

More consultations for NT homelands

Another round of consultations is taking place over the Northern Territory Government's policies on homelands and regional growth towns.

They follow previous consultations conducted by Patrick Dodson and the release of *A Working Future* document in May that left most Aboriginal Territorians living on country angry and alarmed. It outlined plans to create 20 regional 'growth centres' and to retain existing funding to homelands and outstations.

Speaking on behalf of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association in North East Arnhem Land, Yananyumul Mununggurr said *A Working Future* showed the government had either refused or is unable to fully understand the cultural significance of homelands.

"Just days after there was the release of a ground breaking report outlining the major health benefits to Yolngu living on country, the NT Government announces a policy that relegates our homelands to third world conditions, if not extinction," Ms Mununggurr said.

"We see this as a major betrayal of the trust of our people.

"Where is the economic modelling, the data collection or cost-benefit analyses recommended by the NTG's own consultant, Mr Patrick Dodson, in establishing these new town centres?"

"We've been engaged in 'consultation' that has yet again proved meaningless."

The Central Land Council was concerned about the lack of detail in the document and Director David Ross said the

motivation behind the policy looked to be about making life easier for the government rather than improving conditions in remote areas.

"There's some nice sentiments about school transport and roads mixed up with regressive strategies that herd people together into a couple of large towns," Mr Ross said.

All the evidence does not support herding people into larger centres if you're hoping for improved health and well being," Mr Ross said.

"The government carries on about evidence-based policy but there is no evidence that people will be better off by neglecting smaller communities."

The latest round of consultations are listed on the NTG website: www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/consultation



The Northern Territory Government's Working Future policy document is burnt in protest during Blue Mud Bay celebrations.

Ngukurr agreement to improve police relations

Members of the Ngukurr community's Yugul Mangi Group of Elders entered into an historic agreement with Northern Territory Police in June.

Signed by Mr David Daniels and Deputy Commissioner Bruce Wernham, it commits the parties to better cultural understanding, respect for each other's laws and values and the shared aim of making the community safe.

This is the first time the Elders of a Northern Territory community and the NT Police Force have entered into an agreement to cooperate in community policing and mutually respect each other's justice systems.

The Mutual Respect Agreement follows a 2005 incident when Mr Daniels, a respected leader, was arrested by police at Urapunga outstation.

A statement from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency said Yugul Mangi and police had been able to turn the unfortunate event into many positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

Justice Sally Thomas was instrumental in brokering the agreement

which was made with the support of NAAJA.

"There has been a lot of work, from both sides, to get to this stage," NAAJA Chairman Norman George, said.

"I especially would like to congratulate the Ngukurr elders who never wavered in their desire for better relations with police, who continued to show up for meetings and negotiations and were united in their determination.

"The NT Police are also to be commended for their willingness to resolve issues with the Ngukurr people in a constructive way.

"NAAJA sincerely thanks Deputy Commissioner Bruce Wernham and Commanders Jeanette Kerr and Bert Hofer for their efforts in finding a solution that benefits the community and policing in the Northern Territory," Mr George said.

A traditional ceremony was performed as part of the signing at Ngukurr and Deputy Commissioner Bruce Wernham then presented two plaques with the Northern Territory police insignia.

One is for Mr Daniels and the other for public display.



Members of the Ngukurr community perform a traditional ceremony (above) during the signing of an agreement between Northern Territory police and the community's Yugul Mangi group of elders. (right) Deputy Commissioner Bruce Wernham and community leader David Daniels sign the agreement.

