**Hats off to Alice Springs arts scene**

ALICE Springs, at the heart of Australia, is literally the melting pot of creativity. A place where people are free to express themselves and celebrate each other’s diversity.

Our jam-packed social calendar full of events unique to the Red Centre offers the perfect chance to get involved and take in the inspirational works of local artists.

With the Sustainable Couture parade on Thursday evening, followed by the four days of warm-headed goodness that are the Alice Springs Beanie Festival, Central Australians and visitors to the area are spoiled for choice.

Sustainable Couture is the perfect example of textile and fashion artists using their imaginations to create distinctive garments from embellished, recycled fabrics.

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival sees entries come from as far as Germany, Japan and the US. Celebrating everything from your traditional knitted beanie to outrageous headgear made from anything, including barbed wire and dreadlocks, the event promises a heartwarming, soul-enriching experience full of colour and joy.

The Beanie Festival is also special as it’s an event where Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists come together. From the UK, and Canberra, to Indigenous communities in South and Central Australia, the festival continues to grow while it celebrates a global community of crafty people creating the world’s finest headwear.

And it is not just the annual events that celebrate the region’s creativity. The facilities in Alice Springs that house and nurture the creative people in town are at an extremely high standard for a town of this size.

The Arabasi Arts Centre is the focal point for the Centre’s performing and visual arts scene, incorporating galleries and a theatre. The venue plays host to national exhibitions and performances seen in some of the most renowned theatres in the world. The heritage-listed Totem Theatre often has theatre shows and live music, as well as a monthly spoken word event where anyone is invited on stage to speak their mind.

There are also numerous art galleries around the town selling some of the finest Indigenous and non-Indigenous art in the country. So prominent is the art scene in Alice Springs it has become the hub for Central Australian art and sees works regularly sold around the world.

So this festival season, be inspired by the talent of Central Australian artists. Be amused by the beautiful fashion at the Sustainable Couture parade. Check out the beanie for which you soak up the live entertainment at the festival continues to grow while it celebrates a global community of crafty people creating the world’s finest headwear.

This is your opportunity to take full advantage of living in the cultural hub of creativity – Alice Springs.

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**Tragedy avoided**

In reporting on an incident involving a young woman and her baby in the Sunday Territorian (June 15), News Ltd correspondent Paul Tovey makes a salient point: “This should not happen in Australia...”

The same could be said of the myriad tasks police respond to on a daily basis.

Rather than focus on this single unfortunate and unpleasant event, it’s my view that we would be better served addressing the macro issue – why did a 15-year-old mother find herself in this situation and what needs to be done to prevent similar incidents anywhere in the Northern Territory, or elsewhere?

For the record, I unequivocally support our police officers who responded to the reported incident.

At approximately 1pm on Thursday June 12, NT Police responded to a report that a young child had been assaulted by a female.

However, upon arrival, police were faced with a bleeding, distressing 15-year-old mother holding her crying child who had no obvious signs of injury.

The officers tried to speak with the young woman but she was aggressive and refused to allow them to check on the child’s condition. The attending officers were confronted with a highly volatile, high risk situation.

It is clear their priority was the safety and welfare of both the 15-year-old mother and her 15-month-old child, as it should be.

After a short time the young woman agreed to sit in the secure area of a police vehicle. This reduced the risk of the child being injured and appeared to calm the young woman, although at that point she was still unwilling to surrender the child.

The presence of a news photographer was further aggravating the situation and with the distressed mother refusing to hand her child to police, an assessment of risk determined the best course of action, agreed to by the mother, was to carefully relocate both the mother holding her child to a nearby location as investigations continued.

It is not the practice of police to transport children in the rear of a police van unless a risk assessment determines this course of action to be in the greater interests of the child’s safety, as was the case here. As a result, this distressing situation was safely managed and the appropriate support authorities are now involved while police investigations continue.

Police never has been, and never will be an exact science.

Frontline officers frequently deal with incidents that can escalate quickly and they rely on their training to decide how best to respond. In the matter reported, the officers conducted a thorough risk assessment, displayed great empathy and care for the young woman and her child, and a potentially tragic outcome has been avoided.

Respected Aboriginal spokesmen Warren Mundine and Mick Gooda are strong and passionate advocates for Indigenous Australians and I hope that after providing more detail, they will understand the clear, broader issues involved here and do what they can to help all involved, including the police who are invariably caught in the middle.

The challenge for all of us is to work in a collegiate and cooperative way to deal with the real issue, that is, why were police called in the first place? John McRoberts APM Commissioner of Police

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**Quote of the Day**

“We’re encouraging young women who are doing things in the community to come in and give it a go.”

Lizzie Welch

Gill Dew

Berengere Collin

Louise Ewing

Lizzie Welch: “I wasn’t aware the desert had a winter so I’m not handling it very well. I wear lots of layers.”

Gill Dew: “A beautiful open fire in our backyard and my lovely mother has crocheted me a rug which I wrap around myself every night.”

Berengere Collin: “I am living in my car so I have to wear lots of clothes and eat plenty of vegetable soup.”

Louise Ewing: “I wear sensible clothing – it’s all the better to use that works. And I try to keep active.”

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**What are you doing to keep warm this winter?**

**2013 ALICE SPRINGS GROW GIRL GOWN UP, SUSAN BURNS**

Lizzie Welch

Gill Dew

Berengere Collin

Louise Ewing

**By Numbers**

The date in August when the Muluk Mulk gallery will close its doors.

The distance in kilometres the new Chandler salt mine, to be developed by Telxus Holding, is north of Alice Springs.

The average number of burials of loved ones per day in Alice Springs during May.