"Dry areas may go" says Stone

Report By Erwin Chlanda

Chief Minister Shane Stone says he may put an end to "dry" communities in a new bid to curb drink-related disorder in the urban centres.
Mr Stone said in an exclusive interview with the Alice News: "The real issue that has to be addressed here is dry communities. "A lot of the reason for people being in town is because they can't drink in their own communities, so their problems get transferred into town. "I'm coming around to the view that perhaps communities should not be permitted to be dry," says Mr Stone. "They're going to have to deal with these matters locally, in the same way we've had to deal with them. At the present time you just get a shifting of the problem. "Many Aboriginal elders have said to me they don't want these people in their communities. Well, I've got news for them: we don't want them in our community either. "I know they've got to go somewhere, and we've got to get to the root cause of why it is people get into chronic alcohol abuse. "Despite what we see on our streets the facts are the majority of Aboriginal people don't drink. "So you've got a hard core of people, some of whom are beyond redemption, because they are so alcohol impaired you'll never salvage them, but it's the next generation, the young ones coming through that you have to run programs for. "Sometimes these work, sometimes they don't, but you've got to keep trying, and the other real challenge is making sure young, educated black youth have employment prospects, because at the moment they don't." Mr Stone says he's taken a personal interest in the problems of violence in Todd Mall, visiting and talking with one of the mall traders, (News lead story last week) but points out that similar problems are occurring throughout the Territory and elsewhere. "You can't even walk up the Adelaide Mall these nights without the risk of an incident, and this is totally unacceptable for all Australians, let alone for Territorians, and people in Alice Springs. "Following on from my discussions here, I've put in place certain strategies which already seem to be working. "I've requested that a Taskforce from Darwin have periodic sweeps through Alice Springs. "It's a very expensive option to bring that group down here, but they're very effective, and they always seem to get a good result. "But perhaps it's time to revisit the concept of the surveillance cameras. "The Alice Springs Town Council took the view they didn't want to pursue this, but I would be prepared to revisit that, if they want to. "But I can't do it on my own. The mall after all is the responsibility of the town council." Mr Stone says one of the problems is the two kilometre law. "I am absolutely committed to that legislation, but unless you've got a policeman on every corner, you're not going to enforce it totally. "Police suffer enormous frustrations at times in trying to locate the grog [being consumed within the two km limit]. "The offenders are very inventive in the way they will conceal alcohol when they see police coming. "They'll bury the grog in the sand, or hide it somewhere. Sure, you guys can go out and take a photo [see the News pictures last week] but if a policeman turns up, the grog'll be removed very quickly." Mr Stone says he's asked for advice from the Police Commissioner on the question of establishing a permanent police presence in the mall, such as a small depot or police "box." But, he says "Police Commissioners always say that foot patrols are an ineffective use of police. "Sure, it's great visually and it gives people comfort, but they'll say we're far better off having quick response groups. "Well there's no doubt in my mind that the public prefer to see a policeman.
They get a great deal of comfort from that.

Police Commander Robin Bullock is looking at different ways of staffing and running these patrols. The bicycle patrols for example, seemed to work very well.

The Darwin City Council's practice of police and council officers patrolling together is successful, and there are plans for doing the same in Katherine.

"There's nothing to stop the council in Alice Springs saying to me as Police Minister, OK let's give this a trial."

Meanwhile Mr Stone says there may have to be a pay-out to native title holders "at a later date" for land used for the Alice Springs Desert Park, opening this week.

While not able to estimate the size of any compensation payout, Mr Stone says payment would "only be necessary in the event that native title could be demonstrated."

Asked if he thought claims that visitors to the Desert Park could "see the outback in one and a half hours," might result in tourists spending even less time in Alice Springs, the Chief Minister said he didn't accept such a view.

"The NT government has spent a lot of money on this Desert Park to enhance visitor numbers into Alice Springs to add an attraction, and we've also developed driving tours in the area."

"The park will provide yet another thing to do in Alice Springs, and add to the attractions already here."

