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15 August 2008

NTER Review Secretariat
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Canberra Business Centre, ACT 2610
EMAIL: nter.review@fahcsia.gov.au

Dear NTER Review Secretariat,

Re: **SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Please accept the following as the Tangentyere Council Inc. Submission to the Review Board of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER).

Tangentyere Council will also be dispatching in hard copy a Research Report on the Impact of the NTER on Alice Springs Town Camp Residents and a DVD that contains interviews that informs the Research Report.

Yours sincerely

William Tilmouth
Executive Director

TANGENTYERE COUNCIL INC

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW BOARD

OF THE

NORTHERN TERRITORY EMERGENCY RESPONSE



AUGUST 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following provides a summary of the impact of the NTER on town camps in Alice Springs in the following areas:

- Income Management
- Measures relating to Alcohol and Pornography
- Appointment of a Government Business Manager.
- Health
- Education
- Security of Children
- Employment and Training
- Housing
- NTER Implementation
- NTER Goals and Benchmarks

Income Management

- The views of Alice Springs town camps residents on income management are mixed for both men and women. Some people report more money being available for food and clothes, particularly for people who drink heavily. Others report that income management has made life harder for them, they look after their children and families responsibly.
- Many people report a strong sense of being discriminated against and stigmatized by being treated as though they were abusing their children.

Measures relating to alcohol and pornography

- Reports are mixed, some people saying that there is less drinking on town camps now. There are reports that people are drinking out of town and driving home drunk or are drinking in the hills surrounding town camps with less accessibility if assistance is needed.
- Discussions that were underway with the NT Licensing Commission to enable town camp residents to nominate their own houses and public areas in town camps as dry were overridden by the NTER.
- The large signs that were placed outside town camps indicating the banning alcohol and pornography did not appear to have any effect on people's drinking behavior, but did make people living in those town camps feel branded as all being drunks and child abusers.
- Night Patrol resources are less now than they were prior to the NTER, with only one car on patrol for five nights a week, for all 18 town camps and the Town's Central Business District.
- The NTER has not addressed issues of the supply of alcohol, in particular having fewer take away outlets and having an alcohol free day each week.

Appointment of a Government Business Manager

- A Government Business Manager for Alice Springs Town Camps has been appointed for only a short time and it is not possible to assess any impact at this stage. The NTER does not appear to have addressed the need for greater security and streamlining of funding or for evidence based planning approach to the needs of communities and regions.

Health

- Child health checks had been carried out on 261 Town camp children as at 21 May 2008. While this is valuable, many of these conditions will re occur due to the children's living conditions.
- Many people on town camps have serious health problems that are not being checked or managed. For health improvements to be sustainable there is a need for additional resources that enable education, screening, treatment and management to occur on town camps as an outreach service.

Education and Early Childhood Development

- The NTER has not had an impact on the education of children on town camps at this stage. No additional resources have been provided or committed under the NTER to enable early childhood development and family support on town camps through establishment of multi purpose family centres, as recommended in "Children are Sacred" report.

Security of Children

- The Tangentyere Safe Families Program is facing a substantial reduction in funding in 2008-09. This is a nationally acclaimed program, based on kinship systems, that operates a children's safe house and supports families to order to reduce the potential for Aboriginal children to enter the child protection system. It is of great concern and surprise that this program is not even maintaining its funding when it is directly addressing the major aims of the NTER.

Employment and Training

- Tangentyere CDEP was closed in November 2007 and reinstated in July 2008.

Housing

- There has been no improvement to housing on town camps as a direct result of the NTER. The arrangements for upgrading housing and essential services on town camps occurred outside of the NTER process.

NTER Implementation

- The NTER was imposed in a top down manner that minimized Aboriginal input, reduced people's protection under the Racial Discrimination Act, and lost much potential goodwill for change.
- After one year of the NTER, few funds appear to have gone directly to improving the situation on town camps in Alice Springs.
- The aims of the NTER are broad and lack clear goals and benchmarks by which success can be measured.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Tangentyere Council recommends that the government fund a system of voluntary income management which includes a financial literacy component, combined with a system of compulsory income management for certain individuals based on clearly identified unacceptable behaviour.

Recommendation 2

Legislation making town camps dry should be repealed and replaced by a system of the nomination of dry houses and dry public spaces on town camps, with increased police resources to assist with enforcement.

Recommendation 3

Sufficient funds are allocated to allow Tangentyere Council to operate two Night Patrol vehicles for five nights per week.

Recommendation 4

That the government supports measures for which there is already evidence of success, such as alcohol pricing policies and one day a week without any sales of alcohol.

Recommendation 5

Remove Government Business Managers and increase the flexibility of government programs to meet Indigenous needs on the ground, (as recommended by the Australian National Audit Office <http://www.anao.gov.au>), with triennial funded programs that link to needs based regional plans.

Recommendation 6

A disease screening and management service be established as a mobile or outreach service to Alice Springs Town Camps.

Recommendation 7

Ensure that there is public transport that town camp children can access to go to school as a matter of urgency

Recommendation 8

Upgrade and staff multi purpose family centres on all town camps to enable early childhood development and appropriate education, health and welfare services to reach town camp children.

Recommendation 9

Undertake an audit of children on town camps to assess their education support needs in conjunction with families and local schools.

Recommendation 10

Resource Tangentyere Council's Safe Families Program and similar programs to ensure adequate resources for operational functions and capital requirements.

Recommendation 11

That the exemption of the

- *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act, 2007*
- *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007*
- *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007*

from part II of the Racial Discrimination Act be removed.

Recommendation 12

That the Australian Government define clear goals and benchmarks for the NTER, and re-badge the NTER as "Closing the Gap for Children".

INTRODUCTION

Tangentyere Council is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input to the Review of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. We support the Minister's commitment to improving the safety and wellbeing of children and families in remote Northern Territory communities and town camps and to using an evidence based approach to closing the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australia (Media Release *NT Emergency Response Review Board*, 06/06/2008)

The following specific actions have been part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) for town camps in Alice Springs.

1. Welfare quarantining (income management)
 - Income management began on town camps on 7 January 2008.
2. Alcohol and Pornography
 - All town camps have been declared dry.
 - Very large signs have been placed at the entrance to town camps specifying prohibition of pornography and alcohol.
3. Government Business Managers
 - A government business manager has just been appointed to Tangentyere Council for three months, and covers Amoonguna and outstations around Alice Springs, as well as the town camps.
4. Health Checks
 - A total of 261 health checks have been undertaken on children living on town camps (29.05.08). The main health problems identified have been infections especially trachoma, scabies and lice, dental problems and anemia.
5. Abolition of CDEP/ creation of real jobs
 - Tangentyere CDEP had an allocation of 280 positions and was abolished on 16 November 2007.
 - 35 part time equivalent positions (filled mostly by people from town camps) were created and funded at Tangentyere Council in recognition of a number of CDEP jobs actually being "real" jobs. It is hoped that these positions continue.

Comments relating to these areas are grouped under the following major headings:

Section A. Additional NTER Measures

1. Income management
2. Alcohol and Pornography
3. Government Business Managers

These measures were enabled by the legislation enacted for the Northern Territory Emergency Response, which designated town camps and remote Aboriginal communities as "prescribed areas".

Section B. Ongoing Programs and Services to Improve Wellbeing of Indigenous Children and communities

This section refers to programs and services which have always been the responsibility of governments. Some of these have had additional allocations or commitments under the NTER, while other areas such as housing have had substantial funds committed to them, but this has been outside the NTER processes. Consequently, there is much confusion about what is part of the NTER and what is not.

1. Health
2. Education
3. Security of Children
4. Employment and Training
5. Housing

These areas are not listed in priority order. All of these areas are interconnected and considered to be of high priority.

Section C. NTER Implementation and processes

This section examines the processes through which the NTER has been implemented and the lack of clear goals and benchmarks accompanying that implementation.

