Submission to Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities.

"With the creation of a 'national emergency' around the release of the *Little Children are Sacred* report into child abuse in Aboriginal communities, and the use of the military to occupy towns and communities in the Northern Territory, Australia has become the first member of the Coalition of the Willing to invade itself." (Guy Rundle, "*Military Humanitarianism in Australia's North"* in "Coercive Reconciliation", eds. Altman and Hinkson, 2007)

This submission specifically addresses issues around the implementation and consequences of the NTER, particularly in regard to Aboriginal remote community safety, and law and justice. It proposes a governance structure for remote night patrols.

The writer, Jennifer Walker, is well placed to be able to comment on the NTER, as I have a strong history of working with the NT remote communities south of Tennant Creek. I have lived and worked in the Territory as an anthropologist, and on community development and law and justice initiatives for the last 20 years, working with Aboriginal peoples and remote communities for this entire period. I worked as an anthropologist at the Aboriginal Areas Protection Agency for more than 4 years (sacred site protection), set up a remote communities disability brokerage service (which is still operating), worked for ten years as a remote community Night Patrol coordinator and support person, and am writing my Masters by Research thesis in Criminal Justice through the Crime Research Centre at University of Western Australia.

My thesis subject is remote Aboriginal community and night patrols in the southern region of the NT, with particular emphasis on the cultural and community specificity that makes them so effective at crime and violence prevention. As noted above, I spent the last decade working as a coordinator and resource hunter for the remote Aboriginal community Night Patrols in the region south of Tennant Creek. 8 years was spent working at Tangentyere Council as the Remote Area Night Patrol Coordinator, and I have just finished a four month stint working at Central Desert Shire, who are now auspicing the NTER Patrols funding for 11 remote communities. The rest of my time has been spent working on my thesis. There are 24 remote communities in this region, all of which have had a patrol at some stage.

I am currently not working for any organization or government agency, and am not susceptible to pressure to espouse any corporate or organizational agenda.

Impact of Intervention

1.Waste of resources

Millions of dollars have gone into funding the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) so far, with very little observable positive impact on the quality of life of many remote indigenous community residents.   The Intervention was launched with no consultation, something which has received much critical comment from remote community Aboriginal people, agencies, organizations, and observers of the Intervention. The agenda of the NTER appears to be one of old-fashioned assimilation, and forced compliance with an administrative agenda that takes no account of cultural difference. No attention was paid, and no lessons were learned from remote community programs (such as CDEP) that had some demonstrable successes in supporting remote Aboriginal community service and enterprise development.

The NTER activity that is most obvious in remote settlements is a proliferation of non-indigenous bureaucrats, a mushrooming of clusters of remote community housing for them to live in, and government cars for them to drive around in. Most of the remote Aboriginal community services provided under the NTER banner are services to *government* – not to the beleaguered Aboriginal remote settlement populations.

In September 2007, one remote community estimated that more than 2 million dollars of Intervention money had been spent in their community – not one cent of this was spent improving the indigenous inhabitants' lives. However, there were five nice new houses on the outskirts of town for non-indigenous intervention staff (empty most of the time), while some community members and families were still living in car bodies, or camping in the open due to lack of housing. Requests for new community housing had been in government pipelines for at least a decade previous to the Intervention. (pers. comm. D. Finter, 2007).

It is estimated that the proportion of Intervention funding being spent on setting up new bureaucracies in order to deliver services to government is between 60 and 70%. The NT government charges administrative fees of more than 50% to administer any program funding that they auspice. A remote community administrative worker tracked a funding grant from the Federal government through the layers of federal and territory bureaucracy to the eventual amount of funding that was made available to the community – 9% of the original grant funding was all that was left by the time the various bureaucracies and agencies involved in program auspice arrangements had all taken their share.

