

Media Release
Central Land Council
14 August 2008

Communities have their say on intervention

The Central Land Council says a survey of people in Central Australian Aboriginal communities has given them a chance to voice their views on the Federal Government's emergency response in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.

The research was undertaken in six case study communities – Titjikala, Papunya, Yuendumu, Ali Curung, Kintore and Hermannsburg - between February and June this year with the help of local Aboriginal researchers.

It focussed on the main measures of the intervention, including income management, housing repairs and maintenance, the abolition of CDEP, the introduction of store licensing, voluntary child health checks, increased police resources, the introduction of five year leases over communities, the roll out of government business managers and changes to the permit system.

The research was based on a participatory evaluation survey of 141 Aboriginal residents in the communities. They were asked their awareness of the intervention measures, feelings on the measures and the effect on them and their community.

The community surveys were supplemented by 51 semi-structured interviews with other community-based employees or agencies such as government agencies and government business managers in the target communities.

Additional information was provided by the Intervention operations centre, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Centrelink.

CLC director David Ross said the survey is the first real effort to collect evidence of the effects of the intervention on people in remote communities.

“There's a wide range of views out there,” Mr Ross said. “For instance, on income management half supported it and half were opposed to it.

“The results of this survey show that it's not as simple as saying well, someone in this community likes it so everyone does. This survey shows that what works in one community doesn't necessarily work in another.”

The findings of the survey will form part of the CLC's submission to the committee, which is reviewing the intervention.

14 August 2008

Contact: Murray Silby, CLC media officer. (08) 8951 6216; 0488 984 885

INTERVENTION SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Responses were almost evenly divided between people in favour (51 percent) and those opposed (46 percent) to income management
- People on a wage were most in favour of income management
- Advantages of income management included increased expenditure on food and children, young men contributing to family shopping and decreases in gambling and drinking
- Disadvantages of income management included problems with accessing managed money, incompatibility with population mobility and blanket coverage being discriminatory
- People reported improved stock in community stores after the intervention licensing process but also increased prices
- A majority (76 percent) expressed support for CDEP
- People reported there was less incentive to work since CDEP was axed
- None of the six communities had seen an increase in police numbers but 75 percent of respondents said they were happy with current police numbers. Titjikala was the only community surveyed that doesn't have a permanent police presence and 60 percent of people there wanted an increased police presence
- 57 percent of people felt there was less alcohol consumed in their communities than before the intervention
- 86 percent of respondents said they need better housing in their communities
- It took more than 11 months for health checks to be done in Ali Curung
- 85 percent of people were opposed to five-year leases
- 94 percent of people in communities on Aboriginal land were opposed to changes to the permit system
- The majority of people interviewed in Titjikala, Hermannsburg, Kintore and Papunya didn't know the government business manager.
- Almost all people surveyed criticised the way the intervention was rolled out in the first year, including the lack of information for younger and older people

The overall picture reveals support for some measures and opposition for others. Generally, service-based measures that brought benefits from increased services and a greater focus on communities, received support, but where the autonomy of a community was seen to be challenged such as the introduction of five year leases, there has been reservations about the intent of the measure

Some broad themes emerged including:

- That the results are diverse and community-specific with each community being different. The intervention roll out didn't take that into account.
- Where good governance structures existed they were ignored by the federal government or even undermined.
- Many respondents' questioned what improvement the measures had brought to child safety and education.
- The understanding of intervention measures was generally poor.