On the Howard Government's announced proposals to freeze on the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), and concerns that this will see a dramatic increase in unemployment in Aboriginal communities, Mr Stone says: "This is a retrograde step in my view."

"CDEP has worked very well on a number of communities."

"Let's get Aboriginal people working on infrastructure projects relevant to their communities and not on meaningless tasks."

**Braitling battle for ex-chalkies.**

Report By John McBeath

Peter Brooke, 42, a member of the ALP for 25 years, has won preselection for the seat of Braitling held by fellow school teacher, the CLP's Loraine Braham.

Mr Brooke, who is married with four sons, has lived in the urban Braitling electorate for four years, and spent the previous three years teaching at Harts Range.

Last year he was a member of the Teachers' Union executive, and events during the protracted teachers' dispute, he says, galvanised him "into standing up to be counted."

Says Mr Brooke: "The NT government's behaviour during that campaign was outrageous."

While he has never stood for government before, Mr Brooke is no newcomer to elections, mostly in unions.

He says he is confident of doing well against Mrs Braham, "if she wins CLP preselection.

"I want to get out and listen to the concerns of the electorate, but I think this government is looking tired and weary, and they're not performing well in a lot of areas."

"I've got a good campaign committee supporting me, and I think it'll be a good battle."

Ironically, Mrs Braham was Mr Brooke's boss when they both worked for the Education Department in Alice Springs.

As a result of what he terms "a bitter dispute" between teachers and the NT government last year, Mr Brooke resigned from his teaching position at Alice Springs High School, and now works in the building industry.

"It go to the point where I could no longer work for a government system that did not value its teachers, and at the end it was quite clear that they didn't."

"During that dispute, which has left teachers' morale at rock bottom, there was a golden opportunity for Loraine Braham, with her background in education, to play a brokering role, but there was nothing heard from her but a deafening silence."

"How did she go when the blowtorch was turned on her?"

"She just kept out of the way, despite delegations that went to see her."

"There seems to be a lot of support in the electorate for someone to stand against Loraine Braham."

Mr Brooke has not severed his connection with teaching completely; he's still a union member and has done "a couple of weeks of relief teaching" out bush.

In fact, he says when Mrs Braham was making press statements at the start of the year, about all teacher shortages being filled, he was relief teaching at a bush school which had two vacancies.

The ALP candidate says he is working as part of a team, with Peter Toyne, Shadow Minister for Education, whose
electorate adjoins Braitling, and "there's been a lot of support from teachers across Alice Springs encouraging me to run.
"But my interests are not confined to education.
"I have a young family, and law and order is an area where this government's lacking at the moment.
"There's the health issue, with local doctors being unhappy with the Health Minister in the Territory, and his response.
"I'm also interested in the proper use of taxpayers' money, especially the work of the Public Accounts Committee, of which Mrs Braham is the chairperson.
"There are lots of questions about Mr Dondas and his wife, and their involvement in the Northern Australian Film Corporation, which got a thrid of a million dollars of taxpayers' money.
"Closer to home, there are several issues with traffic in Braitling, and I suspect when I start getting around and talking to people there'll be other issues."
Mr Brooke says his campaign will be two-pronged: "There's the performance of the Government Territory-wide, which is tired and worn out, and there are the local issues here in Alice Springs, and how the present Member for Braitling is perceived."