There are also the following attachments:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Attachment One | Experiences Of Income Management Issues Of The Finance Department And Bank Agency At Tangentyere From Jan 08 To End May 08: |
| Attachment Two | Tangentyere's Voluntary Food Voucher System |
| Attachment Three | Alice Springs Aboriginal Community Patrols Briefing Paper |
| Attachment Four | How Is Child Abuse And Family Violence Tackled On Town Camps? |
| Attachment Five | Reform Of CDEP, Tangentyere Council 2008 |
| Attachment Six | Feedback from A Town Camp Community Meeting on The NTER |
| Attachment Seven | Income Management & Other Intervention Stories |

SECTION A.
ADDITIONAL NTER MEASURES ON TOWN CAMPS

This section relates to those measures that have specifically been made possible under the NTER legislation, and which have been implemented on town camps.

1. Income management

What has worked?

Anecdotal feedback indicates that some people feel that more money is being spent on food and clothes. This feedback includes that income management is most beneficial for those who used to spend most of their money on alcohol, as they are looking better fed and clothed.

What has not worked – for individuals?

- The level of micro management involved in the NTER income management makes the system cumbersome, and mistakes that affect individuals are numerous and an inevitable result of such micro management of people's lives.
- The logistics of income management have been particularly difficult for elderly people or people with disabilities.
- Anecdotal feedback indicates that financial education by Centrelink is either not being provided or is ineffective.
- People are being made more dependant on government looking after their needs, not less.
- Some people who have been quite distressed by the application of income management. These people feel a great sense of shame through being treated in the same category as negligent or abusive parents, on the basis of race only. This is exacerbated by having to line up at the Centrelink office in town for long periods with queues often banking up on the street.
- Some people have experienced problems due to lack of immediate disposable cash for obligations such as traveling to funerals.

What has not worked – for organisations?

- A number of specific problems for Tangentyere's management of the intersection of income management with the community banking service and the housing rental collection, and the consequent need for additional internal systems to be established is included in Attachment One.
- Prior to income management under the NTER, approximately 840 adults living on town camps in Alice Springs had been accessing the Tangentyere's food voucher system on a voluntary basis, through the Centre Pay system. With 1955 residents of town camps, including children, this means that there is a high percentage of adults living on town camps who access this system, although some non town camp residents also use the system. The use of Tangentyere's food voucher system since the introduction of income management has decreased by about 10-15%. For details on how this system operates, please see Attachment Two.

- To comply with checking requirements, Tangentyere Council keeps all the Food Vouchers and cash register dockets from the Milner Road supermarket (of which it is part owner). By the end of 12 months, there will be 60 arch lever folders containing around 9,900 vouchers. It should be noted that the larger stores such as Woolworths, Coles and Kmart do not have to undertake this detailed reporting as they are able to provide a store gift card instead. Hopefully introduction of the new debit card system will alleviate these problems.
- Town Camp Community Centres note that their Centrelink work has increased dramatically, including time at Centrelink, on the phone to Centrelink, and assisting people who have had problems at Centrelink with nothing really explained properly. People are seriously distressed by this.

The Future of Income Management

Tangentyere Council believes that the following changes would improve the NTER's income support system:

- Introduction of a voluntary system of income management, combined with a compulsory income management system for certain individuals based on clearly identified unacceptable behaviour. This would mean a system based on choice for those who see benefits in having some income quarantined, would impose consequences for unacceptable behaviour, and would remove race as the main basis for the policy.
- Support for organizations/ communities to meet costs of voluntary income management (Tangentyere Council employs one full time person to manage a voluntary system that has provided approximately 850 food vouchers per fortnight, and over 15,000 food vouchers per year).
- Provision of a financial education process to increase long term independence. This could be voluntary for those on voluntary income support and compulsory for those on compulsory income support.
- Introduction of mechanisms for identifying those who would be on compulsory income management. This would need further research but options may include:
 - Orders issued through the alcohol court
 - As a penalty for breaching Centrelink activity test requirements for certain benefits
 - Through child protection processes
 - A system similar to that being developed on Cape York, in consultation with local town camp community members.
- Legislation against key cards and pin numbers being held by dealers (third parties).
- Establishment of a local complaints system with an attached interpreter capacity to enable people to have their complaints resolved.

Recommendation 1

Tangentyere Council recommends that the government fund a system of voluntary income management which includes a financial literacy component, combined with a system of compulsory income management for certain individuals based on clearly identified unacceptable behavior.

2. Alcohol and Pornography

What has worked?

There are some reports of less drinking among town camp residents, but this appears to be related to either less disposable income or reduced supply measures that are separate to the NTER, and not to town camps being declared dry as such. Some camps have also reported increased drinking by additional visitors from remote areas who have come to town for longer periods due to the intervention, and particularly for factors related to income management.

What has not worked?

- Anecdotal information from town camps generally is that drinking decreased quite significantly at first, but then climbed back to previous levels once people realized that there are insufficient police officers to enforce the dry town camps properly.
- It has been the Council's experience that levels of drinking have increased near town camps and this has led to an increase in intoxicated people on the camps. With the intervention, the number of drinking spots around Alice Springs has spiraled. These places typically are locations that are inaccessible or hidden from view. Town campers complain now about intoxicated people coming on to camps and they worry for family drinking where they cannot be looked after. The intervention appears to have just moved the problem rather than addressed problem drinkers' alcohol addiction.
- These areas cannot be patrolled regularly by the police or Tangentyere community day or night patrols. There is often limited access to water or telephones, which raises safety concerns for drinkers and the children they may have with them, as they would have limited access to ambulances if needed. This has also raised concerns about drink driving and safety of people in those 'drinking camps'.
- Prior to the NTER, discussions were being held between Tangentyere Council and the NT Licensing Commission to enable town camp residents to nominate their own houses as dry, in the same way that public housing tenants can do. This process would enable better monitoring of drinking, and less unsafe drinking practices. However, discussions ceased with the implementation of the NTER.
- Tangentyere Council works closely with police through our night and day patrols, and supports extra police services. However, we also advocate monitoring and improving police practice, including training and cultural awareness training, and establishing an independent police complaints body as a check and balance to extra powers the police now have. As outlined in Tangentyere's separate report on research into the impact of the intervention, the changes to policing practices are of great concern to the community.

- Tangentyere Council now only has sufficient funds to have only one Night Patrol car operating five nights per week. Prior to the abolition of CDEP there were two Night Patrol cars. This reduces capacity substantially to prevent harm from alcohol abuse. Please see Attachment Three for a Briefing paper on Tangentyere Patrols.
- Very large signs, now replaced by smaller signs, have been placed at the entrance to town camps specifying prohibition of pornography and alcohol. Due to protests at the insulting nature of these signs, they were replaced by smaller signs. Tangentyere Council believes that this process did harm to people's self esteem, had no effect on alcohol or pornography and created a sense of shame amongst residents.
- Tangentyere Council has attempted over many years to assist Aboriginal people to learn to live with alcohol in a responsible manner and to reduce the problems associated with alcohol abuse. In addition to night patrols, Tangentyere Council established a social club to provide a family friendly venue for regulated and social drinking and meals, and opposed additional take away alcohol outlets, especially where they were located near to town camps. Many of these efforts were not supported by government, most notably the community driven attempt to make Abbotts Camp dry, which took seven years and a change of Territory government to achieve success.
- The NTER has not addressed measures that have been shown to be effective elsewhere including alcohol pricing policies, reducing the number of take away outlets, and having an alcohol free day each week.

Recommendation 2

Legislation making town camps dry should be repealed and replaced by a system of the nomination of dry houses and dry public spaces on town camps, with increased police resources to assist with enforcement.

Recommendation 3

Sufficient funds are allocated to allow Tangentyere Council to operate two Night Patrol vehicles for five nights per week.

Recommendation 4

That the government supports measures for which there is already evidence of success, such as alcohol pricing policies and one day a week without any sales of alcohol.

3 Appointment of a Government Business Manager

What has occurred under the NTER

- A Government Business Manager (GBM) was appointed to cover the Alice Springs Town Camps, Amoonguna community and outstations near Alice Springs serviced by the Ingkerreke Outstations. The incumbent is local and was well abreast of the community. Both Tangentyere and the incumbent were fortunate that an amicable relationship had previously been established. Due to the short time frame that the GBM has been in place for town camps, it is not possible to evaluate the position.
- However, it is noted that communities have had no input into the appointment of these managers and no account has been taken of where good governance was already in place.
- Tangentyere Council questions whether this is an effective mechanism to increase resources to communities or to make the labyrinth of government funding more efficient and streamlined.
- In the interim, Tangentyere Council considers that the GBM can provide crucial support by accessing funding for the compilation of statistics, that will underpin comprehensive needs based regional planning across town camps.

