

Community Legal Education in Arnhem Land

In November 2005 Miwatj Aboriginal Legal Service invited a number of legal agencies and services from the Top End to join them in delivering a series of Community Legal Education (CLE) workshops in North East Arnhem Land. This presented an opportunity for services to collaborate and deliver a range of information to communities which would not usually have direct access to community legal education.

Intensive planning took place in December, which included making contact with community representatives, arranging the itinerary, charters, transport and accommodation and logistical considerations such as passenger weight, airstrip suitability and cyclone threats.

AGENCIES INVOLVED

In January 2006, representatives from the Family Court, NT Legal Aid Commission and North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency travelled to Nhulunbuy to commence the workshops. Unfortunately the Top End Women's Legal Service were unable to attend, but provided publications and promotional materials to be distributed in the communities.

AIMS

There were two key aims of the trip:

1. To ascertain the CLE needs of some key communities in North East Arnhem Land; and
2. To provide information in relation to:
 - * Your rights when dealing with police;
 - * Domestic Violence and the law;
 - * Family Law; and
 - * Changes to Indigenous legal services.

WHERE WE WENT

We visited the communities of Umbakumba, Angurugu, Numbulwar, Bickerton Island, Ramingining,



Milingimbi, Galawinku and Ski Beach

UMBAKUMBA

A small meeting was held with Community Government Council members and the Women's resource centre. The community expressed a desire for regular visits to the community and showed an interest in receiving more information.

ANGURUGU

There was a large turn out of men and women from the community. The women were especially interested in issues relating to maintaining contact with extended family, particularly grandchildren, when parents separate.

NUMBULWAR

The community of Numbulwar expressed concern at the lack of information and support which they receive in relation to family violence. There was a request for counselling services in relation to family violence. Both the men and women were concerned that they did not fully understand how the legal system works in relation to restraining orders and said that this was causing tensions in the community. The community was keen to attend educational workshops for men and women about domestic violence and restraining orders.

BICKERTON ISLAND

The small community of Bickerton Island was very welcoming. There were few legal concerns among residents there, with the main issues being family law and child contact.

RAMINGINGING

The Ramingining community was interested in having more access to legal education workshops in a range of areas.





A key issue raised at Raminiginging was the need for the community to have a better understanding of their rights when dealing with police. There was an interest in legal services assisting the community to have better relationships with police by facilitating meetings between the Raminiginging community and police.

MILINGIMBI

The meeting at Milingimbi was well attended by senior members of the community. One of the key areas where information was requested was the rights of individuals when dealing with police.

The senior members expressed the need for more community legal education workshops over a longer period so that legal services could spend time talking to youth, women and men as distinct groups.

GALIWIN'KU

The community meeting at Galiwinku on Elcho Island was well attended by a range of people across the community.

Some members were concerned that the Anunga Rules are not being adhered to by police.

Community expressed their concern that they have a poor understanding of key legal issues and said there is a need for longer visits and more workshops to provide legal information. In particular, there is a need for the development of resources which are in language and do not rely on literacy, such as DVDs, CDs and radio segments.

SKI BEACH

The meeting at Ski Beach was attended by two



distinct groups – women and youth. The youth were interested in information about rights when dealing with police. Women had family law concerns which centred around contact with grandchildren. The women also expressed a desire to apply their own traditional dispute resolution processes to address domestic violence as the first resort.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These workshops provided a rare opportunity for legal services and agencies to work together in a remote setting to provide community legal education.

We found a lack of knowledge and understanding in the communities visited about the legal system generally and the particular legal issues being discussed. The language and literacy issues in the community highlighted the need for legal education materials to be developed in a medium which is appropriate to the audience.

All services involved resolved to continue to explore how these identified needs can be addressed in a collaborative way.