The destabilizing and chaotic effects of the Intervention in remote communities has been further exacerbated by the change to a new and unwanted system of local government in the NT. The Intervention, in combination with the new NT local government Shire arrangements, has disempowered remote communities by:

- centralizing policy and decision making with non-indigenous government agencies who run their own agendas at the expense of the Aboriginal peoples to whom they are supposedly providing services and support. There are now 2 layers of new bureaucracy for Aboriginal remote community people to deal with, each bent on claiming control of access to services and resources.
- impoverished remote community families through the Intervention's withdrawal of CDEP, the blanket imposition of income management, and very poorly targeted spending, most of which has gone into the new bureaucracies.
- Due to the imposition of the Shire,there has been a mass exodus of experienced staff such as community managers from remote communities. In some cases, reductions in salary and job conditions have led to resignations; in others, profound discomfort with the methods and approach of both the NTER and the Shires. Experienced staff who know the community are essential to ensuring services to remote communities have some continuity. Local and community specific knowledge is invaluable in minimising the risks of "resource capture" by dominant groups and families in the remote community.
- Canceling CDEP created and exacerbated conflicts between remote community groups and families due to increased competition for ever scarcer resources such as paid work : 8000 CDEP jobs were replaced with 2000 paid positions.

All these strategies are driven by administrative expediency, rather than those of ensuring service provision in remote Aboriginal communities.

2. Inappropriate model

Devising strategic approaches to remote "communities" is problematic, as "it is unreasonable to assume that co-residing Aboriginal people constitute a "community". "Community" is a difficult political achievement not a natural condition or an outcome of co-residence" (Rowse, "Bushtown's Wardens" in "Traditions for Health", pg 195) Government's attachment to standard operating procedures and one-size-fits-all modeling for resource allocation and service delivery is inappropriate and non-functional for remote Aboriginal communities. Each community is different, with different human and other resources. The one-size-fits-all approach does not play to people's strengths – a poor managerial strategy within the non-indigenous domain, let alone across a cultural divide.

This issue has many and far-reaching implications, one of which is the difficulties inherent in forming a "meaningful coalition" (*"Unresolved Issues for Crime Prevention Research", Lab, 2006 US Dept. of Justice, pg 24)* of local peoples, and between the indigenous and non-indigenous cultural domains.   Crime prevention literature refers to the formation of "meaningful coalitions" as requiring time and extensive consultation. This is consultation in the sense of active

listening rather than the imposition of an alien and non-negotiable model for the administration of remote settlement Aboriginal lives.   Patrols are an example of an Aboriginal meaningful coalition, that is interior to the culture.

Aboriginal community owned – as distinct from community based - justice mechanisms such as patrols are in the process of being co-opted by the non-indigenous administrative domain. This will ensure inequity of access by remote community families and people to patrol jobs and patrol services. Some remote communities have already experienced increased conflict and stress over access to patrol jobs.

Despite a very long history of failure of top-down managerial approaches to remote Aboriginal community service and resource provision, the NTER has repeated the same mistakes that have been made many times before. Aboriginal people living in remote settlements in the region report feeling completely disempowered by the heavy handed and overbearing approach of the Intervention strategy. It appears that the NTER (and the Shires) agenda is about enforcing the dominant culture's control of every aspect of remote community Aboriginal lives, and compliance with a culturally alien system of governance in which Aboriginal people play no part except as a problem population.

The obtuseness and persistence of this resoundingly unsuccessful approach is a testament to the NTER's complete lack of administrative imagination, inability to collaborate effectively between government agencies let alone with the Aboriginal cultural domain, and to learn from the mistakes of the past.

3. Indigenous Governance

Australian Aboriginal peoples have the oldest continuous cultures on the planet, yet have never developed a polity that includes centralized governments, bureaucracies or representative democracy. Aboriginal polities are based on kinship, and links to country. Aboriginal kinship based systems of governance (customary law) are still the primary polity in remote communities. The kinship system defines reciprocal relationships of obligation and responsibility within and between the Aboriginal cultures of the region. Indigenous polities are difficult for the non-indigenous domain to recognize, as they bear so little resemblance to non-indigenous political and economic systems, are flexible and negotiable to a far greater extent than non-indigenous polities, and are very locally specific.