Recommendation 5

Remove Government Business Managers and increase the flexibility of government programs to meet Indigenous needs on the ground, (as recommended by the Australian National Audit Office <http://www.anao.gov.au>), with triennial funded programs that link to needs based regional plans.

SECTION B.

ONGOING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO IMPROVE WELLBEING OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES

This section refers to programs and services which have always been the responsibility of governments. Some of these have had additional allocations or commitments under the NTER, while other areas such as housing have had substantial funds committed to them, but this has been outside the NTER processes. Because of this, there is much confusion about what is part of the NTER and what is not.

1. Health

What has occurred under the NTER?

Child Health Checks

- As of May 21 there had been 261 Child Health Checks (CHCs) completed by the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress for children living on town camps aged 0-15 years. Our information from Congress includes the following:
 - All those checked need dental follow up. There was a lot of initial treatment for lice, scabies and anaemia which were treated with penicillin and iron injections. There were some referrals for dental treatment, but for some it was problematic as they needed to be treated through general anaesthetic via the hospital. These procedures include a pre-op one day then show at 7am the next morning which apparently was not all that successful.
 - Generally the CHC's results were broken down into three categories
 - specialist referral and appointment(s) and then follow by GP.
 - trachoma follow ups, these need to be treated as a 'cluster' (everyone in household) and then a recall in 6 months.
 - anaemia, scabies and lice which will be treated if and when people re-present.
 - The Phase 2 of these CHCs has one doctor employed with 2 Aboriginal Liaison Officers until June 20, mostly following up on the trachoma treatments. If children/families are difficult to find then the different Tangentyere programs, Ketye (Under 7s), Safe Families, and Hidden Valley and Larapinta Valley Community Centres will provide what assistance they can.

Additional Health Services needed

- While additional resources of treatment of all of the infections identified through CHCs will be very valuable, experience in the Northern Territory is that these infections already are treated frequently and are highly likely to re-occur unless housing and environmental health conditions improve substantially. This can only be done through significantly improved housing combined with environmental health practices and education programs that engage people in a sustained, non judgmental and constructive manner. It is hoped that the commitment of \$50 million by the Australian Government to upgrade houses and essential services on town camps under a 40 year sub lease arrangement (outside of the NTER process) will result in sustainable health improvements for town camp residents.

- The Baker Heart and Diabetes Research Institute is currently undertaking a study of the prevalence of heart failure among Central Australia's Aboriginal population, which includes town camps in Alice Springs. Results to date for town camp populations indicate that more than half of those people screened are at risk of heart attack. The study's research team had predicted that they would find that 20% of people are at risk of heart attack, which is double the rate in the wider population. In fact the rate is five times that of the wider population. These people are not being checked and their conditions are not being managed.
- There is an urgent need to have a mobile screening service on town camps that screens for all conditions known to be of high prevalence among Aboriginal populations, including infectious diseases common amongst children and dental needs. This needs to be combined with ongoing management of those conditions as part of a mobile service, or services that have an outreach base on town camps. Early intervention and the active involvement of town campers in understanding and managing their health status is crucial to meeting the government's commitment to closing the gap on life expectancy.

Recommendation 6

A disease screening and management service be established as a mobile or outreach service to Alice Springs Town Camps.

2. Education and Early Childhood Development

What has occurred under the NTER

- Tangentyere Council is aware that the Australian government has committed funds to additional teachers and for capital infrastructure for schools, much of which is still to occur. These measures do not appear to have had an impact on town camp children at this time.
- Funding for Tangentyere programs relating to education and early childhood development has not changed under the NTER.

Existing programs

- Tangentyere Council has attempted to assist town camp children access education. These measures include
 - the Yarrenyty-Arltere Learning Centre (YALC) at Larapinta Town Camp. There is an adjunct to Gillen Primary School located at YALC which has been successful in providing a transition to mainstream schooling for children at Larapinta Town Camp.
 - Close liaison between the Hidden Valley Community centre and local schools. (Larapinta and Hidden Valley are the only two town camps with a suitable building and staffing for a community centre).
 - A mobile playgroup that aims to promote early child development, assist parenting skills and support families at risk

- No additional resources have been provided or committed under the NTER to enable early childhood development and family support on town camps through establishment of multi purpose family centres, as recommended in “Children are Sacred” report.
- Transport is one issue affecting school attendance. While some schools provide a transport service for students, the public transport system in Alice Springs does not go near or into town camps in most cases. The NT government is planning some improvements in this area, but additional bus services that assist children in town camps to go to school will not be in place until 2010.

Recommendation 7

Ensure that there is public transport that town camp children can access to go to school as a matter of urgency

Recommendation 8

Upgrade and staff multi purpose family centres on all main town camps to enable early childhood development and appropriate education, health and welfare services to reach town camp children.

Recommendation 9

Undertake an audit of children on town camps to assess their education support needs in conjunction with families and local schools

3. Security of Children and Early Childhood Development

Has there been an increase or decrease in problems related to child security?

Background

- The accepted figure for child abuse across western populations is that 1 in 5 children will have some involvement in the Child Protection system. There is no reason to think the figure is going to be any less in Aboriginal communities. It should be noted that this number includes child protection issues such as neglect and emotional abuse.
- If we accept that high levels of abuse go unreported, it is difficult to identify increases and decreases of actual abuse. The accepted wisdom around abuse numbers is that an increased notification is an indicator of a functioning system. The figure for notifications received in the Northern Territory jurisdiction is 38.9 per 1000 children, which is similar to the national average of 34.7 per 1000. (AIHW 2008).
- It is clear that child health checks have not led to increased notifications. However, community based programs based on relationships do increase the levels of notifications.

Existing Programs

- Tangentyere Council's Safe Families Program is a good example of a successful kinship based child safety program. It has consisted of a safe house for up to six children aged 7-14 years for 6-8 weeks at a time, a rotating team of residential carers, a team of family workers aimed at family reunification, reducing family violence and preventing children becoming part of the child protection system, and two properties used for short term family placements,.
- The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc (SNAICC) declared the Tangentyere Council Safe Families model as promising best practice and HREOC has referred to the program as a way forward for Indigenous out of home care and family violence prevention.
- Tangentyere Council's Safe Families Program is currently facing a substantial drop in funding. Far from receiving support under the NTER's commitment to keeping children safe, Tangentyere Council has had to struggle each year with both the NT and Australian governments to attain funding at viable levels, despite its recognised success.
- Please see Attachment Four for an overview of Tangentyere Programs that address child abuse and family violence. None of these programs have received additional support as a result of the NTER.

Additional Services

Men's & Women's Programs

Central to the safety of Aboriginal children are programs that will ensure their parents are able to seek assistance to care for their children. It is an area that was ignored by the NTER.

- Tangentyere Executive and the Four Corners Council have identified the need for a Men's place to be established. Such a facility, staffed by men and with the involvement of Senior Lawmen would enable Indigenous men to access counselling and support for violence, alcohol and drug abuse and a halfway house on release from gaol. It is envisaged that perpetrators of domestic violence would be removed to the Men's place rather than women and children being forced to leave the family home after an abusive incident has occurred.
- Tangentyere Council considers that it is important to support Mothers and Grandmothers with programs such as Strong Women's Strong Babies, nutrition programs and early childhood programs delivered in town camp community facilities.

Recommendation 10

Resource Tangentyere Council's Safe Families Program and similar programs to ensure adequate resources for operational functions and capital requirements.

4. Employment and CDEP

What has occurred under the NTER?

- Tangentyere CDEP was terminated one week prior to the election in 2007. it was restored in July 2008. The Average Contracted Places (ACPs) for Tangentyere CDEP was 280 in 2005-06 and 200 in 2006-07. Tangentyere CDEP now has 125 ACPs, all of which must be filled with town camp residents. Tangentyere Council believes that this is a reasonable framework.

What has worked?

- Of the previous CDEP participants, approximately 35 were funded for positions at Tangentyere Council in recognition that these were real jobs.

