Caleb’s project to transform city

Monika O’Hanlon

THE sky is the limit for 15-year-old Caleb Maru, who is transforming the walls of Alice Springs into a work of art through his anti-graffiti project.

Caleb’s project has been approved by Central Land Council and will run for one year.

"The main reason for the project is to rid the city of graffiti and replace it with street art," said Caleb.

Caleb said he got the idea a year ago when he was looking for a way to improve his community.

"I’ve been in Alice Springs for 10 years and I’ve seen how much graffiti there is on walls in the region where artists can create stunning art," he said.

Caleb said he has been working on the project for about six months and has been approached by several local businesses and individuals who want to help.

"I’m really excited about the project and I hope it will make a difference in the community," he said.

Caleb said he hopes to find more funding to continue the project and expand it to other areas of the city.

"I think the community is really behind the idea of riding the city of graffiti," he said.

Caleb’s project is part of the Alice Springs Round Table for Young Territorians, and is supported by the Youth Employment Scheme.

"I’m really proud of Caleb and his project," said Central Land Council’s David Ross.

"It’s a great way to get young Territorians involved in the community and make a positive impact.

Teen held over thefts

A 15-year-old male has been charged after being found to be in possession of a large quantity of stolen property in Alice Springs.

Detective Superintendent Brent Warren said the boy was apprehended after walking into a jewellery store and getting an appraisal on an Omega Seamaster watch, which caused the store owner to become suspicious.

"The owner noticed the watch, which was valued at several hundred dollars, had been stolen from a vehicle on Horizon Drive," said Warren.

The boy was arrested and charged with stealing a property valued at $13,730.

"We were now in phase one, which was finding a wall, trailling it and seeing how it works out," said Caleb.

"That way we can estimate how much graffiti we need and get artists together.

"We are now in phase two to find another wall and get artists to work together on one giant piece.

"The project does improve the graffiti around town, maybe some could be hired to run an ongoing project to improve the graffiti issue.

Caleb has his sights set on a future in international development.

"My parents are from Ethiopia so I really want to work for the UN and do some kind of development work there.

Caleb is looking for local businesses or individuals who have a wall to use.

To get involved or to donate supplies, Caleb can be contacted via email at caleb.maru@hotmail.com.

Town criers on song

Corey Sinclair

TOWN criers from all around the country will descend on Alice Springs later this month for the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Australian Town Criers 23rd National Championships.

Alice Springs town crier David Mortimer has been doing his job for three years, and he has even competed in Maryborough and Moree.

Mr Mortimer said despite not being able to compete in this year’s championships because he was on the hosting committee, he was looking forward to see the crowd of colour and pageantry.

"I have a problem that they don’t get involved in the competition," he said.

"We are looking forward to the presentation of trophies.

Mortimer said he was Alice Springs’ third town crier.

"They were running an ad and I was heading into retirement," he said. "As a shrinking violet, I thought ‘why not?’"

Alice Springs Mayor Damien Ryan said the council was very excited to be hosting the 23rd National Town Criers Championships.

"We encourage people to come along and watch the Theme Cry at the Road Transport Hall of Fame from 9.15am till 12pm on Friday August 23," he said.

"We are looking forward to the variety and spirit that Town Criers from around Australia will be bringing to Alice Springs.”

Owners object to park exploration

Mituleki Moyo

AN application by Paladin Energy Pty Ltd to begin oil and gas exploration around the Watarrika National Park has been opposed by traditional owners who have called on the NT Cabinet to block the application.

According to Central Land Council, a meeting held in March this year traditional owners expressed concern about the impact on the cultural values and species and habitats of the park, and were strongly and unconditionally opposed to any exploration.

CLC Director David Ross said allowing exploration in Watarrika cut across the core values of the joint management agreement.

"It is an extremely disturbing idea which violates the very idea of national parks," he said.

"The whole idea of declaring national parks was to be free areas from this type of activity.

Traditional owners say they are also concerned for their local businesses and for tourism generally in the area.

"The exploration applications cover the entire park and if granted, would lead to a range of exploration activity and may include hydraulic fracturing.

"Traditional owners have previously agreed to exploration in areas outside the park, and it is only within the boundaries of the park that they object.

The park is owned by the Watarrika Park Land Trust under NT freehold on behalf of the traditional landowners and jointly managed by the traditional owners and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.

Mr Ross said traditional owners had a duty to protect the park under joint management legislation and through traditional cultural obligations.

A large number of groups are associated with the park and the traditional owners have obligations to them as well.

The park hosts many significant cultural sites, is a renowned tourist destination and supports a rich and diverse number of species and habitats.

A number of threatened species are found there as well.

The traditional owners also said they had worked hard to get small council businesses within the park and the park had provided jobs and opportunity for the people.

The plan also notes that the park protects one of Australia’s most stunning desert ecosystems and the community’s outstanding biodiversity and the Territory’s cultural heritage.

Letters from the traditional owners have been sent to cabinet ministers, and the Northern Territory Government says the proposal will be considered at the next cabinet meeting.

Minister refuses report on land rents

THE Centralian Advocate last Tuesday published the claims of Central Land Council chairperson Lokie Jarapata Ryan that the community of Ali Curung was one of many Aboriginal communities owed payments by the Federal Government under its five-year-lease.

Mr Ryan said the Commonwealth had not paid any rent at all, and as such, “the report in the Centralian Advocate headlined ‘Show Us The Cash’ – Federal Government is five years behind in rent payments for Ali Curung” was wrong.

Mr Ryan’s claim is unfounded and incorrect.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Peter Garrett wrote in a response to the Centralian Advocate statement, that the story being published, made up claims, all moneys owed had been paid.

This is the Minister’s full response: “The Australian Government is committed to paying appropriate rent and compensation to land owners where leases were acquired under the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007.

“The Government has now settled all outstanding rent and compensation payments for the five-year leases acquired under the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007.

“This includes agreement with the Central Land Council on rent and compensation for all community leases on Ali Curung, including Ali Curung.

“The Australian Government is confident that it will not take further compulsory leases and has been negotiating voluntary long term leases to allow for biodiversity protection and cultural re-structure.

“The Australian 40-year social housing lease was extended for Ali Curung in 2013.”