Colonial and post-colonial processes such as the NTER have marginalized Aboriginal people, and dismissed their internal governance structures as being at best irrelevant, at worst, a challenge to the rightful hegemony of the non-indigenous state.

"We would do well to remember that the kinship system and the system of customary law succeeded in maintaining social order in this region for thousands of years until very recent times." *(The Lingiari Foundation, The Munjurla Study:*

A scoping, profiling and planning process in respect of the WA COAG site trial for the purposes of informing the negotiation of a comprehensive regional agreement, April 2004)

Customary law, or indigenous governance, is often narrowly interpreted by the non-indigenous domain as referring only to more sensational manifestations such as payback (blame and retribution), promised marriage, and culturally specific forms of conflict such as "jealousing". The term "customary law" glosses the entire system of kin-based Aboriginal governance.

The most difficult and dangerous remote settlements are those where customary law has broken down to the point where Aboriginal traditional authority and influence is unable to be exercised. These settlements are truly lawless, as Aboriginal traditional law is no longer operable, and non-indigenous law is unable to perform the same social regulatory functions as traditional or customary law.

4.The 30 June deadline – the annual funding cycle - could you design a worse system? 6 months into the Intervention, and after a change of government in December 2007, the Intervention seemed to have stalled for a few months, then went into a frenzy of spending to meet the 30 June funding cycle deadline. Funding provided under the NTER must be spent before the 30th June, 2008 and cannot be rolled over. Simultaneously, the new local government Shire system being implemented with the same end of financial year deadline. This has added greatly to the chaos created by the Intervention in remote communities.

Pressure to spend the funding before the deadline does not allow sufficient time to identify remote community needs, or work out how best to address them. It does not allow time for the development of meaningful coalitions to support remote community development, stability and sustainability. It leads to enormous wastage of opportunity and of resources that could be put to far better uses. It is ironic that the dominant culture frequently criticizes Indigenous spending patterns while implementing a feast and famine annual funding cycle. Perhaps the Commonwealth should be subject to income management.

5.Opportunities: NTER resources could be put to far better use than is currently the case. The level of resources committed to funding the NTER is substantial; so is the waste inherent in repeating the mistakes of the assimilationist era yet again.

NTER resources could be used to develop and implement new auspice and administrative arrangements, some of which have been trialled in communities, some of which have been very promising. Flexibility and responsiveness of support and service provision is essential if improvements in levels of remote community and personal health and safety are to be made. Existing models have so clearly failed, new models must be sought.

In the law and justice area, remote community patrols and community justice groups have enjoyed considerable success in reducing levels of risk, and of contact with the criminal justice system in their home communities. If the NTER is indeed about remote community safety, the NPs are one way to address it using local people and expertise. Placing the NPs in the new Shire is potentially a risk to their operation, given the unpopularity of the Shire program in the region, and the complexity the Shire faces in taking over local government in a large number of remote communities all at the same time.

A better way to support the NPs would be to set up a reference group of experienced remote NP workers in an incorporated association which could develop the service independently to the Shires. The development of community based issue specific regional organizations is one opportunity the NTER could pursue rather than promoting the single overarching organization, with all of it's inherent management problems.

Background on Night Patrols

Aboriginal Night and Community Patrols have gained widespread recognition as an effective and culturally appropriate Indigenous community safety initiative. Set up and support for remote community patrols has formed part of the recommendations of many reports on remote Indigenous community issues for the past twenty years, starting with the RCIADIC (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody). The most recent report to make recommendations in support of community and night patrols is the Anderson/Wild "Little Children are Sacred" report.

In recognition of the importance of patrols in the maintenance of community and family safety, the NTER committed funds through the Federal Attorney-General's Dept. to support remote community patrols. This is the first time there has been a substantial and recurrent financial commitment from the Federal Government for the support of remote patrols. Previous requests and submissions for patrols' funding have fallen foul of patrols not being anyone's core business – not quite health, (though there were clear health benefits as a result of patrol activities), not quite law and justice (no codified legal system or recognizable analogues of police and judiciary services), and not quite community development (interior to Aboriginal culture, and more closely resembling cultural maintenance rather than what is understood by the non-indigenous domain to be community development). Patrols operated largely in geographic, linguistic and cultural isolation, performing culturally opaque and unquantifiable feats of social engineering within their own family and community groups.