**Negotiate, says ALP.**

Report By John McBeath

Negotiating is the way to solve the native title issue, says Territory Labor in its first major policy statement leading up to the NT elections, expected to be called this year.
The ALP's approach is in direct conflict with that of the ruling CLP, which is calling for Canberra to legislate away key native title rights, especially over pastoral leaseholds.
Opposition Leader Maggie Hickey says the options are "legislate, litigate, or negotiate," and opts firmly for the latter.
The policy document, entitled Let's Just Do It! - Negotiate and Win, says under Labor there would be "regional agreements and certainty, leading to economic growth."
However, Chief Minister Shane Stone told the Alice News: "The moment you start to negotiate you are accepting that the claim has a degree of legitimacy, and a large number of these claims have no legitimacy whatsoever.
"NT Labor is saying negotiate, so they're accepting there's something OK about ambit claims.
"We have drawn the line in the sand and said there is absolutely no merit in these claims.
"When you say negotiate, you start to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars chasing your tail, negotiating."
The CLP position now relies on the Howard Government legislating "to narrowly define native title," following the High Court decision that native title and pastoral leases could co-exist.
The ALP paper says the "legislate" option (where the Federal Government legislates to extinguish or amend native title, overriding the High Court decision) would result in "financial losses to taxpayers, and lead to lack of public and private investment."
This option would also lead to further court appeals, says the paper, and probably mean a sky high compensation bill.
Mr Stone does not use the word "extinguish," saying: "The Territory government never went out and argued extinguishment.
"What we argued was that no one knows what native title means.
"The Aboriginal leadership says native title is nothing more than the right to hunt, to gather, to have association with the land, and to observe sacred sites.
"The NT Government says alright, if that's it, why can't we define it as that?
"But the land councils have said it's a bit more complicated than that.
"They believe they should have a say on land development; they believe they should be able to extract an equity, a share holding, or a cash compensation.
"That's where we part company," says Mr Stone. "The Labor policy mirrors what the land councils were putting to us three or four weeks ago. It's the same thing."
Labor says the "litigate" path (where each claim is fought out in the courts) would have massive legal costs, and delays of up to 20 years before resolution.
Spokesperson Peter Toyne told the Alice News the reasoning behind Labor's opting for the negotiation process:
"Negotiation was the line Minister for Lands, Mike Reed, was taking in discussions with the Central Land Council (CLC) and the Alice claimants, over about a nine month period before the Federal Government changed hands.
"When the Howard government was elected, the Territory government pulled away from this negotiated position."
"I think they then decided they'd get a quicker solution through legislation, so they've backed away from negotiation," Mr Toyne says.

"What we've said in our policy is that in Alice Springs, along with any of the other urban centres where there is, or might be a claim, we would sit down in a negotiated process and try and trade off a raft of outcomes for the claimants against a raft of outcomes for the town as a whole.

"The negotiations would be based on the idea of mutual benefit," says Mr Toyne.

"For example, in any discussions about the Alice Springs claims, one of the major things we'd include in the potential outcomes for the Arrernte people would be a strong cultural centre here, which would also be a jewel in the tourism crown for Alice.

"We'd put up a barrier to endless demands or huge levels of compensation.

"There'd be a series of quite specific outcomes: a culture centre; an employment and training program earmarked for the Arrernte people; acknowledgement in a very formal sense of the Arrernte custodianship of the Alice Springs area; inclusion of Arrernte people on any planning meeting where decisions are being made that might impact on their traditional concerns for the area."

Mr Stone's reaction is: "Those tradeoffs are paid for by the taxpayer.

"Governments have done these sort of deals in the past, and Mt. Todd was an example of that, but you've seen the old lady at Century Zinc saying we've got a group of people here who've vetoed what we've managed to negotiate, and they have cruelled it for all Aboriginal in Cape York.

"You've got Robinson, deputy chairman of ATSIC, saying these ambit claims are just absolutely diminishing the credibility of Aboriginal people on native title. And they're right; it's just seen as a huge grab," says Mr Stone.

The ALP proposes a Territory-wide body called the Native Title Advisory Council comprising all stake holders: land councils, industry interests, social interests, and cultural interests.

Such a council would not hold negotiations itself; but would "identify a community of interest, say up to six urban centres and about 20 rural ones around the Territory."

"They'd then get the local forum together and make sure there are resources and advice available to that group to reach a regional agreement.

"In Alice Springs the key negotiators are the government and the native title claimants via their land council, but there are other stake holders who need to be there to make sure that something outrageous isn't being done to say the tourist industry, or to the social arrangements at schools, or whatever," says Mr Toyne.

"Then, as long as the raft of outcomes for each group is pre-announced, basically the framework being negotiated to is understood, and people know what the Arrernte can expect to get out of it, and what the town can expect to get out of it, we feel that it's a practical exercise then to get through it fairly quickly."