What has not worked?

- Work for the Dole has proved to be an inadequate replacement for CDEP. There have been insufficient places, work has often been meaningless, and people have felt less motivated by being on Centrelink payment than they were under CDEP wages.

The Future

- Tangentyere Council believes that CDEP has a viable and useful role as a transition to work program providing project based and time limited work that incorporates skills training and work experience. CDEP should not be used to cross subsidise government programs or services.
- It is important however that CDEP participants are provided with wages rather than Centrelink payments. There is no evidence to show that moving Aboriginal people on to Centrelink payments is more likely to result in employment than CDEP work. Factors of much greater importance are provision of skills and work experience combined with appropriate employment practices. The success of Argyle Diamond Mine in the Kimberley in employing Aboriginal people shows that people will move to employment if provided with the right infrastructure to train and live in an appropriate environment. Pressure to move away from remote communities for employment without security of jobs and an appropriate framework may result in greater urban drift with increased anti social behavior.
- Please see Attachment 5 for the recommendations for a revised CDEP that Tangentyere has submitted to the Australian and Northern Territory governments' Discussion Papers on revision of the program.

5. Housing

- Housing matters are being dealt with outside of the NTER. While this is not of concern in itself, it does raise the question of the purpose and scope of the NTER and its overall rationale, particularly as housing is of fundamental importance to the well being of children and communities.
- Tangentyere Council welcomes the agreement with Minister Macklin to allocate \$50M to upgrading housing and essential services on town camps, and her commitment to work with town camp Housing Associations in implementing this process under a 40 year sub lease arrangement.
- Tangentyere Council notes that none of the prescribed town camp communities received funds under the Community Clean Up Program to undertake repair of houses. As such there has been no improvement to housing on town camps as a direct result of the NTER.
- Tangentyere Council also notes that under the Local Government reform in the NT, there will be an allocation of the equivalent of \$8,000 per house per year for maintenance. Tangentyere currently receives the equivalent of \$2,200 per house per year for maintenance of houses on town camps in Alice Springs. Homeland outstations and town camps will not be receiving this increase in maintenance funding.

SECTION C

NTER IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCESSES

This section examines the processes through which the NTER has been implemented and the lack of clear goals and benchmarks accompanying that implementation.

1. **NTER Implementation**

- The NTER was imposed without processes that allowed Aboriginal people and communities to participate in the process. This process makes sustainable change difficult and reduces the opportunity for Aboriginal people to exercise agency and to take control of their own lives.
- The exemption of legislation associated with the NTER from the Racial Discrimination Act sets a dangerous precedent in presenting the reduction of human rights as a precondition for the improvement of living conditions. All evidence is to the contrary, that is, that discrimination reduces the health and well being of populations.
- In making this exemption, the government lost much goodwill in Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organisations and amongst other groups and organisations that could have assisted the NTER to be more effective. This was exacerbated by the top down approach and the lack of respect implicit in the nature of the NTER's implementation.
- It appears that a large proportion of the funding spent on the NTER to date has gone towards the salaries of public servants who administer the income management system, who have been appointed as Government Business Managers, or to people who fly in and fly out, providing short term assistance but not building long term sustainable capacity in service delivery.
- One year after the implementation of the NTER, it is hard to identify many funds that have gone directly to making sustainable improvements to health, education, child and family safety, employment or housing for town camp residents.

Recommendation 11

That the exemption of the

- *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act, 2007*
- *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007*
- *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007*

from part II of the Racial Discrimination Act be removed.

2. NTER Goals and Benchmarks

- The stated aim of the NTER is:
- “to protect Aboriginal children from abuse and build the basis for a better future” (<http://www.facsia.gov.au/nter.htm>).
- The NTER has not provided any benchmarks by which to assess if these general aims have been met and has not provided any milestones to assess progress at particular points in time.
- Further, the NTER has not provided evidence of how specific measures relate to achieving its general aims. Tangentyere Council has seen no research that links many of the new measures, made possible under the NTER, to positive outcomes for Indigenous children or for Indigenous people in general.
- Tangentyere Council believes that the NTER was intended to undertake radical social engineering without a sound evidence base, and that this is a poor policy development process and likely to have detrimental consequences. These measures are contained in the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act, 2007, Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007, and the Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007
- Tangentyere Council believes that most measures directed to town camps as part of the NTER to date have been ineffective, reduced the capacity of Aboriginal people to take responsibility for their own lives, and in some cases have been damaging to the well being of town camp residents due to their discriminatory and punitive nature. In some cases, NTER measures have also undermined processes being developed to address issues such as alcohol abuse.
- However, Tangentyere Council also believes that measures to increase resources for safety, health, education, employment and housing are likely to have positive outcomes in relation to the current Australian Government’s stated aims of “Closing the Gap” in life expectancy, at least halving the rate of Indigenous infant mortality within a decade, and at least halving the difference between Indigenous and non Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks within 10 years. Tangentyere Council supports increased resources in these areas.

Recommendation 12

That the Australian Government define clear goals and benchmarks for the NTER, and re-badge the NTER as “Closing the Gap for Children”.

EXPERIENCES OF INCOME MANAGEMENT ISSUES OF THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT AND BANK AGENCY AT TANGENTYERE FROM JAN 08 TO END MAY 08:

1 Identification issues

Some clients, who have been known to us for years under either their married or skin or family name, have been changed in Centrelink to their birth name.

Consequently they will come in to the bank not realising that Centrelink has now changed their name, and will ask for their food voucher.

We will be unable to locate any funds under their usual name, and not knowing that they have a different birth name, they have to go away empty-handed until someone twigs that they have a different name.

This happened about a dozen times since we came on to IM in Jan to the end of Mar.

We are now having to spend more time loading people's details in order to be able to call them up by Centrelink Reference Number or DOB rather than name.

We are not funded to do this administrative work, and we now have 3 full-time people involved in this process at an approximate cost of \$225,000 including computer, paper, and utilities costs.

2 Rent for Housing Associations

Our second problem area is with the rent for the Housing Associations. We would appear to have several people listed as paying rent from Centrelink to our Camps when they either don't live there, are not and never have been tenants, or are only there while they are in town.

The Town Camps have a membership list of who is a resident and who should be paying rent, which includes preferred names and CRNs. Centrelink has been sent this list, but we are still receiving rent from people who are not residents, so the process is not consistent.

This tends to tie up the time of our Reconciliations Officer who is not included in the 3 staff members listed above, and would add another \$30,000 cost to our overheads just for the work she is having to do to sort out the rent matters.

It also means that we have to return funds to Centrelink for those who should not have paid rent in the first place. Another unfunded expense for Tangentyere and drain on the limited funds of clients who initially had to wait for these funds to be returned.

3 Centrelink coding system

The Centrelink coding system has been divided into two sets, one for Centrepay deductions and one set for Income Management. We now have to deal with 5 extra codes on top of the 4 we had for Centrepay. When the Council downloads the file, it now has to be sorted in to these different codes, duplicating our previous workload. Another cost to Tangentyere.

4 Return of Income Management Funds

The Council has been unable to keep up with the demand for return of IM funds to Centrelink and as a consequence, Centrelink has paid the clients before our funds have been returned. In some cases, especially where these funds are for food vouchers that the client now says they don't want, the client has received the returned benefit from Centrelink AND has taken a food voucher from us without telling us they had cancelled the voucher request. This technically puts us in debt to Centrelink under our agreement with them, even though the client has received a double benefit and should be repaying Centrelink as a normal debt. It is highly unlikely that we will see the client again, but Centrelink has the capacity to recover debts where Tangentyere does not.

5 Need for Additional Systems

Currently, the Council does not keep our tenancy records client by client only camp by camp. However, now that there is so much confusion on who should be paying rent and who shouldn't and the number of requests for refunds from Centrelink is not diminishing, we have had to purchase a new licence for our accounting system to set up the tenancy records on a separate accounting system. This is just so we can track clients and where they live. The rent download from Centrelink still contains between 15 and 20% of clients without any reference to which camp or house they live in. This adds again to our administrative overhead.

