

NGUKURR NEWS

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Ngukurr News

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Reporters

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Views expressed in Ngukurr News are not necessarily those of SEALCP

Health Workers will not lose their jobs

Ngukurr News no. 25 contained a story about the proposal to develop a health board in Ngukurr and for Ngukurr to be involved in a new way of delivering health services. Under the new system the community would have much greater involvement in the health services that are provided to them. There would also be increased funding making it possible to employ a full-time doctor and other staff in the community.

This proposal has become the focus of debate within the community. At the most recent Council meeting (Thursday 21st Feb) health staff expressed concern that the existing RANs and the Health workers would lose their jobs under the new scheme.

No existing staff member will lose their job or their entitlements under the new system. In fact the new system gains a great deal of strength from a team of committed health workers who are prepared to work with the community to improve health for everyone.

Members from the Katherine West Health Board, including the director Mr Kirk Whelan and health workers that are involved in the project will be visiting Ngukurr in the near future to talk about the proposal and answer people's questions.

John Bern

Council meeting

On Thursday February 21st a Council meeting was held to discuss the future of Ngukurr. Mrs Lyn Mott, the Town Clerk talked about her intention to leave the Town Clerk position and concentrate on running Air Ngukurr. No decisions have been made yet about who will take over as Town Clerk.

More news from the Council meeting on page 3.

Daphne Daniels

Air Ngukurr

In response to our story about Air Ngukurr in the last edition of the Ngukurr News, the CEO of Air Ngukurr Lyn Mott has provided the following press release. Please note that we have not altered this piece in any way.

Normal Operations for AIR NGUKURR.

CEO of Air Ngukurr Mrs Lyn Mott said that normal operations for the airline commenced Wednesday the 30th January 2002, to spite the current investigations by CASA.

The investigation had started from rumour and disgruntled, pilots working for the company who did not get the promotions they wanted.

This is sad because this does not just effect one person but effects several Communities, Tourism, and other local businesses were Air Ngukurr provide services. We are one of the few organisations that does not receive government funding to operate our company.

The Air Ngukurr board of directors is seeking legal advise, and has met with Local Member Mr John Ahkit, and a telephone Conference with the Federal Member for Lingiari Mr Warren Snowden..

Normal operations resumed for the airlines on Wednesday, and with the arrival of the new 20 seater Bandeirante Aircraft, has increased our passenger carrying capacity to service the Tiwi Islands.

Air Ngukurr's mission statement is to provide services for indigenous people, so that they maybe able to fly when **they** need to fly.

We have a base in Ngukurr, Borroloola, Katherine and now Darwin.

For Bookings call 89754180

Parents need to take responsibility

Parents need to take more responsibility for their children in the community. At the school council meeting it was reported that some children are still coming to school hungry and without food or money to buy their lunch.

The school is also concerned about children sniffing at school or attending while affected by sniffing petrol.

Ben who runs the petrol sniffing program comments that there is an increasing number of young boys and girls (often under the age of 15) who are taking up sniffing and not attending school.

For Ben's program to be successful he needs the support of parents in the community. He also needs the support of Council.

Parents should not be ashamed to ask for help if they need it. We need to also think about what kids want and talk to them about their problems.

Daphne Daniels

New appointments at NORFORCE

The new NORFORCE commanding officer is LTCOL Roger Bryent who replaces LTCOL Martin Glass.

The new Training Warrant Officer in the Arnhem squadron is WO2 David Ashworth who replaces WO2 Neil Clarke.

MAJ Len Tracey is still the officer commanding Arnhem Squadron, which includes Ngukurr.

WO2 Ross Parsons is still the training Warrant officer based in Katherine and responsible for the Ngukurr soldiers

TB Screening

All people over the age of 15 should go to the clinic to have an x-ray of their chest taken to check for TB. The TB doctors and nurses will be in the community for several weeks.

Land Rights in the spotlight in Canberra

NLC's regional officer Bobby Nungamajbar attended a forum in Canberra, which discussed the forthcoming performance audit of the four NT Land Councils and possible amendments to the Land Rights Act.

Bobby was part of a group of NLC and CLC members and staff who attended a two-day workshop held at the Australian National University. The workshop was addressed by the Australian National Audit Office, well-known economist Professor Ian Manning and several other experts from around Australia. The workshop was hosted by Professor Jon Altman and the Centre for Economic Policy Research. The "performance audit" of the Land Councils has been commissioned by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to assess the "effectiveness and efficiency" of the four councils.

