

Report on Service Provision to Swan Valley Nyungah Community April 2003

Summary of service delivery progress

The Dept of Indigenous Affairs is coordinating a collaborative approach to the Swan Valley Nyungah Community (SVNC). This interagency group, the Swan Valley Ngungar Working Group, has been operating since February 2002 with a focus on engagement with residents of SVNC and coordinated and collaborative service provision to residents. Departments involved include: Dept of Community Development, Police Service, Dept of Justice, Dept of Health, Dept of Education & Training, City of Swan. All departments report positive benefits of the inter-agency working group approach.

The interagency group is working with the three other communities in the area, as well as SVNC. These communities are considered to have similar or higher risk factors in regard to child abuse, family and domestic violence and substance abuse.

The service providers, with the support of the interagency group, have kept a focus on the normalisation of relationships and the wellbeing of the residents, and a range of initiatives and services have been delivered by service providers in the Midland area, or accessed by resident of SVNC. These are detailed in Attachment 1.

Departmental service providers reported a divergence of views in terms of ease of access to the residents, and in how to improve relationships with management to provide the residents' freedom of access to local services. Most departments have developed, or are developing, agreed protocols with the management of SVNC for individual services.

Related Initiatives and On-going development

The local interagency group will continue to put effort towards building and normalising an effective relationship with residents and providing effective coordinated service delivery.

The Dept of Indigenous Affairs is progressing the Urban Settlements Project in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC), to advise the Minister of the current status, and recommendation for the future of Cullacabardee, Urban Community of Henly Brook (Saunders Street), Noongar Community Gnangarra and the Swan Valley Nyungah Community.

The Dept for Land Administration is facilitating the implementation of a Management Order for Reserve 43131 that has been served on the Swan Valley Nyungah Community Aboriginal Corporation. Part of this Order requires that the Corporation prepare a Management Plan within 6 months – the deadline being 11 April 2003. A first draft has been received and the final content will be negotiated with the Minister.

Remaining Concerns for Service Providers

Several service providers reported little progress in terms of the management group of SVNC working with departments to develop solutions together that would lead to long-term positive change. They also reported demands and blocks being presented by the management that detract from the further development of cooperative approaches.

Departments report that the management of SVNC is unsatisfactory in terms of :

- residents having access to the full range of available services and supports in the District,
- service providers having ready access to residents to assess risk, determine service delivery needs, identify who is in residence, and assess school attendances;
- departments and inter-agency representatives receiving cooperation in collaborative initiatives;
- reluctance to engage in constructive dialogue at venues other than the camp; and
- ensuring the safety, protection and empowerment of women and children.

Departments report that positive development at SVNC remains limited whilst issues such as intimidation of residents, lack of confidentiality of health issues, the lack of a supportive environment for victims of domestic violence or child abuse to seek assistance, or lack of freedom for residents to leave camp and contact service providers still remain.

Also reported by several departments was the dominance and negativity of Mr Bropho's influence at times and his frequent attempts to using meetings with service providers to express his views on political matters rather than focusing on the wellbeing of residents.

The Government's Response to the Gordon Inquiry required the Swan Valley Nyungah Community Aboriginal Corporation to develop a Management Plan addressing concerns raised in the Inquiry within six months of the Management Order dated 11 October 2002. At the date of this report a draft had been received that has not covered the concerns, and further negotiations are being undertaken through the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Lands Administration).

Departments also recognised that matters involving camp residents are complicated by the presence of itinerant residents.

Summary

For any service provider a degree of trust has to be built and although this is happening for individual contacts with residents of the camp, overall there remains real concerns for the on-going safety of the women and children. There is some doubt that continuing the current levels of time consuming negotiations with camp management for access to residents or cooperation in collaborative approaches would result in the effective levels of access or cooperation required. Service providers are not confident that the residents are safe and are free to seek and receive assistance without bias or intimidation. Departments reported that the on-going issues with camp management including the apparent wide, and often negative influence of Mr Bropho. This and his sometimes demanding or uncooperative approaches are two of the key factors limiting social and economic development for the residents. The reports also noted that other people of influence at the camp may be a negative influence on Mr Bropho.

Whilst the service providers and the interagency group have made improvements for the residents, it is clear that the extent of improvements sought in the management of the SVNC are beyond the capacity of service providers alone.

