

Groote Eyland Safe House one step closer

Clayton Utz and the North Australian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service (NAAFVLS) celebrated a milestone in the Groote Eylandt Safe House Project on 14 June.

An afternoon tea for those involved marked the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations, who have conducted consultation and compiled a business plan for the safe house project to date.

Clayton Utz Lawyer Alix Cameron and her colleague David Hillard spoke of their role in the project at the function, as did Rhonda Solien and Angela Dowling from

NAAFVLS. Ms Cameron said the MOU will help those involved proceed with the project's business plan, "with more strength and authority."

Ms Cameron said they had hoped to have a temporary safe house structure in place by January 2008, however they have faced delays.

"It is possible that the Commonwealth's intervention in the Territory may expedite the process, given that the 'Little Children are Sacred Report' included recommendations for more safe places for people to escape violence in communities," said Ms Cameron.



Vicki Brogan, Deanna Roberts, Richard Fejo, Sue Phoo, Nikki Bensch, Ronda Solien, Peta Brogan, Pat Raymond & Angela Dowling



Joanna Albert, Helen Willson, Eliza Tuckwell

Establishment of a permanent structure will rely on funding being obtained.



Nikki Bensch, Emma Salkavich & Pauline Gartlan



Pat Raymond, Rhonda Solien, Richard Fejo, Caitlin Perry and Sue Phoo



Pat Raymond, Vicki Brogan, Peta Brogan, Zinta Tomanis, Helen Degening



Angela Dowling, Sue Phoo, Rhonda Solien & Megan Howitt

About the Groote Eylandt Women's Safe House

Groote Eylandt, located 630km from Darwin by air, off the east coast of Arnhem Land in the Gulf of Carpentaria, has a history of family violence directed towards women. According to Office of Crime Prevention statistics, applications for Restraining Orders increased from 11 in 1999 to 51 in 2006, although some of this increase can be attributed

to the increase in availability of legal services. At present, there are no safe places for victims of family violence to escape to, particularly if victims do not wish to contact police.

NAAFVLS employs local Indigenous women as community legal workers (CLW's) in each community they are involved in. These CLW's have had to take victims into

their own home on occasion, placing them at extreme risk.

In addition to assisting with the immediate safety of victims, the safe house will facilitate counseling, mediation, advocacy and referral services to help victims get by in the longer-term.

The safe house will provide a refuge for women of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island who

are victims of family violence and sexual assault. Programs and assistance is also likely to be extended to men from the community, although the safe house itself will be for women only.

The safe house will employ a General Manager, Operational Coordinator, Counselor and cultural advisors.

Loadman retires

Members of the Darwin legal profession were amused by tales of a colourful career at Magistrate David Loadman's farewell sitting at the Magistrates Court in May.

Mr Loadman, who has been in the Territory for over nine years, reluctantly retired from the bench on his 65th birthday, under the mandatory retirement legislation.

Originally from South Africa, Mr Loadman and his family immigrated to Australia in 1977, settling in Melbourne, where he has since returned following his retirement.

Law Society President, Allison Robertson, said in her address at the sitting that it's not often members of the legal profession today gain so much enjoyment from their jobs.

"Your Honour should be congratulated for having brought such a positive approach to your work in the Northern Territory," Ms Robertson said.

Ms Robertson made reference to the many colourful headlines Mr Loadman had provided for the *NT News*, however she said his career had involved more than providing inspiration for journalists. She detailed his qualifications and experience which included being admitted to legal practice in the Royal Kingdom of Swaziland, acting as a legal advisor to the Republic of Nauru and the Victorian Department of Education, and five years as secretary of the Maritime Law Association of Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to sitting as a magistrate in the Northern Territory, Mr Loadman has held positions as the President's Delegate of the Mental Health Tribunal, and Chairperson of the Lands, Planning and Mining Tribunal.

Fellow magistrate Vince Luppino, John Tippett QC



Magistrates Sue Oliver, John Lowndes, David Loadman, Vince Luppino and Jenny Blokland with one of Mr Loadman's gifts from his colleagues



David Loadman, Jenny Blokland and Vince Luppino on the bench

and Glen Dooley recalled many amusing anecdotes from Mr Loadman's trials, during the morning's proceedings.