At the same time as the workshop, NLC Chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu and CEO Norman Fry, along with the CLC's leaders, met with Philip Ruddock over amendments to the Land Rights Act. The Minister told the groups that he wants to get changes made to the act in the spring session of Federal Parliament this year. He did not give any indication of what these changes might be.

Following the workshop and the meeting the NLC and the CLC have agreed to work very closely together to ensure that the rights of the traditional owners are protected and that no changes are made to the Act without the consent of Aboriginal people.

Ngukurr Arts Exhibition

A collection of paintings, prints and lithographs have been on exhibition at Alcaston Gallery Melbourne during February.

The *Ngukurr Now* exhibition was a selection from the art works done during last year. Some were especially painted for the show. It was a very vibrant and strong show of paintings that filled three rooms of the gallery. On the opening night Beverly Knight, Martin King from the Australian print workshop and Brenda made speeches that welcomed the visitors to the exhibition and told of some of the experiences of working with artists at Ngukurr. Many of the MLC students and their parents came, also Simon Normand and his family, and many of the visitors who had been to Ngukurr on 4WD trips during the past couple of years. It was a very happy gathering of friends of Ngukurr and all passed on their best wishes to Ngukurr people and the artists.

Brenda Gibson

Disaster meeting - a new cyclone plan

Last Thursday there was a meeting of essential service personnel to discuss a new disaster plan for Ngukurr. Lyn Mott has stated that at least 20 houses in the community are built to cyclone code. These houses will be marked and people who live in these should stay in them, instead of evacuating

to the school or the police station. People who do not live in houses that are up to code standard can either go and stay with people in houses that are safe, or go to the school or police station.

When a cyclone is approaching the community, the church bell will be rung and two vehicles with orange lights will travel around their community warning people to either stay in safe houses or walk to the shelters.

It is very important that people have enough water and food stored to get them through a cyclone. If the power is cut the community will run out of water in two hours. Fill buckets and bottles with water when you hear that there is a cyclone warning. The store will allow people special "book down" so that people can buy the food that they need.

There will be people to pick up the old people in the community and those people with disabilities.

Once the cyclone is over the church bell will be rung again to tell people it is safe to leave their houses.

As of February 28th the Bureau of Meteorology say that there are no tropical lows near the Northern Territory and that no tropical cyclone development is expected within the next three days.

Traditional Credit Union to open a bank in Ngukurr

The Traditional Credit Union will be opening a branch in Ngukurr and will be situated in the CDEP office.

A bank in the community will offer people many advantages. People will be able to keep a check on their accounts and they will also be able to draw out more money than they are currently able to at the store. There will be no charges for over the counter transactions, but some charges for the use of EFTPOS cards.

Opening a new account with the Traditional Credit Union costs \$10. This payment makes you a member of the union and you have voting rights.

The Traditional Credit Union will also be able to provide personal and small business loans. Once an individual has saved \$500 in their account they are eligible to apply for a \$5000 loan. Small business loans of up to \$15,000 will also be available.

The Bank will open up employment opportunities for local people. People will be asked to apply and will be interviewed for the positions.

Ishmael Andrews has been nominated to be on the board of directors.

Grant controller will continue to administer CDEP payments

As a result of the ATSIC review of CDEP in the community, CDEP funds are being managed by a grant controller in Darwin. This arrangement will continue until the end of March.

After this time it is likely that pays will continue to be administered from Darwin, by Louisa.

Ngukurr stars in Building maintenance video

The Centre for Appropriate Technology has produced a video entitled "Our place, your place" about building maintenance. The video is narrated by Ernie Dingo. Alan Joshua and the maintenance program in Ngukurr play a major part in the video.

Copies of the video will be available at the library and the Council office.

No IHANT funding for new houses this year

Ngukurr has not received any funding to build new houses in 2002-2003. Urapunga has received funding to build three new houses.

Upgrade of oval

Community members have talked about the need to upgrade the oval. Funding will not be available to put top-soil on the oval until it is fully fenced to protect it from being disturbed by cattle and horses.

