



CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

REPORT ON
PORT AUGUSTA DIALOGUE

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On Friday 3 September 2010 over seventy representatives of the communities of Port Augusta, service providers of the three levels of government, NGOs and business came together to start a process of change. They worked together in a spirit of goodwill to identify solutions to the problems of Aboriginal disadvantage and ways to develop a more inclusive and harmonious future for all its citizens.

"Communities are created by individuals who dream and plan together"

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Executive Summary

This Dialogue was instigated by the Port Augusta City Council and funded by the South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation in response to ongoing challenging issues experienced by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Port Augusta, including Aboriginal disadvantage, community disharmony and violence.

The Dialogue built on existing work, particularly the recent *Lew Owens Report* that proposed constructive ways to bring about positive change by coordination of service delivery but also highlighted the need to address underlying cultural and safety issues to enable such change. This Dialogue and our analysis highlights these underlying issues, the need for Aboriginal participation in governance and proposed solutions.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community representatives and service providers were brought together to mutually acknowledge their issues of concern, create a momentum and goodwill for change, and propose solutions for those issues.

Key stakeholder participants were identified, to ensure appropriate and broad representation of Port Augusta's communities and those who service them. A transparent preliminary facilitation and information process was put in place for invitees prior to the event, so that participants were informed and involved. Some 70 participants contributed to the Dialogue on the day, of which 43 per cent were Aboriginal.

The Dialogue used in-the-round, facilitated dialogue and workshop techniques to provide constructive exchange of views and ideas by creating a safe place for the often difficult conversations and to ensure equality and mutual respect for each others' views. Participants identified the issues and linkages, and then moved into small groups to workshop firstly solutions to the issues and then how they could be actioned. The issues identified fell into the following eight key areas:

- Housing and Davenport Community
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Family/Domestic/ Lateral Violence, Healing, Counseling and Elders
- Justice and the Prison System
- Duplication and Coordination of Services
- Racism

Our Report presents a summation of each issue and the outcomes of the workshops. The Report is structured into eight sections; 1) Motivation and Background, 2) The Dialogue Process, 3) Stakeholders and Participants, 4) Current Situation, Issues and Solutions as Offered by Participants, 5) Atmosphere and Immediate Achievements of the Dialogue, 6) Analysis of Views and Proposals from the Dialogue Process, 7) Recommendations and 8) Acknowledgements.

This Report presents what the people of Port Augusta and those with a strong interest in it said at the Dialogue on matters that are vitally important to them, together with our analysis and recommendations that we conclude from the Dialogue and information available to us.

A significant and impressive element of the Port Augusta Dialogue was the willingness of the community, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to engage with the issues and each other. This 'good will in waiting' is a powerful attribute for the Port Augusta community that can lead to the development of a strong and positive shared future.

We have made seven recommendations (Section 7) from the Dialogue and available information that the next steps in addressing the issues discussed should be:

- Aboriginal communities coming together to participate in governance, making their own decisions assisted by non-Aboriginals on possible governance models
- Outreach by respected non-Aboriginals and Aboriginals
- Coordination and information of available services
- Building on the momentum of the Dialogue with further dialogue type gatherings and community taskforces to develop and pursue the solutions proposed in the Dialogue - and commencing this process quickly while the goodwill, momentum and sense of ownership of ideas and issues is still fresh amongst the participants and the Port Augusta community
- Recognising the limited resources available for new initiatives, seek funding and in-kind support from industry, local businesses, philanthropists and existing government research and action programs for Aboriginal betterment.

We submit this report to the Port Augusta City Council, for all the participants in the Dialogue and the organizations they represent and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. We hope that it will build on the momentum and goodwill of the Dialogue and lead to the Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal community working together to bring about cultural change and practical solutions that emanated from the Dialogue process and are identified in this report.



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1. MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND FOR THE DIALOGUE EVENT

1.1 Motivation

There have been many reviews, reports and programs on the problems of Port Augusta and its Aboriginal communities (see Report to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Lew Owens, special Adviser to Minister on Port Augusta, 29 June 2010 – *The Lew Owens Report*). It is widely acknowledged that little has changed over recent decades and that Port Augusta needs to become a safer, more harmonious place providing opportunities for better lives for all its people, particularly its Aboriginal people. Partnerships and consultation with Indigenous communities is part of the emerging national discussion in ***Closing the Gap*** on Indigenous disadvantage (Close the Gap Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality, 2010). Indigenous communities therefore need to be involved in decision making about their own issues. Port Augusta has one of the largest proportions of Aboriginal people of any regional urban centre in South Australia. They need to be heard and involved.