**Eagles soar at new park.**

Report By Kieran Finnane

"Work with it, rather than against it," is Deb Fisher's motto.

For the senior architect of Tangentyere Design, that goes for the site, the climate, the materials, the local pool of skills. Combined with her commitment to design as a process of consultation and collaboration and her incontestable talent, Fisher's approach gets the kind of results that won her the Institute of Architects' Best Building Award in the NT two years ago. This was for the Julalikari Administration Centre in Tennant Creek.

The Desert Park, officially opened today, is graced with but one of Fisher's designs but it is a shining beacon in the generally unexciting built environment of Central Australia.

More good news is that the Alice CBD will soon be treated to the Fisher touch with her conversion of the former Queen Elizabeth II Infant Health Clinic (opposite the town council chambers) to a CATIA Visitors' Information Centre.

Parks and Wildlife commissioned Tangentyere Design to work on the Raptor Building at the new park, bringing it forward from Stage Two of the building schedule.

A raptor is a bird of prey - an eagle, a kite, an owl, all of which have their natural habitat in the MacDonnell Ranges.

Fisher was able to sit at the building site at dusk and watch them free-wheeling over the foothills, giving her inspiration from the outset.

The building consists of an amphitheatre - where visitors to the park will be able to see a display by tamed raptors - and, tucked in beneath it, the birds' cages and handlers' rooms.
Fisher says she works intuitively, drawing inspiration from the site and the surrounding landscape, working that in with the clients' brief.

In the now completed Tangentyere Building, which Tangentyere Design will enter in this year's architects' awards, there is a clear reference in the roof lines and striated walls to the characteristic splitting and layering of the Western MacDonnells landscape, one that Fisher particularly loves.

With the Raptor Building the predominant reference is to the birds themselves in the winged form of the amphitheatre's shade structure which, as you approach from below, appears to hover over the landscape.

To reach the amphitheatre you must cross a boardwalk bridging a small natural creek bed.

The balustrade leans out slightly and the lines of its timbers are unusually fluid. The effect is light and inviting.

Fisher explains that the plantation timbers are radially sawn, which means that the log is cut as you would segments of a round cake.

This maximises the return from each tree and by working with its form, minimises cupping and bowing, as well as expressing its organic origins.

As Fisher says: "The timber expresses its former life as a tree."

Timber gives way to concrete, steel and corrugated iron but, amazingly, a light organic, although not at all "woody" feel is maintained.

Fisher doesn't make any assumptions about what will work. She brings samples of everything onto the site and strives for the right rather than the easy solution.

The concrete steps are a very light sandy colour. Sitting on them you look up to the top of the ranges - maintaining this sight line was a primary requirement of the brief.

It is hoped that eventually the birds will be trained to swoop into the amphitheatre from the crest of a hill directly opposite the site.

The wall enclosing the amphitheatre is made from a unique aggregate developed with the local CSR Readymix quarry, mixing a rich variety of small stones with a sandy orange cement.

"We aimed for a movement of colour in the material that is there in the landscape," says Fisher.

The wall, like the balustrades, leans out slightly - again an embracing feel - and is split on the western side, for no reason other than to draw your eye into the landscape - what the park is all about, after all.

The shade structure is supported by beams of rusted steel, the first time to Fisher's knowledge that the material has been used in Central Australia.

Over the radiating purlins - the skeleton of the wing, if you like - is stretched a tight skin of shade cloth, the colour of unbleached cotton.

This is doubled externally on the southern-facing two thirds of the structure by a layer of corrugated iron. No shining silver here of course; rather, a two-tone design in matte iron grey and rust red sheets, referring to the variegations of plumage.

The northern side of the structure has just the single layer of shade cloth, to maximise warmth from the winter sun.

Sun angles are among Fisher's earliest calculations in the design process.

Dense planting on the south-eastern side will ultimately shelter the area from cold winds.

The birds themselves have received as much careful attention. Although Fisher found it difficult to design for caged creatures, she accepts that they serve an important educational purpose.

Within their confines, she then tried to do as much for the birds' comfort as she could.

The cages are sunk into the ground, to a depth of one and a half metres on the western side. This will keep them reasonably cool.