Community boat

The community boat needs major repairs in order to make it safe. Council will find out how much the repairs would cost and then decide whether to keep the current boat or to buy a new smaller one.

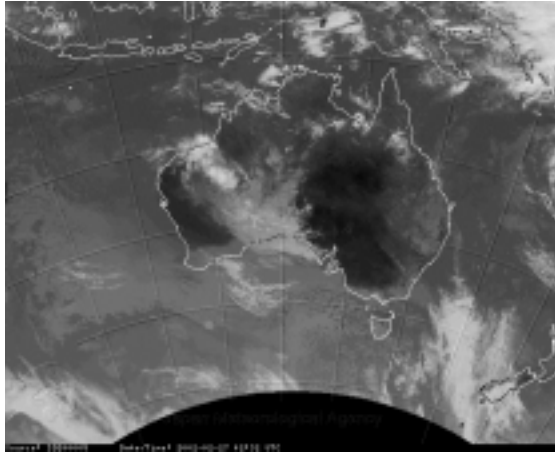
Batchelor Institute building opening

The Council agreed that the official opening of the Batchelor building will be in May after the rivers go down.

A "dry" wet season so far

Although we had quite heavy rain last week and the rivers are all high, this wet season has been much drier so far than last year. Last January Ngukurr had 164mm of rain, this January we only had 50mm of rain. In February last year Ngukurr received 431mm of rain, this February we have only reached 222mm of rain. Gwen and Lance Tremlett collected this information in their rain gauge at the Rectory.

The satellite image of Australia shows that there is not much cloud over the top end of the continent and the Bureau of Meteorology has forecast hot days of around 36°C and evening showers or storms until Saturday.



Satellite Image of Australia Wednesday 27th February.

A mine of information

A meeting was held at the Council meeting room for informal discussion regarding people's understanding of the impacts of mineral exploration and possible future mining in the Ngukurr region. About 14 people attended the meeting and talked to Brian Senior, who is a geologist with extensive experience in the mining industry.

Several of the participants had worked with Rio Tinto on soil and sediment sampling exploration programs, but few people were aware of the types of minerals that the company were after. There was a general feeling that a summary of achievements should be published at regular intervals in the *Ngukurr News*.

There were several questions about the environment and the effect of people moving into the area, and impact on traditional hunting and fishing and sites of special significance. It was pointed out that mining companies operate under strict laws that prevent personnel from activities that could damage the community and its land. For example firearms and possession of domestic animals are forbidden. Alcohol in mining settlements is either forbidden or strictly rationed. Personnel employed at mine sites or on exploration project work 12 hour shifts seven days per week and are flown home for rest and recreation. While people are in the area, they are either working or resting at the mine site.

People talked about identifying important sites and the problems that people had about reaching agreement on the extent and location of these. There was a general awareness of the benefits of mining and that our clothes (often made from artificial fabrics from petroleum products), houses, vehicles, roads and energy requirements (fuel and electricity) are largely the product of mining.

It is unlikely that a very large mineral deposit will be found in the Ngukurr region, but the rocks here are little explored and there are possibilities for base metals (copper, lead, zinc) and gold. If mines were developed in the region they would probably have a limited lifespan of about 10 years. The community could benefit from employment opportunities and some of the infrastructure such as roads and airstrips that would remain after mining ceased. This could lead to other development opportunities such as eco-tourism as well as making access easier to land. After a mine is closed open cuts are left in a safe state, and some sections may be fenced off from stock and native animals. Dumps are levelled and contoured and seeded with native plants. All the buildings, plant and equipment and rubbish are removed from the site and the land is allowed to revert back to its natural state.

Brian Senior

Where does all the money go?

Kate Senior, David Perkins and John Bern are completing the report about household income and expenditure in Ngukurr. John will bring this report to Ngukurr with him, for community members to read, suggest changes and ask questions about the content. Anyone who is interested in discussing the results of this study should talk to Kate.

Young women in Ngukurr

Kate will be starting work, which will look at how young women in Ngukurr view their lives and what they want in the future. We are keen for several young women aged 14-20 years to come and work with us on the *Ngukurr News* and write their stories for the next SEALCP publication which will be called "Boyfriends, babies and basketball - young women in Ngukurr". Anyone who is interested and would like to learn some valuable computing and office skills at the same time as writing their stories should talk to Daphne or Kate.