

But the job I took has a far more human element than I had anticipated. I knew that I would be assisting people to use the law to protect the environment, but I had not realised the day-to-day realities of resource extraction and other developments on people living in remote Indigenous communities.

These are the realities of my clients, and I use that term very deliberately. They are indeed clients, with very real legal problems, difficult to imagine from the confines of a major east coast city or the corridors of power in Canberra. That fact does not diminish the importance of those legal problems and it should not affect the ability for those people to understand and access the rights and remedies available to them under environmental laws. It is deeply offensive that our Commonwealth Attorney-General reduces my clients' to a 'cause', rather than recognising them for what they are, people with legitimate legal problems with a right to access remedies available to them under Australia's environmental laws. The EDONT seeks to ensure those rights are upheld, with or without government support.

What would closure have meant for the NT? Last year we visited communities across the length and breadth of the Territory, from Alice Springs to Maningrida, from Borroloola to Wadeye and many in between. All of those visits were undertaken at the request of those communities, who sought information on various matters relating to environmental law.

We have provided education, advice and representation on a large range of issues that have included fracking, environmental assessments, seabed mining, mine derived pollution, heritage and water extraction. By way of example:

- We successfully represented the Environment Centre Northern Territory in the Supreme Court in relation to the process that the Minister must follow when making water extraction licence decisions.
- In the Lands, Planning and Mining Tribunal we successfully argued that the Heritage Council's decision, to not declare the Kulaluk Lease Area a heritage place, should be set aside.



- We continue to work on behalf of our clients to obtain a fuller picture about the impacts and issues associated with the very problematic McArthur River Mine in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Our work has included statutory complaints and freedom of information requests.

The EDO also provides valuable input to law reform work in the NT. We make detailed submissions to government, inquiries and independent agencies. By way of example, the recent Hawke Inquiry in Hydraulic Fracturing said the following about our submission:

The NT Environmental Defenders Office 31 October 2014 submission proposes a best practice regulatory framework for the hydraulic fracturing operations, including some important case studies. This submission will be particularly valuable in working through what has to be done to create an improved regulatory framework in the NT.

In my mind, it's clear that the closure of the EDONT would have been of significant detriment to the NT community. We take this opportunity to thank our supporters and we look forward to continuing to provide this community service for the 2015/16 financial year.

For more information about EDONT, please visit edont.org.au



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