6 Sale of goods bought with store cards

We have anecdotal evidence that the store cards are not working as intended, as those clients that are addicted are selling their \$100 worth of food for a discount and using the cash to buy grog. We also have allegations that clients buying clothes on the KMART cards are selling those at a discount also. (Allegations of returning the clothes for cash refunds are groundless as KMART says that it refunds card purchases with cards not cash, and that they have stopped selling cigarettes on KMART cards also.)

7. Centrelink Queues

People often have to wait at Centrelink for long periods. The Tangentyere Centrelink sub-office is not able to handle income management even though this would relieve congestion and be less embarrassing for people. It would make sense for the income management cards to be issued from the Centrelink office located at Tangentyere.

8. Funeral expenses

A complaint has been made to the Ombudsman's office in relation to one woman having her bereavement payment income managed, and receiving \$800 in store cards rather than money going to the funeral expenses, which would normally happen. This does nothing to assist with budgeting and financial planning.

9. Deceased Estates

Tangentyere's Financial Counsellor has assisted many hundreds of intestate deceased estates. Prior to income management the Financial Counsellor was able to access all available Centrelink funds through closing the bank account. This is no longer the case. With income management a fax and authority needs to be sent to the Impact Team of Centrelink in Hobart and they assess what income management funds are available. Once this is determined the money will be forwarded to a trust account in Tangentyere. This process is far from timely.

It is recommended that Centrelink pay all unused income management funds into the bank account of the deceased.

Summary

The administration required to control Indigenous CentreLink recipients' benefits in the Territory is horrendous. Tangentyere receives no funding for the amount of administration involved and are having to redirect finance officers from their nominated duties to accommodate changes the intervention has wrought, which also creates stress for these officers.

The income management system in Alice Springs fails to stop those who are impossibly addicted from finding ways to fuel their addiction, currently benefits the large retailers over small businesses, removes freedom of choice for non-addicted people and applies only to Aboriginal communities.

TANGENTYERE'S VOLUNTARY FOOD VOUCHER SYSTEM

Proudly serving Aboriginal people for 25 years

Purpose

The food voucher system is designed to overcome the "feast and famine" cycle of fortnightly Centrelink benefits, whereby people can find themselves without money for food for the last part of the fortnight before they received their next payment.

Background

The food voucher system was put in place at Tangentyere Council over 25 years ago by Aboriginal elders living on town camps.

How it works?

- Tangentyere's food voucher system is voluntary.
- People signed up with Centrelink can choose to have a nominated amount of money deducted from their Centrelink payments every fortnight. This money is then provided to them in the form of a food voucher, which is issued through the Tangentyere community banking service.
- This system is also used for food boxes for pensioners or meals on wheels to eligible town camp residents.
- The food vouchers are made out to the Aboriginal owned supermarket in Alice Springs because it is the only supermarket that has to date expressly agreed to make sure that people don't get change from the vouchers to purchase alcohol. In the past, the big supermarkets were reluctant or unable to police this problem and would give people change which could then be used to purchase alcohol at the supermarket's alcohol outlet.
- Family members with drinking problems can give written permission for a sober family member to collect their food voucher when they are drinking. The bank staff will only give people a small voucher for food when they are drunk in case they lose their voucher or forget that they got them. They can pick up the rest of their voucher when they are sober.
- If people are going out bush for cultural reasons for a while, they can cancel their deductions while they are away, and start up again when they come back to town.

How much does it get used?

- There are 840 food voucher clients (including old people and those who are income managed). These people use the bank at least twice a month and often twice weekly.
- Since 2001, 1970 food voucher clients, including old people, deceased clients and people from remote communities, have signed on to the food voucher system.
- The Tangentyere Community Bank Service handles between \$8,000 and \$14,000 each day in withdrawals for these people.

- In the financial year 2006-7, the Tangentyere Community Bank Service issued \$1,700,000 in food vouchers; \$155,000 in food boxes; \$60,000 for meals on wheels, and \$1,000 on blankets and mattresses.

Costs

Centrelink charges \$.99 to Tangentyere per person for each transaction they make.

In 2006-7, these fees totaled \$17,000 and \$1,650 in GST. Tangentyere Council is not funded for these charges.

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**ALICE SPRINGS ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY PATROLS
BRIEFING PAPER**

1. BACKGROUND

There is a strong base of evidence regarding the effectiveness and benefits of community patrolling in Aboriginal communities (see References). Such benefits include reducing violence, including domestic violence, assisting in the prevention of child abuse, increasing community perceptions of safety, minimising the harm of substance misuse, creation of jobs and self esteem for community members, and reducing the costs incurred by other services, such as incarceration and health care.

Despite this, there has been no increase in support for Night Patrols in Alice Springs as a result of the Intervention.

2. CURRENT OPERATION OF ABORIGINAL PATROLS IN ALICE SPRINGS

2.1 Tangentyere Night and Youth Night Patrols

Tangentyere currently operates a Night Patrol (one vehicle, 5 nights per week) and Youth Night Patrol (one vehicle, 3 nights per week) funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. Night Patrol has operated since 1990, and Youth Night Patrol has been operated by Tangentyere Council since February 2007, and was formerly operated by another agency in Alice Springs.

Patrollers (both Night and Youth) were formerly CDEP subsidised employees, and are paid at the rate \$17.92 per hour. They are not eligible for penalty rates. See 3.1 for further discussion on this point.

2.2 Tangentyere Community Day Patrol

Tangentyere Community Day Patrol is funded by the NT Department of Health and Community Services and operates 5 days per week, commencing pre-dawn 5 days per week. The service has been in operation in current form since late 2006 (and previously operated between 2002 and early 2006).

The service was re-designed in 2006 to not be reliant on CDEP subsidies, and staff are paid according to the Tangentyere Collective Agreement at a rate of \$20.64 an hour.

3. CURRENT PROPOSALS FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

The following proposals have been identified as ways to address key challenges for Alice Springs Night and Youth Patrol services. Some of these challenges were identified in the review of Tangentyere Night Patrol conducted by the Attorney-General's Department in 2007.¹ Tangentyere fears that the challenges relating to the current models of patrolling, if not addressed, may lead to a reduction in community safety, with the resulting increase in violence, alcohol abuse, and other problems.

3.1 Normalising rates of pay

The current rates of pay and conditions for town based Night Patrollers are well below that of the equivalent Award and other conditions of the Tangentyere Collective Agreement. Wages for Patrollers have traditionally been 'pegged' to CDEP wage levels, so that all Patrollers employed were able to remain on CDEP. In this way, the service was dependent on CDEP program subsidies, a situation which has now been addressed by the Department. To address this issue, Tangentyere proposes a staged move to more appropriate remuneration for patrollers on attainment of experience and qualifications. This would involve pay increments over a period of three years, linked to the career development plan outlined below.

3.2 Improving career pathways

It is difficult to recruit and retain staff on patrolling services. This is not only due to the rates of pay, but also a lack of career pathways. The most skilled patrollers are highly sought after by local employers, and those who gain skills tend to move on to more highly paid positions with more established career pathways.

A career development plan has been proposed which would allow patrollers to progress through three levels of employment as patrollers and achieve a transferable, nationally accredited qualification while working for Tangentyere Night or Youth Patrol. The implementation of this plan will foster pride in the work and ambition amongst patrollers, as well as recognition by agencies external to Tangentyere of our skilled and professional workforce.

It is proposed that advancement to higher levels of skills and qualifications will be linked to pay increases, to bring Night Patroller wages in line with Community Day Patrol wages in a staged process, thereby improving our retention rate on night time patrolling services.

3.3 Streamlining data collection

Tangentyere Night Patrol maintains a comprehensive database of patrol activity for reporting and service planning. Through routine monitoring and reporting using the Patrol Database, Tangentyere Council ensures that the Night Patrol service addresses performance measures outlined in the Program Guidelines. Regular meetings with Patrollers and reflection on the data also allows for qualitative interpretation and service improvement.

¹ Audit of the Prevention, Diversion, Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice Programme, Tangentyere Council Section, p. 3.

However, there is potential to further optimise our process of data collection, reflection and service development. In recruiting patrollers, priority is given to those with cultural seniority, language skills, excellent mediation skills, etc. However, some people with these skills do not possess high levels of literacy or numeracy. In addition, the budget does not allow for the employment of any administrative staff to regularly enter the data collected on the paper sheets into the computer.