Patrols are highly regarded, and are much sought after by Aboriginal remote community families in this region. This is largely because patrols are a specifically Aboriginal initiative, and are thus "owned" by Aboriginal families living in remote communities. Patrols' operations and methodologies are well

understood by the people and families they work with, due to the patrollers' status as cultural insiders; they are part of the family and kinship networks that constitute Aboriginal governance. There are also culturally specific forms of conflict (e.g. "jealous" fights, conflict associated with sorry business, and payback) that patrols are particularly appropriate and effective at mediation, management of conflict, and prevention of escalation. Functional remote community patrols have also been very effective at reducing risks to remote community families associated with alcohol and violence. When the Yuendumu Women's Night Patrol first commenced operations in 1991, they reduced levels of domestic violence in Yuendumu by 80% in their first year. They achieved this remarkable result largely without recourse to non-Indigenous law and justice mechanisms, using their cultural status as senior Warlpiri law women, and their own kinship based governance systems.

A common misconception about patrols is that they are akin to community policing. However, there is no equivalent role to policing in Aboriginal cultures of this region, defining police as impartial agents of a codified system of law. Community and Night Patrols are an Aboriginal initiative, originating from, and situated within Aboriginal cultural and social domains. Aboriginal governance is based on a complex system of kinship rather than on a codified system of law. It is who you are, and how you are related to your own and other families, that is significant in Aboriginal cultural domains.

Policing of Aboriginal people has had an inglorious history, and continues to remain problematic. From an Aboriginal perspective, Police administer an alien system of law and are the coercive and punitive agents of that law, sanctioned by a state in which Aboriginal people play little part except as a disadvantaged group.

Encounters with whitefella law are rarely positive for Aboriginal people, and usually take place only after an offence has been committed. Patrols' strengths are in *prevention* of crime and violence. As cultural insiders, patrols know who is at risk from violence, alcohol or other substance misuse, they know which people and families are in conflict with each other, and they are often able to use their family networks and cultural status to head off potential escalation of disputes to violence. Aboriginal forms of dispute prevention and mediation can be far more effective than non-Indigenous mediation or restorative justice strategies when undertaken by an Aboriginal person or persons who are in the correct relationships to all parties, and who have the appropriate status to ensure that any agreements made are adhered to.

Cultural law is negotiable, flexible, and disputed, in a way that is not possible for a codified system of law such as pertains in the non-indigenous domain. However, Aboriginal regulatory social structures lack the basic requirement for being taken seriously, as they lack a statehood that is recognisable in the non-indigenous domain. Non-indigenous statehood is "… viewed as the only

acceptable and legitimate form of political organization possible; there can be no political process without the authority of the state" (*Blagg, 2008, pg 20, citing Marshall-Beier 2004*). This has profound implications for Aboriginal community *owned* - as distinct from community *based* - initiatives such as patrols.

What is not well understood by the non-indigenous domain, is that for the Aboriginal populations of this region, family and cultural law is what constitutes the primary Aboriginal polity, (what we would call the state). Access to resources (economic power) and coercive power are vested in family and kinship relationships, and are of far more relevance in daily remote community life than the law of an alien culture.

Contributing factors to a demonstrably poor non-Indigenous understanding of patrols and how they work are the difficulties inherent in measuring *preventative* activity (how many fights didn't happen??), the unrecognisability of Aboriginal polities, and the geographic, linguistic, and cultural disjunctions between the Aboriginal cultural domains in this region, and dominant non-Indigenous culture.