The alignment is stepped so that there is maximum outlook from the front and side of the cage. Again Fisher paid careful attention to the materials she used.

Instead of cyclone wire, a marine material of the sort used for shark nets has been employed on the walls, minimising the risk of injury to the birds.

Gravel covers irrigation pipes in the floor so that the cages can be simply hosed down, with the waste filtering down through the gravel.

Fisher is unstinting in her praise of her collaborators, from the Parks and Wildlife curators and bird handlers to the builders, Sitzlers, and other contractors.

"Everyone has committed themselves to excellence in this project," she says.

"I know people in town are highly skilled in working with the vernacular materials of the region - concrete, steel, Besser block, shade cloth, corrugated iron.

"These materials can be used in new ways and people enjoy the challenge, they rise to it, taking pride in local
achievement.
"Design isn't a tangible product that you can hand to someone in an envelope.
"It's a process: one that, in terms of the life cycle of a building, takes a little more time and commitment, but that is relatively inexpensive and pays off in the long term."

Fresh shock allegations of ATSIC work for dole rorts.

Report By Erwin Chlanda

<>Massive rorts of the CDEP "work for the dole" scheme in Central Australian Aboriginal communities are being alleged in a report to the Commonwealth and South Australian Aboriginal Affairs Ministers.
A former community development officer in the Pitjantjatjara lands south of Alice Springs says ATSIC has paid wages to people who don't exist, CDEP materials and vehicles are being stolen and resold, and in many communities, none of the work for which funding is made available is being carried out.
The secret report, leaked to the Alice News, alleges that millions of dollars are being misappropriated.
The report says: "Since April, 1996, [on one community] all CDEP workers - more than 100 residents - were being paid double the legal training allowance.
"There were false names listed for CDEP weekly payments, both on homeland work-attendance sheets and also on domestic attendance sheets.
"Who received the falsified payments has not yet been ascertained.
"A $250,000 CDEP deficit was incurred by [the] community.
"Strangely, there did not appear to be any sort of scrutiny by the ATSIC office staff, from Port Augusta, nor from the Pitjantjatjara Council's accounting department, in Alice Springs, who [allegedly] permitted the over-payments for the greater part of six months," the report says.
"It obviously appeared that the CDEP programme ... was regarded as nothing more than a type of welfare project, sit-down money provided by the government instead of unemployment benefits.
"Attendance sheets were falsified ... at that time and this was perpetrated with impunity.
"From the outset, it was evident there was little or no work being conducted with the various CDEP projects; in fact, the system was being cynically exploited by most people involved.
"The CDEP programme at that point was not properly structured; there was no CDEP clerk employed and neither was there a CDEP manager / foreman.
"There was no organised work plan arranged for the various teams and no accountability whatsoever.
"CDEP vehicles and equipment were at that time used willy-nilly for personal activities. This infringement of CDEP rules still exists.
"At weekends, or over-night, diesel fuel was milked from the tanks of CDEP vehicles for use in privately-owned cars and trucks.
"Another ploy was to fill a CDEP vehicle with fuel, supposedly for work purposes, and then to take the vehicle to a homeland, milk the tank, and use this fuel for generators, or to share around with others.
"There did not appear to be any CDEP vehicle register maintained by the [community] office.
"When such a register was latterly commenced, it was noticed that some CDEP vehicles had been confiscated by council members and sold, some were 'lost', vanished without trace - or destroyed, and there was no forthcoming information offered as to their current whereabouts.
"According to local informants, it seemed the Aboriginal Council had control of all CDEP vehicles.
"After a period of common use, the vehicles were presented to various individuals to do with as they wished and new vehicles were ordered from ATSIC."

The report then quotes a litany of specific rorts, discovered at a series of site inspections, including the following:-
The supervisor was not on the work site. Eventually [we] found him working at opal mining with a white chap. [The community] was deserted. No one was working at anything, nor was there any evidence of work being done.
The homeland site was very dirty.
An old building, believed to be part of the old Alice Springs hospital, was trashed. An Aboriginal informant told [us] that all the residents were "noodling" for opal. This was a daily task, he said.
The CDEP supervisor did not accompany [us] to the homeland work site, saying he was "too busy."