It is proposed that along with the Night Patrol Team Leader, the patrol base is staffed each night by one person responsible for simultaneous electronic data collection on all service activities, whereby patrollers in the vehicles radio back information to base, which is immediately entered electronically. This enables those in the vehicle to focus on and use their skills to address the situations at hand. In addition, staff will be trained and rotated through the data entry role to develop electronic data collection skills.

This will require the employment of one additional patroller per shift, shared between Youth and Night Patrol.

3.4 Increasing the number of patrols

Currently, one patrol car is in operation for Night Patrol, five nights per week, and one Youth Night Patrol vehicle three nights per week. Given that they are expected to patrol 19 town camps, residential areas and public spaces in a town of over 25,000 people, this has been identified by many community members and other key stakeholders as an inadequate level of service delivery.²

Tangentyere proposes to double this level of service delivery. Not only would the community outcomes be vastly improved, a two car operation for each service would improve occupational health and safety by allowing 'back up' from the second vehicle should the need arise.

3.5 Extending hours of operation

At several meetings of stakeholders in Alice Springs in 2007, it was identified both night time services, and in particular, Youth Night Patrol would better serve the community if their services were to operate later on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

As a result, Tangentyere Council prepared a proposal outlining a model for later operation of both Youth and Night Patrol on those nights. As Northern Territory Government agencies were prominent in calling for the later hours of operation, this proposal was sent to the Northern Territory Government in the first instance, as well as being incorporated in our submission to the ICC for 2008/09.

This would require the payment of shift allowances for Night and Youth Patrollers on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, to the equivalent of penalty rates.

² *Alice Springs Town Camp Review Task Force, Review Report (2006), pp. 9, 16.*

4. CONTACT DETAILS

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HOW IS CHILD ABUSE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE TACKLED ON TOWN CAMPS?

Tangentyere Council provides a range of services that address issues of child abuse and family violence on town camps. In actual fact most of Tangentyere's services provision is about making the lives of town camp residents safer. Outlined below are just some of our areas of service provision.

1. The Tangentyere Safe Families Program

The Tangentyere Safe Families Program focuses on an Aboriginal, family inclusive, community centred approach in relation to child protection issues in order to keep Aboriginal young people safe and with family.

Safe Families has a 6 bed residential house for kids to stay in up to six weeks. These kids come from vulnerable families, some are under child protection orders and some are there through agreements with family.

Safe families works with vulnerable families to making sure kids are safe. They also help the Department of Family and children Services in finding safe family placements. They do this with non-indigenous and aboriginal Family Workers.

Two transitional houses have also been set up by this program to help families learn how to manage their own homes in a safe and healthy way.

The Safe Families Vision Statement includes:

- Kinship care is crucial to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all young people
- Support of families to preserve their traditional obligations to nurture and provide care to young people
- Fostering and preserving community connectedness and the cultural integrity of Aboriginal families
- Ensuring young people grow up strong, safe, resilient and healthy in their transition to adulthood

Safe Families Target Group

- Children and young people aged up to 14 yrs
- Young people presenting as "at risk"
- Young people subject to child protection intervention
- Young people who present with multiple and complex issues

How it Works

- Employment of local Aboriginal staff members
- Family mapping
- Family meetings
- Language speakers
- Informal and formal networks
- Collaboration with other organisations and agencies

Safe Families acknowledges that some Aboriginal children need residential options outside of their immediate family for periods of time to keep them safe. This shows that these children don't need to leave the care of their community. The same community that is invested in keeping them safe is also the one working with families or finding long term safe care elsewhere.

The program does play an important part in Tangentyere's overall response to child safety concerns by filling gaps between other service providers and interventions from statutory services. On several occasions statutory services have not acted as quickly as Tangentyere would have liked and Safe Families has stepped in with safe plans to ensure children are safe until statutory services respond.

2. Early Childhood Services

Tangentyere delivers playgroups on 5 of the 18 town camps as this is the maximum we can deliver with funds available. With these services we have access to children who are not yet part of the education system. If the Playgroup identifies children that need extra support they refer them to the Tangentyere 0-7 program. This helps us identify children that need assistance from an early intervention program. If more serious concerns come to the attention of staff from either program referrals are made to relevant statutory bodies. At the same time these cases would become active to Tangentyere to ensure follow up from relevant agencies.

3. Community Centres at Larapinta camp and Hidden Valley camps.

These community centres are points of contact for services delivering into town camps. Organisations like Alice Springs Women's Shelter, Sexual Assault Referral Centre and Northern Territory Department of Families and Children attend regularly at these centres developing relationships and engaging with town camp residents. These centres also case manage individuals with drug and alcohol problems, monitor the situations that arise on the camps, they advocate for families and attempt with community to address issues of child safety.

4. Tangentyere Youth Activity Services (YAS)

Tangentyere Council's YAS operates a wide range of structured activities for 400-600 young people aged 6-18 years living in the eighteen town camps in Alice Springs. These activities include sport, music, circus and social activities and are run after school, during evenings, on weekends and during vacation times up to six days per week throughout the year. Most of these activities run out of the YAS premises at 3 Brown Street in Alice Springs.

Tangentyere YAS program is a service that highlights strengths, abilities, and positive relationships between participants. These positive experiences build skills, self esteem, access to mainstream services, familiarity with practicing constructive relationships and a platform for learning that is positive and successful.

Young people participating in YAS activities are expected to attend school and this has been a successful outcome for the service.

It should be noted that the majority of services that Tangentyere provides have a role in injury reduction and town camper's safety. Night Patrols, Family Well Being Programs, Youth Link Up Services and Sport and Recreation for young people all have a role to play in child safety.

5. Patrols

Tangentyere Patrols are prevention and acute intervention services, staffed by Aboriginal people who work to resolve disputes and intervene in situations of family conflict before harm is caused. They are Indigenous services, operating within Indigenous culture, and have no coercive powers.

Tangentyere Council operates a Night Patrol (5 nights a week), a Youth Patrol (3 nights a week) and a Day Patrol (5 days a week).

6. Family Well Being Program

The Family Wellbeing Program aims to improve the emotional and social wellbeing of Aboriginal people affected by issues such as family violence, substance abuse, or caught within an ongoing cycle of loss and grief. It assists in the healing process for those holding onto past trauma, encourages new ways of facing life's challenges, and provides people with the information and the skills to create positive changes in their lives.

Reform of CDEP, Tangentyere Council 2008

This paper is a summary of comments by Tangentyere Council on the *CDEP Discussion Paper March 2008*, developed by the Northern Territory Government.

1. Why we need CDEP.

Tangentyere Council agrees with the views expressed in the paper about the reasons for CDEP being needed. In our experience, CDEP, provided it is properly managed, provides valuable skills, familiarity with workplaces and work culture, and community /social capital that is not available to most participants in any other way. It is also a good mechanism for job placement where there is a labour market. Tangentyere CDEP placed 131 participants into employment off CDEP in the two years between July 2005 and July 2007. It then placed another 80 people in jobs in the second half of 2007 before it was closed in November.

For many people who were participating on CDEP, its demise has meant that they are either on welfare benefits or on no income support at all, and have no day to day structured activity. They have gone from participating and contributing, and having a pathway to employment, to being passive and dependent. Work for the Dole has proved to be an insufficient and inadequate replacement. It has not had the capacity to pick up anywhere near the number of people involved previously with CDEP or to enable a sense of either personal skill development or of contribution to the local community.

Tangentyere Council believes that CDEP should be available to people who are not job ready and who do not have skills that would enable them to find employment without the assistance of CDEP.

2. Different Labour Markets

Tangentyere Council believes that CDEP should be geared to the opportunities that are available in each location, with distinction only between CDEP in established labour markets and in limited labour markets. CDEP that are in urban areas with established labour markets, should be primarily aiming at job transition. In limited labour markets, CDEP should be making use of any job or business opportunities, but improving community and social capital, as well as skills and work preparation, should be a major aim of the program, as outlined below.

3. Voluntary mobility

Tangentyere Council does not view assistance with voluntary mobility as part of the role of CDEP. This is a function of job network providers or in some cases such as mining companies, the company itself may provide assistance. The Discussion Paper provides no detail on how it envisages that this might work.