Progress - Department Specific

Department		Initiatives or Services Provided
Department for Indigenous Affairs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DIA has regular contact with community in regard to heritage and cultural issues – primarily aboriginal site protection. This has established a good relationship on these issues. ▪ Coordination of the interagency working group has been a positive step. Some additional access to services for residents has been achieved and coordination of services and initiatives. ▪ A recent strategy was to meet with all four communities and include the camp to propose a forum to identify common service needs. The forum would focus on families attending so would have events etc. ▪ Two representative from the interagency working group met with Mr Bropho on 26 March to invite them to join the forum, and they were firmly but politely informed that that would be no use to the community and there was no point in them coming to the community or attempting to do anything. He indicated he was only interested in an MOU with the Government. ▪ DIA are working with ATSIC on the Urban Settlements Project, “to develop a position and strategy for addressing the issues and future of metropolitan communities”.
Department for Community Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since “audit” visit last year , visited again on 18 Dec 2002 and met with Mr Bropho and some members in response to his written request for ‘preliminary assistance’. At that meeting we clarified the desire to build workable relationship, with the main focus of protecting the safety of the women and children. Made it clear that our focus is service delivery not political. ▪ In response to services being offered outside of camp, Mr Bropho responded that he didn’t like people having to leave camp. ▪ Proposed a meeting with an interagency group to develop local ways of working including protocols. He initially said he would think about it – then later contacted us to say no meetings outside the camp. ▪ People have been coming to services on an ad-hoc basis – often only at crisis times or for financial assistance. Have seen some improvement of residents’ access to services with Cannington, Northam and Mirrabooka. ▪ A recent event involved a young boy initially agreeing to a placement, he then chose not to go to the placement and also left the program he was referred to. Concerns that he had been influenced and that this was not in his best interests. This is soon to become a full Child Protection investigation. ▪ Recognises the good work of the Police Service, particularly Sgt Jim Clarysse. He has built a good relationship & DCD can contact him for information and knowledge about events or status of the camp. ▪ DCD is involved and supportive of local interagency working group. This has been meeting regularly to determine strategies for engagement. The interagency group is working well – openly sharing information in the best interests of women and children. ▪ Strong Families Program operating in Midland. ▪ There has been interaction with Mr Bropho ; in sensitive way explained that their demanding timeframes and requests can’t always be met. Response is often that he then labels this response as racist.

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Department Initiatives or Services Provided	
WA Police Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kiara Police Station have made gains in obtaining unimpeded access to the community to perform their duties, and have broken down the barriers that previously existed with Mr Bropho and his advisors. Information in regards to residents has been more forthcoming and could still be greatly improved. There is an open line of communication between Mr Bropho and the East Metropolitan Police District. ▪ There are regular patrols and meetings at the community, and Crime Prevention staff and Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers regularly attend the community. ▪ Police have developed good relationships with other agencies through regular meetings and interagency meetings. Some of these meetings have included Mr Bropho on an individual level, but he appears reluctant to meet at an interagency level. Mr Bropho has a position of influence in a political sense, and the community as a whole is reluctant to speak out with opposing views. ▪ No complaints have been forthcoming since the Gordon Inquiry, however there remains concerns in the general Aboriginal community about the possible continuation of issues of substance abuse, child and sexual abuse. Fear of intimidation against families who speak out may be contributing to the absence of complaints. ▪ Mr Bropho also has a strong political influence in the Urban Community of Henley Brook (Saunders Street). A recent change to the Chairperson's position may see this influence diminish. ▪ Cullacabardee needs clearly defined ownership and management support. ▪ Currently police are not experiencing any major problems with the campsite or Mr Bropho. ▪ The main issues at the camp are still alcohol and drugs, sexual abuse and family and domestic violence. ▪ The number of itinerants moving in and out and the current management structure of the community remain key concerns.
Department of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular visits by Aboriginal Health Workers based in Midvale. Visiting mothers and young children, giving advice on parenting and health promotion, facilitating access to the General Practice at Lockridge. The health workers are supported by the Child Health Nurse in Midvale. ▪ This work has been effective in getting SVNC members to access local health services. ▪ A senior Community Nurse participates in the local interagency group which discusses joint activity in SVNC and other communities. ▪ Concern about the lack of a male health worker.
Department of Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing protocols for access to the community ▪ Involvement in interagency group ▪ Attendance concerns – ongoing issues regarding relationship with Govt/ non-govt schools
Department of Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protocols in place and no difficulties in complying with the protocols or gaining access. ▪ Aboriginal Cyclical Offenders Project being developed. Some progress on Local Service Agreements between Government agencies to assist in meeting the outcomes. Project if funded by a number of Govt agencies. ▪ Supports Strong Families Program

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Department	Initiatives or Services Provided
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement in interagency group ▪ Minimal contact with SVNC – no cases at SVNC at present. ▪ Midland CJS negotiating partnership with Aboriginal Lands Trust to run programs for youth at risk utilising the Old Caversham School
Department of Planning & Infrastructure (Land Administration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applied Management Order to the Swan Valley Nyungah Community Aboriginal Corporation dated 11 October 2002. ▪ Required Corporation to present a Management Plan within 6 months – due 11 April 2003. A draft has been received and negotiations with SVNC Aboriginal Corporation are continuing.
Department of Housing & Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently no direct service delivery with SVNC ▪ Concerns that the community could be having a greater level of development with more cooperative management.