet and caravan park complex that has been operating commercially in the Daly River district for over 25 years. Apart from the Nauiyu Club which operates within the community on restricted hours on weekdays (no takeaway sales permitted), the nearest general alcohol outlet to the east is at Adelaide River or Hayes Creek some 110 kilometres away. West of Daly River the community at Peppimenarti operates the local club which again operates on restricted hours. There are no licenced outlets at other neighbouring communities of Palumpa and Wadeye.

The Daly River outlet operates daily between 10am and approximately 9.30pm (it operates under a roadside inn licence.) The Council applies local restrictions to alcohol sales as necessary to avoid disruption to cultural ceremonies in the area or when local behaviour warrants. Takeaway sales are

permitted only between the hours of 3pm and 9pm each day. No flagons are sold nor are bottled spirits or bottled beer available for sale to community residents.

As mentioned the community is a restricted alcohol area but a large fenced area has been exempted from the two kilometre laws by community request to allow the consumption of alcohol. This area is located approximately midway between the community and the hotel; approximately a kilometre from each.

Since hotel operations have been monitored by the community, there has been a definite trend in the volume of takeaway alcohol sales. Since 1999, (measured over a three week period in September) there has been a decrease of nearly 38% in the volume of takeaways sold. While this in part can be attributed to situations where alcohol is brought into the area from Adelaide River etc. as a result of a temporary restriction on takeaway sales or limiting bar sales to light beer only, the main causes seem to be the growing incidence and usage of cannabis in the area and the trend for illegal alcohol runs by Darwin based operators to areas to the west.

The hotel staff and local Police agree that many of the younger locals aged between 18 and mid twenties, are tending to spend their fortnightly income on cannabis and possibly other drugs rather than alcohol. It has been stated that they get "more value for their money" with drugs rather than alcohol. There has also been one or more home brew selling outlets in the area that affect hotel sales. Certainly the incidence of substance abuse is more noticeable in the community.

Local Police have been extremely diligent in trying to stop illegal alcohol and substance sales but without firm information and solid evidence of illegal trading, they are often powerless to curb the trade. There have been many arrests and convictions for alcohol abuse, carrying alcohol into the restricted area and detection of cannabis and other substances. Despite this the trend towards drugs appears to be growing. While Police have detected illegal growing of cannabis in the area, they feel that drugs are regularly imported into the community and district from Darwin and other areas.

The other trend noticed has been the decline in large purchases of alcohol from the hotel by people from communities to the west. It has been stated that large quantities are regularly flown into this area from Kununurra and other locations landing at locations within the Port Keats/Daly River Reserve outside the community restricted areas. It is known there is a regular carriage of alcohol from Darwin to areas west of Daly River where spirits and beer is sold at inflated prices. Reports are received regularly of antisocial disruption this causes to communities such as Peppimenarti, Woodyculpidya, Palumpa and Port Keats. Again, without definite knowledge of the shipments Police are almost powerless to stop the trading. The large area over which they have to patrol must also be considered.

- (c) The social and economic consequences of current patterns of substance abuse with special reference to the well-being of individuals and communities and to the demands placed upon government and non-government services.

Within the Nauiyu community the effects of alcohol and substance abuse are readily apparent. Regularly drunks enter the community late at night and disrupt residents. Families are disturbed and often have to seek refuge in neighbouring houses. Workers are often too tired to attend their employment, especially CDEP, and so incomes and community programmes suffer. Most CDEP

workers receive a low wage which is often not much more than that offered through New Start and other Centrelink schemes. Therefore any disruption to their personal ability to work can have disastrous and extremely negative effects on the household, families and community. Health and the attendance rates of children at the community school suffers. Fights and general civil disruption is commonplace placing growing demands on local police and residents.

Despite the efforts of Council through such programmes as sport and recreation, night patrol and similar, there appears to be a growing tendency for anti-social behaviour including vandalism and break-ins. The community clinic attends to a great many cases of general trauma that can be directly related to alcohol and substance abuse. In many instances, young children roam the community at all hours of the night unsupervised as their parents become affected.

One disturbing trend is the incidence of young children being taken with their parents and/or guardians to areas just outside the community where general drinking takes place. Clinic staff have noticed a trend for young teenagers, aged between 13 to 15, becoming attracted and possibly addicted to illicit substances through the growing trade in same and the easy availability.

Overall this places a growing demand on services such as Police and Night Patrol which impact into the limited financial resources of the community. The effects also flow onto a greater need for welfare, health and related services to the community.

- (d) Services currently available within the Northern Territory by both government and non-government agencies to deal with issues directly or indirectly related to substance abuse.

The Northern Territory Government, especially through Territory Health Services, provides assistance and support to communities such as Nauiyu. Alcohol and other drug branches have been established and they try and provide counselling, advice and financial support. The Commonwealth Government through the Department of Family Services provides assistance with programmes aimed at families and support for young people.

The Aboriginal & Islander Alcohol Awareness & Family Recovery Unit of the Catholic Church have operated a family rehabilitation and alcohol rehabilitation unit at the Five Mile at Daly River for many years. This has attempted to help people affected by alcohol and substance abuse to rehabilitate themselves and their families. Unfortunately this service closed from 28 June, 2002 due to insufficient funds. The community has supported local residents attending their programmes as well as those provided in Darwin by FORWAARD and CAAPS. Despite their best efforts, it still seems there is a growing trend for people in communities such as Nauiyu to become addicted.

There have been suggestions to Council that it consider establishing a sobering up shelter in the area in conjunction with the night patrol. However the cost of this to a small community would be enormous and almost beyond reach without substantial assistance.

- (c) Factors which directly affect the level and nature of substance abuse in the Northern Territory community or parts of that community, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

- (i) the accessibility/availability of licit and illicit substances within communities;
- (ii) the demographic and ethnic structure of the Northern Territory; and
- (iii) the correlation between socioeconomic conditions and substance abuse.

The level of addiction to illicit substances appears to be directly related to the general socioeconomic circumstances of any community and the level of local industry which is able to provide employment.

It is accepted that the very low population of the Northern Territory, spread as it is over vast distances, makes policing and detection of illegal substance trafficking extremely difficult. Traffickers in illegal substances and alcohol obviously take advantage of this situation and easily avoid detection.

- (f) Appropriate policies and services for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse in the Northern Territory.

Any policy or service designed to combat the influence of substance abuse must be directly linked with employment or an activity that would decrease the amount of boredom and attempt to provide an alternative to illicit substances.

In conclusion, Council would actively support any policy or proposal to combat illicit substance and alcohol abuse. It considers that the current trends, if continued unchecked, could have dire consequences on the future viability of communities such as Nauiyu. Council wishes the Committee well in their deliberations. Our apologies for the lateness of this response.

Yours sincerely,

David Shoobridge
TOWN CLERK