There are ten different major Aboriginal language groups in this region, with cultural differences between each of them. A useful analogy is to think of Central Australia as having a "European" character – with French, Belgian, Spanish, Swiss, German, Danish, etc language groups, all with their own distinct national characters and world views. As with any nationality, there are also cultural differences within the broader language and family groups, according to age, gender, status, etc. This cultural diversity tends to be subsumed into a category of "pan-Aboriginality" by the dominant non-Indigenous culture, which favours a one-size-fits-all approach to service provision. This approach, of course, is designed to fit non-Indigenous administrative and managerial criteria that are often alienating and difficult even for non-Indigenous peoples to negotiate.

Patrols are *owned* by Aboriginal peoples and families. They originated in Aboriginal cultural domains as a response to the challenges of having settlement life enforced on previously highly mobile peoples, and they operate from within their own systems of kinship based governance. This cultural insider status is what provides remote patrols with their operational base, and is what protects them from potentially violent retribution for transgressing the personal autonomy of their captious, violent and substance misusing kin. Attempts to claim ownership, or convert community owned initiatives such as remote community patrols to running a non-Aboriginal agenda have usually resulted in failure, which is then blamed on the patrols.   Without community ownership, patrols lose their credibility, and the status that enables them to work safely and effectively. Aboriginal ownership carries its own set of conundrums for the non-Indigenous administrative domain, accountability for resources and funding being one of them.

Aboriginal community and Night Patrols and their remarkable achievements have been largely overlooked by the non-Indigenous domain, a peculiar oversight considering the history of frequent appeals to the rhetoric of self-determination for Indigenous people by politicians and bureaucracies. This discourse ignores the violence of colonial processes, and places the unexamined dominant non-Aboriginal culture in a position of moral neutrality at best, moral superiority at worst. *(pg 15, Blagg, "Crime Aboriginality and the Decolonisation of Justice" Hawkins Press, 2008*) From this lofty moral viewpoint, the non-indigenous domain is able to literally pass judgement by dictating the rules of engagement with the Aboriginal cultural domain. Night and community patrols are self-determination in action, arguably one of the most positive and proactive attempts by indigenous people living in remote communities to address some of the issues created by the post-colonial conditions of their lives.

Remote patrols are accountable first and foremost to their own families and settlement populations, under their own systems of family and kinship based governance. Patrols' local specificity is difficult for the non-indigenous domain to understand, let alone administer and manage. All the patrols are resourced by government grants, and so are accountable to government, on terms set by the government, for any resources or activities funded by them. Patrols do not fit easily into organizational taxonomies, standard operating procedures, and operational plans and models used as management tools by organizations and government departments. However, with appropriate reporting and accountability tools such as the RANP picture reporting system, information about patrol activities and accountability for resources can cross the cultural divide.

Remote patrols, as a community owned service, generally do not do so well at accessing and accounting for resources where they lack appropriate administrative and bureaucratic skills, or lack access to these skills. Until the NTER, remote patrols were staffed by volunteers and CDEP workers. Patrols were minimally funded, and scraped along from one small one-off grant to another. Their activities and effectiveness waxed and waned according to changing conditions in their own and related home settlements, community usage of alcohol and other drugs, and levels of support available in their home settlements and from the non-indigenous domain.

NTER – detailed notes with particular reference to the NTER funded Night Patrol services.

The Howard Federal Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response (otherwise known as the Intervention) which began in mid-2007, conspicuously neglects to mention indigenous self-determination, or to address any of the recommendations of the "Little Children Are Sacred" Anderson/Wild report, under whose banner the Intervention was launched. Indigenous self determination was apparently deemed to be a failure in the Howard Liberal government's eyes, and

the "determination" exhibited by the Howard government was entirely from the perspective of the dominant culture and polity, seemingly determined on old fashioned forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into the "mainstream" dominant culture. This is despite profound cultural and linguistic differences, geographic and cultural isolation, and far from mainstream standards of housing, education, health, and access to services and support in remote indigenous communities.