It is also debatable whether people should be encouraged to move from a CDEP position in a remote community to an established labour market such as Alice Springs if they do not have a job organized and have limited skills, as this may only result in being unemployed in town.

This may then exacerbate overcrowding on town camps, as there is a long waiting list for public housing and unemployed people are unlikely to be able to afford commercial rents. Encouragement of people to move from remote communities to towns may aggravate existing problems of homelessness and overcrowding in those towns.

4. CDEP Delivery Issues

4.1 Wages and Top Up

CDEP should be waged and have clear expectations about attendance and work performance with clearly set out penalties for non attendance.

Tangentyere Council strongly believes that there should be no system of top up. This creates a two tier system which can be detrimental to the view of normal CDEP participation. Importantly, if a job exists, it should be treated and resourced as a proper job. Where wage subsidy labour market programs for jobs exist, CDEP participants should be considered eligible for those positions.

Tangentyere Council strongly believes ongoing jobs should not become CDEP top up positions. This institutionalises a second rate system of service delivery for Aboriginal communities that would not be acceptable elsewhere and allows governments to under resource normal services.

CDEP jobs and training should be geared to work that is not ongoing or that would not normally be funded via government. This may consist of a wide range of project based jobs and training such as creating a vegetable garden or orchard, fencing a community facility, painting, making curtains for community facilities etc. A list of activities should be planned in advance for each CDEP.

The skills and work experience gained through CDEP may enable a shelf labour hire company in some cases whereby CDEP participants are able to be employed when community infrastructure programs such as building of houses, infrastructure or major repairs and maintenance are undertaken, rather than all of this work being undertaken by teams of workers from elsewhere. All major projects of this nature should be required to employ and train a number of local people as part of their contract.

Similarly it may be possible for CDEP gangs to take up full time contracts for particular jobs such as road works, minor household repairs (possible on a partial fee for service basis) or concreting work.

4.2 Business Development

Business development needs to be approached in a realistic way. Small businesses are often unsuccessful and often employ very few people. It can be possible to enable many people to contribute to a business in a flexible way however, in the manner that Titjikala's Gunya Tourist enterprise has, with numerous associated long term social and economic benefits.

5. Summary of Recommendations on the Reform of CDEP

Recommendation 1.

- ◆ The CDEP scheme should be retained and reformed. There should be different types of CDEPs to address the different circumstances existing in NT communities.

Recommendation 2

- ◆ Urban based CDEPs in the NT should be retained and function as an indigenous transition to employment program. Incentive payments for placing participants into work should be commensurate with those given to Job Network Providers for similar outcomes. Urban based CDEPs should focus on participant development and job placement. Remote CDEPs should focus on both employment and community development.

Recommendation 3

- ◆ Town based CDEPs in the NT should be limited to a maximum of five, one each in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and possibly Nhulunbuy.

Recommendation 4.

- ◆ Participants must qualify for CDEP by showing they can participate productively in WfD. This would mean that CDEPs would have fewer participants but they would be more work ready.

Recommendation 5.

- ◆ CDEP wages should not be used to cross subsidize government or other programs. The real jobs in communities should be properly funded by government or business to provide proper employment pathways for participants.

Recommendation 6.

- ◆ The use of CDEP wages to subsidize non-government jobs should be strictly limited. It should only be available as a tool to encourage employers to take on indigenous staff. It should be available for a maximum of six months and only on the condition that it will convert into a real job after that time.

Recommendation 7.

- ◆ CDEP Managers and coordinators should be registered and undergo proper training in how to deliver an effective CDEP program. They should have a standard salary and conditions commensurate with the task.

Recommendation 8.

- ◆ Funding of CDEPs should be for up to three years to allow for effective planning and retention of staff.

Recommendation 9.

- ◆ There should be a separation of capital and recurrent funding. Capital allocations should be fair and equitable based on community needs and not on the size of the CDEP.

Recommendation 10.

- ◆ There should be a minimum limit (100) to the size of a CDEP to ensure viability. Participant numbers should not be the only determinant of how much funding is allocated to a CDEP. Smaller community based CDEPs should be funded adequately to be able to provide an effective CDEP service.

Recommendation 11.

- ◆ CDEPs should be regionalized or merged to take up advantages of scale and to more effectively develop enterprise opportunities.

Recommendation 12.

- ◆ The CDEPs main role should be the training and employment of participants to enhance the social capital of a community. The secondary role should be business development but only where this leads to viable and sustainable employment. CDEP should not be a surrogate community service delivery agency unless it is under a proper contractual arrangement.

Recommendation 13.

- ◆ CDEPs should be developed as enterprise hubs within communities able to undertake commercial opportunities and generate real jobs in communities.

Recommendation 14.

- ◆ CDEP participants in transition to mainstream employment should be regarded as employed to all intents and purposes. A proper CDEP award should be developed with leave accruals, workers compensation and superannuation entitlements provided for in the funding arrangements.

Recommendation 15.

- ◆ Participation on CDEP in urban centres should be time limited to 52 weeks. Participants should be aware that CDEP is an opportunity that should be grasped and not a destination.

Recommendation 16.

- ◆ There should be a moratorium on the future role of CDEP in the NT. All stakeholders in the community should be invited to attend a forum and have the opportunity to present their ideas for a reformed CDEP.

Recommendation 17.

- ◆ CDEP organizations in Australia should be allowed to form a peak body where issues that effect the operation of the CDEP program may be discussed and so provide a conduit for informed feedback to and closer consultation with the policy makers.

FEEDBACK FROM A TOWN CAMP COMMUNITY MEETING ABOUT THE NTER**Income Management**

- "looks like the families that are trying to do the right thing are being punished"
- "Messed up all payments – they (Centrelink) don't tell you how much \$ I get \$140 family payment, \$70 quarantined \$30 somewhere but they can't explain where the other \$40 is."
- "We have that old man at home, we can't get ID for him, hard to get him to Centrelink, hard too to be there long time with(incontinence)"
- "I don't know where the money is going"
- (Child) "better off before, used to buy clothes and things but now \$ goes to store and it's expensive, so there is not enough \$ left to buy clothes" (at second hand shop)
- Community shop "\$ goes to store, have to spend it all". "\$ not at store, Centrelink says there is this much money, store says no, only a little bit."
- "they (Centrelink) must be keeping the money for themselves"
- "Problem between store and Centrelink, Centrelink says the \$ there and then go and shop and then no money there" (ie no money at store when go to register)
- They don't know where the money is going to, maybe some to Ivy's, Eastside, ID
- Complete loss of control
- Feeling very frustrated at not knowing what's happening to your money, might be stole, liars, no one knows where it's going.
- The cards these days, I reckon that's better. You know people get all money one day, and then it's all gone the next day.....before store card there was millions of them down the river with drink, now only 3 or 4 groups because store card cutting them off.
- Store card can't help get to Alice from community, can't save for trip, not enough \$.
- Good for drinkers wasting all their \$ on grog
- Harder to give \$ (cash) to kids to take to school for lunch.
- Think income management for only people who really need it, like people with no houses, living in the creek, homeless people.
- Stopping cash for families with kids not going to school, won't help to get kids to go to school, it's not a solution.
- Centrelink should have an interpreter, there's no Arrernte interpreter.

Alcohol

- "Intervention hasn't changed the grog. People still drinking bringing the grog in. Nothing still the same".
- "Alcohol causes Violence"
- Why are there so many alcohol outlets in town?
- Same problem "come out @ 12 & fill car up ... (with grog) they should drink in a pub till late & come home in taxi
- Why don't they help deal with the issues of alcohol *CAAAPU we go there
- Still losing family to grog, accidents from drink driving, especially drinking in Town Camp & and then go to bush
- Alcohol laws working?
 - "no"
 - "Not really, every afternoon people go picking up grog and bring it home"

- Alcohol in the camp
 "more.. you know why, people don't like to drink in Riverside, they use to drink there and make fire, now they come and drink at the camp. Its better off to drink in your own camp".
- Kids don't hang around when people are drinking, they go to the sober family place.
- Alcohol "people get that lonely feeling, like homeless people, they drink lots, Government's should come and see all the people sleeping in the salt bush at night, no homes they got nowhere to go"
- Aborigines don't go for young kids, they don't do that.(when drinking)
- People should be allowed 1x 24 pack per day to share.

