27 March 2003
Yugul Mangi Community Government Council dismissed

The Yugul Mangi Community Government Council based at Ngukurr has been dismissed. The announcement was made yesterday to a community meeting attended by Minister for Local Government John Ah Kit.

"This was not a decision that I took lightly, and follows recommendations contained in the report of a commission of inquiry held over the past seven months.

"The main element of this breakdown was in the failure of Council to separate its activities from that of its commercial activities.

"This in itself is problematic, but most serious was the fact that Council funds were illegally transferred into the commercial operation to prop it up.

"What has occurred here at Ngukurr has been going on for some years, and represents a serious break down in proper governance, within both the Yugul Mangi Community Government Council and Yugul Mangi Clan Development Pty Ltd," Mr Ah Kit said.

Material gathered by the department and the commission of inquiry will be forwarded to other agencies and authorities, including the Northern Territory Police, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and the Australian Taxation Office.

"There is a broader issue here that goes far beyond the current problems at Ngukurr. As I stated in parliament last year, many communities in the NT are dysfunctional. The heart of this problem can be found in poor governance, and the lack of capacity among community members to run their affairs properly.

"The origins of this is in years of government neglect since policies of self determination were introduced in the early 1970s, in which there has been little sustained effort in capacity building and training, coupled with a collapse in literacy and numeracy and stagnation in health outcomes.

"The Government is adopting a proactive stance in developing partnerships with remote communities to build capacity at local and regional levels to tackle the enormous problems members of those communities face.

"I have asked the minister for police, Paul Henderson, to request the Commissioner to expedite any inquiries that are required, and my department will be handing over all material obtained during their investigations and that of the inquiry to the appropriate authorities."