It is somewhat ironic that commitment to more systematic support of remote patrols has come about as a result of the NTER, where Aboriginal self-determination appears to be viewed as a failure. Under the NTER, funding from the Federal Attorney-General's Dept. has been made available to support paid part-time positions for remote patrollers (4 per community), with extra funding to purchase infrastructure such as patrol vehicles and office equipment. This funding is being auspiced by the new local government Shire arrangements. The Shires are so far exhibiting every symptom of repeating the same mistakes made by generations of government departments and bureaucrats in running an agenda based on control, compliance and appropriation/ownership, attempting to enforce a non-Aboriginal agenda and operational framework on remote community Patrols.

This strategy is a dangerous one. The lack of administrative and managerial congruence with the cultural framework within which the patrols are inextricably embedded increases the level of personal risk to patrollers, and also risks the sustainability of patrols as an Aboriginal community justice mechanism. As noted above, patrols are *not* analogous to Police, and if their operational base as cultural insiders is undermined to the point where they become unsustainable, *there is no service that is able to be substituted for a functional patrol.* Once a service like a remote community patrol becomes non-functional, it is very difficult, and sometimes impossible to re-establish a viable patrol or community justice group.

When the Intervention was rolled out in late 2007, the Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP) which employed many remote area people, patrollers among them, were removed from many of the remote settlements in the region. CDEP programs were removed in order to enable quarantining of income received from welfare payments and Work for the Dole schemes. 8,000 CDEP positions in the region abruptly disappeared, to be replaced by 2,000 "real jobs". These "real jobs" were largely defined by the non-Indigenous domain, with non-Indigenous skills and work practices required. Poor standards of health and education, plus the demands of family and cultural maintenance usually negatively affect remote community Aboriginal people's ability to sustain these types of employment.

 One settlement went from having 40 people in part-time employment under CDEP with 20 more on the books waiting for work, to having no-one at all

employed, and the entire adult population of the settlement got on the grog. Violent incidents in the settlement escalated rapidly, and the settlement fell apart – not for the first time.

CDEP, despite its flaws, was sufficiently flexible to enable Aboriginal people living in remote regions to have a manageable workload (16-20 hours per week being usual) that allowed enough time for them to also fulfil their family and cultural obligations.

The Federal Attorney-General's department has, for the first time ever, committed some serious funding to supporting remote community patrol positions. This is a distinct change from the situation before the NTER was rolled out, where support for patrols was subject to squabbling between the NT and the Federal government over who was responsible for funding them. ATSIC provided grants for some community patrols of up to $20,000. This amount barely covered operational costs for patrols, and was mostly used to fund fuel and maintenance for the patrol vehicles. Other funding came from a series of one-off small grants from NT and Federal government grant schemes, sourced by the community CEO's and/or the RANP coordinator.

There are some consequences for patrols in having government resources allocated to them. This is not an argument against resources being committed to supporting remote patrols; however, there are factors attached to government funding and management that can impinge negatively on indigenous governance structures that form the basis of patrols' operations.

Ideas and practices of indigenous governance vary widely between communities, language groups, and regions *(pgs 48-54, Rowse, T. "The National Emergency and Indigenous Jurisdictions" in ""Coercive Reconcilation: Stabilise, Normalise and Exit Aboriginal Australia", eds J.Altman and M. Hinkson, Arena Publications Association, 2007).*   There is also much disputed territory in indigenous understandings and interpretations of customary law, the underpinning of indigenous systems of governance.

Patrols management strategies need to be flexible enough to retain the ability of the patrols to support the wide and varied range of activities and responses appropriate to their particular families and communities. Blagg makes a useful distinction between agencies and services that are community based (such as clinics and stores, which may employ Aboriginal people) and those, such as the patrols, that are community owned. Patrols, as a grassroots initiative originating from within the Aboriginal domain, need to remain community owned in order to retain their effectiveness. If they are perceived in their home communities as becoming yet another top-down government program, or as a junior arm of the Police, this will damage their credibility. This distancing from indigenous cultural imperatives will in turn undermine the patrols' ability to manage family and

community conflict, and to effectively influence some of the more destructive behaviours of their families.

