



CHINESE LITERARY ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND PO BOX 21 CHRISTMAS ISLAND, WA 6798

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"Keeping our Culture and Traditions alive"

INQUIRY INTO GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE IOT 09APR 2015 Submission by the Chinese Literary Association of Christmas Island (CLA)

Introduction

Jeannie Ku – Treasurer of CLA

Gee Foo - Secretary and business operator with business interest in Travel, Food & beverages, air charters

CLA

Incorporate OCT 96 but with a history that dates back a century ago.

ROLE- our role to preserve, observe and promote its culture, heritage and traditions in our unique multi-cultural island. We have work with other non-profit organisations on the island in activities that the whole community participate

All our volunteers are not paid. We rely very heavily on sponsorships from individuals and businesses on the island including the shire, CIP to assist us in our activities.

GOVERNANCE

CLA respects and support the democratic elected members of the shire and will continue to work with them to create a better environment, welfare to the community
We are concern about

- a) **JOBS** and the state of the **ECONOMY** on the island with the scale down of immigration detention centre.
- b) We are concern about our **YOUTH** will they be given priority if they have the Skill over expatriates. If they do not have skill do we provide the necessary training.
- c) We are concern about the **SMALL BUSINESSES** on the island who have been providing some essential services to our remote island.
- d) We are concern about **AGE CARE**.
- e) We are concern about the shortage of **HOUSING**
- f) We are concern as to the direction this island is heading or do we have a direction?

We are concern and confuse as to who are actually governing us (our bureaucrats in Canberra who are not elected or the democratically elected shire) and who do we turn to when we need to raise issues and who is listening to us to tackle issue?



SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS WITH WA (SDA)

Has the IOT department engaged with the community, shire or the CCC annually to review whether all services under this arrangement has been delivered ? The KPI achieved?

FESA – Understand on island are run by volunteers. Understand that the present equipment as some have put it “meant for the museum”. Understand, the CI airport do not have firefighting capabilities which is a requirement with almost all international airlines before they can fly to CI. Are we doing something about this?

The present SDAs

We are very concern that the bureaucrats in Canberra does not support small business on the island. We are also concern about the lack of transparency, engagement and accountability.

TOLL FREIGHTER – The department underwrites the weekly toll freighter. There was no proper consultation/engagement with the community. It was a sudden arrangement which impact on the Northern flight as well as to some local shops. Who are the users of this freighter and the cost? As far as we are aware none of our members use this service as we believe in supporting the local shops which create employment and support community activities.

CITA – The department also fund the CI Tourism office to compete with some of the businesses. CITA is a member’s base organisation not sure whether it is a non-profit organisation. But it is obvious that they operate a merchandise shop as well as a booking system that earns them commissions, taking away business from the usual travel agent but funded to a yearly budget of more than \$400,000/- by the Govt. We are concern with a lack of transparency in this case with this budget – is it a special Service Delivery Arrangement? If so how come the community is not aware of this arrangement and where is the KPI? We did enquire with CITA and can quote **“as long as we can justify its expenditure, is’nt of huge concern to the govt. they just want to be able to say that they spend \$500k on tourism”**. Is this how the Govt work? CITA has received funding of millions of dollars these past few years without KPI. We understand only about 250 visitors arrive last year and may not be all tourists.

The department do not allow the local travel agent on the island to book flights for their on island staff as they have a so call existing system to book with their official travel agent which is off island and who do not contribute to the activities on the island.

With some of this examples, one wonders whether the department actually cares for members of the community on the island. If our local businesses are not look after the CLA and other non-profit organisation’s activities will suffer without their support.

TRANSPORTATION

High cost of fuel 2.15 per litre – WA average about 1.50, 1.60. High cost of vehicle maintenance. No public bus for alternative arrangement. Maybe we should be reviewing the School bus contract to include providing some extra services.



HOUSING

This has been raised many times over but no outcome or solutions. Land- no land release to solve some of the problems.

1. Role of the Administrator and the capacity of the Administrator taking A stronger decision-making role.

In the past many inquires many reports but lacks action. Since the Minister is too busy with such a small remote island like Christmas Island, It may be good if the Administrator who is on island can have more powers to make decisions. Right now lots of decision making comes from the bureaucrats in Canberra who relies on certain groups who frequently writes to them but not the majority who hardly correspond with Canberra not that they do not want to but don't know how.

2. Existing consultation mechanisms underetaken by government rep Including IOT RDO and best practice for similar small remote Communities engagement with the Australian and state governments.

The RDO has been establish to support both economic and community development in the IOT. The RDO works with local businesses, community organisations and individuals to develop strategic priorities for economic diversification and community resilience.

At least with the IOT RDO, we have representation with regard to some funding arrangement and some voice. This can be seen in a lot more application grant funding from local organisations.

3. Local Govt's role in supporting and representing communities in the IOT

The CLA respect and support the democratically elected representatives of the local government and will work with them to deliver better outcomes for The community.

4. Opportunities to strengthen and diversify the economy, whilst maintaining and celebrating the unique cultural identity of the IOT

- a. Economic development – Both Canberra department and the local government is very weak on this. There is no sense of dynamism & direction.
The IOT has no experience or the right people to lead us economically. There is no proper tools/mechanism in place to spearhead growth. There are no encouragement but more frustrations for investors who want to invest here. Who would want to come to invest when they may have to spent tens of thousands if not millions to clear all the hurdles without even a guarantee.
- b. **Detention Centre scale down-** lots of contractors we know are planning to leave the island if there is no more work.
- c. **MINTOPE** – Mining to Plant Enterprise. Looks very positive and we hope the government would support this project which will see agriculture On CI. Land needs to be released and all tools /mechanism in place for it to get started. This will create much needed jobs and opportunities.
- d. **Land Management Scheme-** do we have one?



Conclusion

Obviously we have issues that need to be addressed but who is looking into this?
Canberra? Perth? CI.

Do we have any plans for CI? The direction and support? Where are we heading now
with the economy?

Lots of Inquiry, lots of reports but no action in the pass. Will this be another one to be
put inside filing cabinet? We want action and we want someone to be in charge to see
the fulfilment of this Inquiry.