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Kurduju leads the way in regional crime prevention

Minister for Justice and Attorney-General Dr Peter Toyne has chaired the first meeting of the Kurduju Committee in its new form as the first Territory Indigenous Regional Crime Prevention Council.

The Kurduju Committee, comprising the Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy Committees from Ali Curung, Lajamanu and Yuendumu have been meeting for nearly two years and represent the first Territory indigenous communities to come together to progress crime prevention initiatives.

Dr Toyne said the meeting discussed a range of issues including pre-court conferencing, sentencing processes, night patrol funding, and customary law.

Representatives from Wilowra also attended the meeting to hear about the experiences from Ali Curung, Lajamanu and Yuendumu and expressed interest in bringing some of these initiatives to their own communities.

"The Committee have been doing some fantastic work on the ground based on their own authority in the community and in working with the Police and the Justice system.

"In the community of Ali Curung, as an example, the work of the Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy Committee, in conjunction with Police and the justice system, has seen a huge drop in the rates of vandalism, violence against women and truancy.

"Stabilisation of law and justice issues on communities is an essential prerequisite to providing adequate health, educational and other services and working on community capacity building. With out stability, those other initiatives cannot progress.

"Customary law was discussed at the first meeting of the crime prevention council and it was very clear the Walpiri people are thinking through the public issues raised about customary law in a constructive manner.

"An outcome of the meeting was for the Kurduju Committee to develop protocols for all areas where customary law arrangements have worked well for that group can continue to operate without flying in the face of the law of the land.

"These protocols could include determining an appropriate time for consenting arranged marriages within the boundaries of the Territory's age of consent laws.

The Kurduju Committee will meet early next year to develop the protocols and will also report on that work to the Towards Mutual Benefit Customary Law Inquiry.

The Kurduju Committee has a considerable amount of collective experience and knowledge in law and justice planning and addressing family violence and have
used their forum to document remote community initiatives that are working for the use of other communities.

Members of the Kurduju Committee include members of the Tribal Council, Community Elders, Safe House Committees, Women’s Groups, Night Patrol workers, Council members, Traditional Owners, Outstation representatives and other community organisations from the three communities.

Dr Toyne welcomed the formation of the Kurduju Regional Crime Prevention Council that will be able to access ongoing support from the new Office of Crime Prevention.

"I hope to see other groups of communities follow on from Kurduju and form regional crime prevention councils," said Dr Toyne.

Kurduju in Warlpiri means *shield, block, protect or ward off*, and the Committee emblem is a shield. This represents the work of the Committee across many areas including interacting and engaging with the law and justice system, with pre-court conferencing, victim/offender conferencing and acting as a focal point for community law and justice concerns.