A major issue for remote patrols is that a commitment of government funds means that the funding bodies then expect to be able to set the patrols' agenda. Patrols are assigned a role in the government scheme of things, and any departure from that role can be viewed by government as non-compliance, and as a waste of government resources. If patrols do not conform to criteria and performance indicators written up by a distant and culturally alien bureaucracy, they may be deemed to have failed. If they do not report against the performance criteria set by funding bodies, they will be deemed to have failed. Very few of the remote patrols have the administrative skills that would enable them to report at the required levels of competency in written English (this is, in any case, the job of the patrols' coordinators). Any failures or incompetence in reporting then jeopardizes the patrols' credibility in the non-indigenous domain, and any future funding and service development opportunities.

An unforeseen consequence of the NTER has been fierce competition for the few "real jobs" for which funding has been made available. 8,000 CDEP jobs were eliminated by the Intervention, to be replaced by only 2,000 "real jobs", employment for community and night patrollers being amongst them. There are four funded part-time patrol positions in each of the remote communities identified under the NTER. Income from jobs is not subject to income management. Centrelink payments, the major source of income for most remote community families, are subject to income management, so any opportunities for employment (and access to a non-managed income) are coveted, and the competition for access to jobs and resources is fierce. In some remote communities, patrols are being undermined by family jealousies over jobs and resources. With only four positions per community, access for all families in the larger remote communities to patrol services can be compromised, and the risk of patrol jobs and resources being "captured" by a dominant group or family increase.

The arbitrary limit of 4 funded positions per remote community patrol, and the inability to employ or otherwise resource the involvement of a wider range of family, gender and age groups through CDEP means that not all groups within a remote community will have access to Night Patrol services (particularly if the NP is captured by a dominant family or group). Patrols can be captured by a gender group. Cultural factors make it difficult for men and women to share resources such as vehicles. There are also avoidance and uncomfortable relationships to be considered – there are more of these between the genders than within them.

Male patrollers work very differently to their female counterparts. Generally speaking, women would use a "caring" model to influence their errant kin's behaviour, where men will generally exercise status and authority in a more direct way. The ideal is to have a separate men's and women's community

patrol that can work together when they need to. Some of the culturally specific conflicts in remote communities cannot be dealt with by the opposite gender. If women are fighting, men cannot intervene without serious consequences, and vice versa. Some patrols have couples working together; this works well, but other responsibilities may mean that it is not possible in some places, and at some times.

Conclusion

The patrols jobs and resources (vehicles, comms equipment etc.) are now owned by two tiers of government. Patrols are funded by the Federal Attorney-General's dept., but are auspiced and administered by a new NT local government shire structure. Indigenous forms of governance will be difficult to acknowledge or recognize under the complexities of two tiers of governmental supervision and accountability. The non-indigenous public service attachment to "one size fits all" service models that can be implemented across the board, with a set of standard operating procedures, is unworkable in the remote indigenous domain, as each community, and the sets of sub-groups within that community, has differing needs and differing priorities.

Quotes from the "Little Children Are Sacred" report

Empowerment of Aboriginal communities
Communities can take more control and make decisions about the future. The Inquiry's report suggests ways in which this can happen including the role which men and women can play, the introduction of community justice groups and better dialogue between mainstream society and Aboriginal communities." *From NTG website, summary of Anderson/Wild report.*

"Alcohol
Alcohol remains the gravest and fastest growing threat to the safety of Aboriginal children. There is a strong association between alcohol abuse, violence and the sexual abuse of children. Alcohol is destroying communities. The Inquiry recommended urgent action be taken to reduce alcohol consumption in Aboriginal communities.

Family and Community Services (FACS) and the Police
Both need to work more closely with each other and with communities. It is important FACS and the Police build the trust of communities so everyone can work together to combat child sexual abuse. The Inquiry has also proposed an Advice Hotline so anyone who is concerned about possible child sexual abuse can call someone for confidential information and advice.

Family support services
Family support services need to be improved, particularly in Aboriginal communities, as this will help to strengthen families and keep children safe and healthy.