Pornography

- We don't have that problem here
- We don't let our kids watch that sort of stuff
- Just live normal life
- There's no such thing as pornography in Aboriginal Communities, no paedophile rings, there never was. There was law, punishment against that aboriginal way.
- We don't let our children watch those sort of movies and even magazines, we throw them away.
- Mal Brough should look at his side of the sexual abuse, they have kids missing on TV all the time, kids being by shed, newspapers magazines
- How about that nude 6 year old on TV that's white girl, that's their way, not ours, and that 12 year old. Did we have camera in olden day, we don't even have one now. We don't even know how to use video camera, even if I had one I don't know how to use it.
- Everything is in Art for Aborigine, not in photo's, everything told thru Art
- Education through Art
- Naked kids in photo they call art, for Aborigine Education is in Art, we teach things like bush food, bush medicine and to keep cultures in our dreamings

Health Checks

- They alright took my grandchildren to check and check immunization, we take them to have them to have check anyway
- We already take our kids for check up
- *NB most people found this confusing, they already take kids for check ups and assume that the "health checks" where just part of the normal and expected service

CDEP/ Real Jobs

- `Some people have never worked before, they don't know what it's like to have a real job, they (others) expect people who've never worked before to go and work 9-5 in a real job, they need to learn it's a big step.
- Community Centre comment - " used to have lots of men particularly on CDEP, but now we don't. Cheryl is not better off without CDEP, still same hours , can't increase.

What are the GOOD and BAD Effects

GOOD

- Drinkers starting to buy clothes, and keep them clean, go to Salvation Army and have feed and shower
- Slowing of violence, slowing of grog
- Kids are going to school

BAD

- Government is all about the Government. Just like the modern days, John Howard – Captain Cook
- Gone back to ration days. Ration Days come back.
- Kids always had a feed @ school, intervention just made that fussier.

What could be done differently?

- Why only Aboriginal people? Only in the Territory?
- Why can't they say all that about themselves too?

WHAT COULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE TO HELP MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY SAFER

- More Night Patrol – more \$\$ for NP
 - mixed up people not necessarily all Aboriginal people
 - create more "real jobs"
 - have own NP in camp, strong people talking to people here. "REAL" job
- Bigger Sober-Up Shelter – pick up people from around town and put them in there, those in need of help.
 - create more 'REAL' jobs
- Work together with Police
- CAAAPU is good, need another with more Social And Emotional, Mental Health, not just for Indigenous but for the whole community.
- Education - school should have more people who speak languages, teach all other people/kids culture and language, how to survive out bush.
- Youth Centre After School – Kids walking around @ night, making trouble, breaking things, stealing
 - they should have, like here, games, circus, disco for the kids, drums
- Fences for Houses - to keep family inside safer
 - keep dogs in yards

HELPING EACH OTHER, HELPING PEOPLE AROUND US

- don't come home if your drunk, stay elsewhere, drink somewhere else, take your blanket
- Safe Kids Environment - fix up and clean up park and put tap in there

Income Management and Other Intervention Stories

Tangentyere Council asked Aboriginal people and staff to pass on stories, good and bad, about the NTER that related to them or their families or to people they knew. These are those stories.

- One man was planning to go from a bush community in the centre to Darwin for his daughters Year 12 graduation but the implementation of the income management at the time meant that he did not have access to his money to buy a fare to Darwin so he missed out on his daughter's graduation and he and everybody in the family was very disappointed.
- One woman, much to her embarrassment held up the line at the checkout in Woolies supermarket because she was told by the checkout operator she could not purchase a light bulb on the food voucher.
- All the old people from the bush sitting on the pavement waiting outside Centrelink in 40 degrees heat.
- In a community outside of town. The Centrelink Agency is not that efficient and a lot of misunderstandings occur between deaf people and also not confident in English literacy. One 60 yr old man lost 6 or 8 weeks of payments because he was told he didn't have to fill out forms. Eventually he had to come into town to find a relative who could help him negotiate with Centrelink. The Centrelink officer who must be so used of this scenario wrote up an 'interview' with this man writing up some sort of story in pidgin English to make it sound like a real interview so the man could have his payments reinstated.
- To spend your money outside of Coles, Kmart, and Woolies you have to go into Centrelink for an interview and they will assess the request and make arrangements for the payments direct to the place were you want to make a purchase.
- Community shop operators are not paid for all the extra work they have to do to administer the income management.
- Baby Bonus and Family Benefit tax bonus is all quarantined, hence, with the Kmart card people tend to buy a lot more stuff that they wouldn't ordinarily, such as an inordinate amount of clothes, toys etc
- There has been a big influx of people coming to town so they can access Centrelink benefits and there probably wasn't any town planning for their accommodation.
- One little girl got into her aunty's make-up and had on lipstick etc and when her parents saw her they were terrified in case a white person saw her and thought that it was evidence of sexual activity. They made her scrub it off straight away.
- Have witnessed desperate acts of stealing from shops since the Intervention that I hadn't seen before. A few times I have seen men running for their life out of liquor outlets with a stolen bottle in broad daylight.

- Have heard from a bush community and from shop worker in Darwin that there is more stealing from the shops.
- One man applying for an Intervention job to broker jobs on a community was offered around \$100,000 salary package plus \$90 a day food allowance. He eventually did not take up the job because he thought it was obscene that he get \$90 a day food money on top of his wage when the people in the community wouldn't have that amount a day to spend.
- The contractors who went around to all the communities erecting 6 foot high fences around the Interventionist's Compounds were put up in motels for months on end.
- The Interventionists jobs were not advertised in the Northern Territory.
- And the fencing contractors and those putting up the Intervention Compounds did not employ local people.
- Have spoken to a lot of people in a lot of communities around the centre and I haven't heard one person embracing the Intervention. Most people have used words like 'aghast' and 'flabbergasted', 'gobsmacked'.
- Centrelink appear to be asking all the wrong questions when they deal with income management. They are asking people where they want their money to be available. They are not sitting down with them and doing a budget and people are confused as to whether they are nominating amounts for a week, month or year. As a result we are seeing countless people coming to us for Emergency relief who have had amounts of \$200.00 or more nominated to K Mart and not enough for food.
- It appears that the intervention in Alice Springs is doing nothing for the hungry people but a great deal for the profit margins of the multi nationals.
- Also when people in communities have been asked how much they wanted placed under the control of a community store (with food at twice the price of other stores in Alice Springs) and they nominated an amount, they are unaware that there is other money 'on standby' held by Centrelink and think that there is no money left for food after the 'store' amount is spent.
- Discussions with Centrelink are quite astounding as they feel that people need to save for bigger items and therefore this holding amount is justified. These indigenous people do not have enough disposable income to go around let alone save
- The whole income management policy which in itself is incredibly racist as it only applies to one group in our society, is causing more hardship than it is supposed to fix.

- One man didn't have a proper feed for 5 days because of the Income Management. He is a man who has work all his life but is now on disability pension as a dialysis patient. He lives in a flat in town and his family live out on a community. Usually he would have enough mobility to get to the corner store and use his keycard to buy food .But the income management, without his knowledge put most of his pension on to rent and left him with \$32 a fortnight cash. Over the weekend he managed to scrape a few coins together and buy some self-raising flour. By the time he got himself to my place he was near collapse and so took him to hospital and he was admitted.
- One woman on disability pension who otherwise had worked all her life and had always managed her own money was so upset and stressed by the Centrelink income management: all the rigmarole she had to go through and she found it so demeaning and they told her they would stop her payments if she did not comply. She was so upset her blood pressure went through the roof and she had to be hospitalized for a day. This person said she has written it all down herself and sent it to Centrelink Management. She said the Centrelink officers were grateful for the feedback because not many people express what they are feeling about it. I can imagine people will generally not speak up too much about it as it is their lifeline and they don't want to do anything that will jeopardize their payments having already seen already what governments are capable of doing.
- From my experience with Centrelink the staff are very good and they are having to help people through a quagmire over the past few months.