PLUS FROM THIS WEEK: The ATSIC response.
Report By The Alice Springs News

<>ATSIC "called in" its own fraud unit, as well as Commonwealth and South Australian police, last November to investigate allegations of rorting a work for the dole in the Pitjantjatjarra lands, according to the commission's Deputy CEO, Glenn Rees.

He says reports in the Alice News about the alleged CDEP rorts "may now put that police investigation at risk". The allegations were from a former Community Development Officer (CDO) at one community, he says: "ATSIC has done everything to get these allegations investigated by the proper authorities," Mr Rees says.

"Two spot checks" conducted by ATSIC staff in the community at the centre of the allegations had found that "only two people were being incorrectly paid", and other spot checks "did not identify that any participant was being paid more than the amount allowed under the conditions of the CDEP."

If there were inconsistencies in work time sheets, then "it would have been the CDO's job" to check. "Spot checks by visiting ATSIC project officers would have identified 'false names' - however, none were discovered."

Commenting on a reported $250,000 CDEP deficit in one community, Mr Rees says it has "taken action to reduce a deficit and ensure it does not reoccur."

Pt Augusta ATSIC field staff spot check CDEP "on a regular basis", undertaking "mini audits" and "if problems are identified, they are raised by the field staff and are dealt with by the community".

Attendance sheets are the "responsibility of the CDO" now making allegations; if there are falsifications then he "is admitting to negligence."

There was no "continuous stream" of new cars: "Only two vehicles have been replaced at this community since the 1995-96 financial year," says Mr Rees.

Painting their homelands with passion and talent.

Report By Kieran Finnane

"These women paint with a passion that I've never seen in any other artist, day and night, seven days a week!"

Former Keringke Arts coordinator Liesl Rockchild, last Friday opening an exhibition at Araluen by Arrernte artists Kathleen Wallace, Gabriella Wallace and Theresa Ryder, recalled the many times she had come into the art room late at night to find Kathleen asleep in front of her silk, paintbrush in hand.

"We love the land, that's why we paint," says Kathleen simply.

The women started painting when they were 12 or 13 years old. A European artist was visiting Santa Teresa mission which had become their home:

"His name was Mr Sawjack. We used to follow him around and watch what he was doing," says Theresa.

Kathleen is best known for her silk painting and painted chairs and other objects. However, this small exhibition under the title rentye, meaning homeland, is dominated by landscape painting.

There are some outstanding expressions of the Namatjira watercolour tradition by Theresa (see the large Trephena Gorge and Simpson's Gap) but there are also some interesting departures.

Kathleen is painting with a far more impressionistic approach in, for example, the oil on canvas Looking from where I live.

"I like this place, I see it every day from my back door," she says.

She is clearly interested in painting the effects of light. This is particularly evident in Yam Creek which is also striking for its intimist point of view. Rather than the landscape being spread in a vista before your eyes - as it is in the majority of the works - it embraces you, you feel that you are in there, in the shade of the trees.

There are also opportunities to reflect on the evolution of the other artists.

Contrast Gabriella Wallace's 1955 Landscape with Gum Trees with her large Landscape from this year. The aesthetic focus has moved from primarily an organisation of strong compositional elements to a virtuosity of mark making - what exquisite grass!

Theresa's recent Dancing Lubras represents the same land form (in the Ross River area) as the earlier Dancing Kungas from the permanent collection, selections from which are on show in the main gallery.

Theresa has in fact painted this subject for many commissions.

"I paint it from memory," she says. "I've painted it so many times that I don't make mistakes."

While visual rhythm is important in both paintings, it is intensified in the more recent version with its emphatically
horizontal format, its careful repetition of elements and choreographing of the trees - they are like an immense chorus line.
Not surprisingly Araluen curator Alison French would love to add the more recent version to the permanent collection. At $700 Dancing Lubras is very reasonably priced but Araluen relies on donors and sponsors for the acquisition of works.

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