

Senate Inquiry into Emergency Response Legislation

Response from Milingimbi Community, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

The people of Milingimbi Community wish to respond to the Emergency Response Legislation by stating the following:

1. There are no 'Rivers of Grog' running through the Milingimbi Community. It is a dry community. Mala/Clan leaders have for many years worked to ensure that alcohol does not produce the dysfunction so characteristic of many other communities. Where there is alcohol smuggling we ask that the resources in terms of adequate policing be provided. There is no police presence in Milingimbi and consistent requests for support of a community night patrol have been ignored. The people of this community consider it an insult that all Indigenous communities have been painted as violent and swimming in 'rivers of grog.'
2. The removal of the Permit System is a cause of great concern. The system allows the community to monitor those who live in or visit the community. Milingimbi is very much an 'open' community and legitimate requests to visit are almost always granted. Will the Federal Government guarantee that it will provide the appropriate level of law enforcement to ensure that the removal of the Permit System does not lead to 'rivers of grog' flowing into this community ?
3. Milingimbi community acknowledges that there is significant scope for improving school attendance and subsequent levels of literacy and numeracy. At its most recent meeting, Milingimbi Council stressed the need for the School, Council and wider community to work together.
4. The removal of CDEP from the community will have serious consequences for Milingimbi. There are very few 'real jobs' that can be created without appropriate levels of infrastructure support. In this area of support, Milingimbi has been ignored by all levels of government for years. Why should CDEP participants and those who rely on their income have any faith that this support, especially from the Federal Government will somehow magically appear ?

It is the expressed desire of Milingimbi Council and the people of this community that there be an appropriate degree of consultation when the changes outlined in the new legislation are implemented. It is clear that in its response to Little Children Are Sacred that the Federal Government is taking a 'one size fits all' approach and treating all communities as if they are exactly the same. Milingimbi is not an Alice Springs town camp. The cultural and ceremonial life of the Yolgnu is strong. The fabric of our society has not been torn apart by alcohol and the people of this community should not be treated as if they are being penalized.

We seek constructive dialogue that is respectful of who we are as Yolgnu people. We seek a partnership and not paternalism. We seek improved outcomes and improved life chances for our children both now and well into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Stewart, Chief Executive Officer

For and on behalf of

Milingimbi Community Council
8-08-07