

Alpurrurulam Community Government Council



PMB 23 Mount Isa Qld 4825 • Phone: (07) 4748 4800 • Fax: (07) 4748 4913
ABN 39 167 203 791

24 February 2004

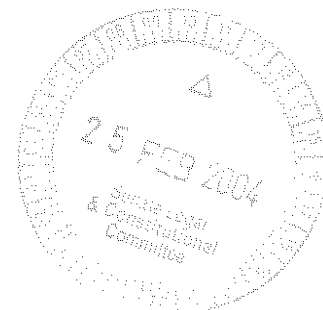
Senator Nigel Scullion
3/80 The Esplanade
DARWIN
FAX 08 89813022

Dear Senator Scullion

RE: THE SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENCES COMMITTEE

In response to your correspondence of 23 December 2003, the members of the Alpurrurulam Community Government Council discussed the issues concerning local access to legal services. The Council members have asked me to forward to you're their comments.

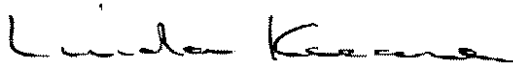
1. Members of the Council report that to the best of their recall they have only ever had one community visit by representative(s) of any legal service. The members feel that regular visits are needed.
2. The members are not satisfied with their access to legal services locally and welcome an improvement in access. Visits at least quarterly are recommended.
3. Very few of the residents of Alpurrurulam have private telephones. Their only access is through the use of Council telephones. Privacy cannot always be guaranteed and waiting for return phone calls involves lengthy waiting periods. As a result the contacts are rarely completed successfully.
4. As there has only been one legal service visit, the members feel they cannot comment on the cultural awareness of legal staff. But given that they have not visited the community regularly it could be assumed that awareness is poor.
5. The Council reports that there has never been a circuit court at Alpurrurulam. This is a community of 832 people and the Council feels that a circuit court is needed.
6. People from Alpurrurulam who are awaiting court appearance wait on an average of one month. The waiting period may be much longer during the wet season when roads are cut off due to flooding.
7. People from Alpurrurulam attend court in Tennant Creek some 600 kms. away. The Council reports that access to interpreters is good. Consultations do not take place in the community.



8. Lawyers are not available in the community for criminal matters. Occasionally lawyers from the Central Land Council will assist people in the community or by phone in relation to land matters. There is a demand for more legal advice on non-criminal matters.
9. Only offenders of family violence receive legal advice/support. Victims only have access to welfare supports in Tennant Creek which are rarely used due to the distance and poor roads.

I trust these comments will be of value to the deliberations of your committee.

Yours sincerely



Linda Keane
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER