Planning for the future in Gunbalanya

The Territory Growth Town of Gunbalanya located in Arnhem Land is the first Northern Territory town to sign off on a plan to work with all levels of government to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

The Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Gunbalanya Local Reference Group signed a Local Implementation Plan on 10 November 2010 which sets out priority actions in the areas of early childhood education, schooling, housing and community safety. It is expected that the West Arnhem Shire will also join as a signatory.

This plan will drive future development in Gunbalanya and was developed in partnership with the local community. It sets time lines for specific actions to be taken by responsible parties, including government agencies and the community.

The plan also outlines the future direction and growth for the town and its residents which they can continually adapt to suit their needs and is one of 15 plans to be developed in Remote Service Delivery locations in the Territory.

It has a strong focus on education and includes an agreement by the community that parents and other adults will encourage children and young people to regularly attend school.

Other highlights include plans to:

- construct a 50-place child and family centre to support young children and parents
- upgrade roads, including improvements in drainage, kerbing, footpaths and lighting
- enhance job opportunities for local people, including an examination of the feasibility of a proposed new arts and culture centre, a mechanics’ workshop with an authorised inspection station, and a government business centre.

Gunbalanya is one of 29 Remote Service Delivery locations agreed to under the Council of Australian Government’s National Partnership Agreement to improve access to government services for Aboriginal Australians living in remote communities.

Under the Remote Service Delivery Strategy, all Australian governments have signed up to a concentrated and accelerated approach to tackle deep-seated disadvantage. Under the strategy, local communities have been working with governments to develop implementation plans that include tailored solutions to priority needs.

The Australian and Northern Territory governments and the local Reference Group of Gunbalanya have developed the plan for service delivery in Gunbalanya over the period to June 2014.

Aboriginal Interpreter Service in Wadeye

The Territory Government is calling on local Indigenous people in the Wadeye region to apply to become an interpreter in their community.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS) in the Territory Growth Town of Wadeye provides local people who do not use English as a first language access to an interpreter when making important decisions about their lives and wellbeing.

Trained interpreters provide clear, easy to understand information in a range of Indigenous languages. These interpreters can also be engaged by service providers and visitors to the area when they do business with local community members.

The AIS Wadeye office is funded by the Australian Government, under the Northern Territory and Australian Governments’ Closing the Gap in the NT National Partnership Agreement. Under this agreement, $8.1 million will be provided to the AIS over three years to assist them to employ more Community Development Liaison Officers and Community Based Interpreters across the Northern Territory.

AIS offices are also located in Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and the Territory Growth Towns of Maningrida and Yuendumu.

Indigenous Employment Program Graduation

The Indigenous Employment Program is a key Territory Government initiative to assist in achieving Indigenous employment targets across government agencies.
Stamping out volatile substance abuse

The Government Business Manager for the Territory Growth Town of Yirrkala recently organised a community meeting on volatile substance abuse (VSA). The use of volatile substances is also known as glue sniffing, petrol sniffing or solvent abuse. Twenty-five community participants attended the meeting on 12 October 2010 which included representatives from government agencies, police, non-government organisations and local service providers. The meeting focused on planning for ways to minimise VSA over the wet season and upcoming school holidays.

A range of actions were identified during the meeting for the treatment and prevention of VSA. All participants were committed to these actions and will continue information sharing. It was agreed that ongoing community engagement will be required to successfully implement the identified methods to minimise VSA in Yirrkala. These methods include placing secure refuse bins and volatile substance canisters for waste in the community, distributing promotional material on identifying and reporting VSA, and communicating with local businesses on volatile substance safe-storage options.

In September, the program celebrated the achievements of 18 graduates who have now taken up permanent A02 positions with the Territory Government. An additional 10 people are expected to graduate in December.

The program is specifically designed to attract Indigenous jobseekers wishing to enter or return to the workforce, or individuals seeking the opportunity to access the relevant training to enter into a career with the Territory Government. The program aims to equip each trainee with the skills relevant to entry level administration positions.

Program graduate Jacqueline Peckham said, "I wanted to make improvements in my life and for my children's future. The program was a great opportunity, giving me the skills and the passion to do anything I set my mind to."

The Indigenous Employment Program will pilot its first regional program in 2011 in addition to a range of programs across the Darwin area.

For more information about the program, email wendy.moulds@nt.gov.au or phone 8999 3762.

Image: Graduates of the Indigenous Employment Program in September