The City Council, service agencies and the general community need to listen to and respect the views of local Aboriginal people to develop a better understanding of their needs so that they have a better chance of building fulfilling lives. This Dialogue event aimed to start that process, recognising that it is only with the participation of the community, the service recipients, that genuine progress can be made.

The Port Augusta City Council, with the support of the South Australian Government, engaged the expertise of the Centre for Dialogue at the Australian National University (ANU) to undertake the Dialogue event as a safe and neutral forum – a forum for talking, understanding, exchanging ideas and building momentum and shared ownership of the issues and the road to their resolution.

Port Augusta has an opportunity to exploit its natural advantages of location and history, including its rich Aboriginal heritage and culture and diverse Aboriginal population, which have yet to be celebrated and highlighted in the image and nature of the town. The Dialogue opens a way for Aboriginal people to be more involved in the opportunities that the town provides and actively participate in planning for its physical and cultural development.

1.2 Background

In February 2010 the then State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs acceded to Port Augusta City Council's request for support to engage the ANU's Centre for Dialogue to hold ***a Dialogue*** to help resolve Port Augusta's challenging issues. At the same time the Minister appointed Mr Lew Owens, retiring Chief Executive of ETSA Utilities, to advise on service delivery challenges in Port Augusta. The resulting '*Lew Owens Report*' (Lew Owens, June 2010) provided a useful summary of the specific problems of Port Augusta. It highlighted the problem of the low level of coordination of management and governance of Commonwealth, State and Local Government Programs and the need for a governance system that engages the local communities, especially Aboriginal communities.

The *Lew Owens Report* provided a valuable and timely platform for this Dialogue. It was presented to all the Dialogue participants. Together with their collective personal experience, it enabled a frank, informed and constructive discussion on the diverse problems faced in 'closing the gap' of Aboriginal disadvantage and developing a better future for Port Augusta.

South Australian Government Departments/Agencies, coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet is developing an *Urban and Regional Closing the Gap Initiative* for improved delivery of services to clients. Port Augusta is their second priority. Together with the Lew Owens Report, the Dialogue and this report informs the Departments/Agencies on considered proposals for improved service delivery. It also provides a platform and significant head start for the initiative to engage with Aboriginal client and non- government service providers.

1.3 Invitation of participants

The ANU Centre for Dialogue proposed 30 to 35 invited participants to represent the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, business, service clubs, churches, government service agencies and NGOs to give a broad representation of the community and those that serve it, but also seeking at about 50 percent Aboriginal representation. The City Manager identified individual representatives and invitations were sent to them firstly from the Australian National University which resulted in some interest. Later, an invitation (Appendix 1) was sent personally from the Mayor of Port Augusta, Ms Joy Baluch, demonstrating mayoral and local government commitment to developing a better future for the Aboriginal communities and the city.

Each invitation was followed up with a phone call and e-mail addresses were sought for follow-up contacts, including preliminary discussions with the convener and facilitator. Where invitees thought there were others who would be important to the outcome, they were also invited, thus giving respect and ownership of the Dialogue to the primary person offering their advice.

To ensure invitees would not feel uncomfortable about attending alone or if they wanted someone to assist their representation as primary discussants they were offered the option of bringing a companion who could sit alongside or even change places with them. Media releases were issued and talks given on local radio and television stations. During this process, other members of the community made requests to attend and where possible, their requests were accommodated to ensure there were no disgruntled or excluded voices in the community. Council staff with networks in the Aboriginal community encouraged Aboriginal invitees to attend. The invitation process built a momentum and curiosity within the community on what the Dialogue would be about and what it might achieve. It created an awareness for those participating that they could achieve concrete outcomes for their community. This led to a positive attitude with a desire to attend and participate.

The convener, facilitator and the City Council were delighted by the overwhelming and now challenging response of 58 acceptances, plus companion supporters for intensive constructive dialogue seated in-the-round and covering the wide range of issues. In addition, representatives of various Institutions were invited as observers and further requests to attend were offered and accepted as Observers. It should be noted that all attendees participated equally in the Workshop Sessions. Overall 85 persons registered to attend and on the day and some 70 participated continuously throughout the day.

2. THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

The ANU Centre for Dialogue convenes and manages facilitated dialogue events and planning and training for community consultation on any issue or situation where public good can be achieved. The Centre is modelled on Simon Fraser University's successful Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Downtown Vancouver, Canada, where successful dialogue events in-the-round have helped resolve many social, environmental and economic development issues. The ANU Centre for Dialogue holds dialogue events on both local and national issues, including 'Building Policy on Indigenous Affairs in Australia' which proved a useful experience in developing this Dialogue for Port Augusta. The ANU Centre was pleased to undertake the Port Augusta Dialogue because significant potential for public good can emerge from constructive dialogue on the problems and opportunities of Port Augusta.

The Centre for Dialogue creates spaces for dialogue in-the-round where the nature of the space has a positive effect on outcomes by creating an atmosphere conducive to calm and constructive communication. All participants are equal and agree to maintain respect for each other, giving others equal opportunity to talk without fear or favour even when they disagree. Listening to others is just as important as talking in order to develop an understanding of each others views and perceptions. Participants agree to these principles which are applied by the facilitators who are tasked with giving equal opportunity by encouraging the least confident and preventing anyone from dominating available time or the topic.

The Port Augusta Dialogue was co-facilitated by Dr Pat Dudgeon and Peter Hancock. Pat Dudgeon is an Aboriginal psychologist and from the Bardi people near Broome with special interest in the role of Aboriginal women in society. Peter Hancock, the founding director of the ANU Centre for Dialogue, has a special interest in consensual dispute resolution and strategy building on multi-stakeholder issues. Both held preliminary one-on-one discussions with as many of the participants as possible over the preceding five weekdays to encourage the participants and to help them explain their concerns and proposals at the Dialogue.

A program was drawn up after consideration of previous reviews and preliminary discussions with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Dialogue participants. The program was designed to give the participants an ownership of the dialogue process, the problems and the solutions.

After Welcomes to Country by Kym Thomas, to the City by Mayor Joy Baluch and to the Dialogue by ANU Convenor-Facilitator Peter Hancock, the Dialogue aims and ground rules were established by Pat Dudgeon. After which, introductions were made by each participant.

Five speakers were then asked to lead the discussions providing a personal perspective of what they thought the key issues were. These speakers were Deborah Fuschtei, local Aboriginal business woman; Kym Thomas, Project Officer for the program Males in Black; Tony Edmonds, City Safe Program; John Harrison, General Manager Port Augusta Prison; Robert Cugley, Salvation Army;

The Dialogue was then opened up with all the participants being asked to name the issues that they thought were in need of attention. This session, with everyone seated in-the-round, gave everyone the opportunity to present their perception of the problems faced, improvements to date and what might be achieved in Port Augusta. A second in-the-round session then identified the key concerns that the participants felt needed to be resolved and the reasons as to why they should be. Each concern identified was immediately projected onto a large screen to assist further consideration. This built a sense of

recognition, acceptance and ownership of the problems and solutions - a shared ownership and a shared motivation for action. The key issues identified were then grouped over lunch into eight embracing issues for further discussions.

In the afternoon all the invitees including the observers, worked in small round table groups of eight to ten for two workshop sessions on the eight key issues they had identified in the morning sessions. Each participant was able to choose the issue they wanted to discuss and contribute to resolving it. These sessions identified both the solutions and then how they might best be achieved (actions). At the end of each workshop, all participants reconvened to provide feedback from their small group deliberations.

The Dialogue was recorded for future analysis of views and progress. An independent professional reporter, Cherie Gerlach (Gerlach Media), was engaged to provide written summary reporting of the dialogue, including her observations of the 'atmosphere', attitudes and general feeling of the meeting. This reporting, together with preliminary discussions with participants have been used to compile Section 4, *Current Situation, Issues and Solutions Offered by Participants*.

The media was not permitted to be present or to record the Dialogue as there were concerns that this might inhibit frank discussion or encourage grandstanding. Furthermore, the Dialogue and this report are owned by the participants for the communities of Port Augusta to build on for their future. However, the media were invited to interview consenting individuals during the breaks between sessions and they broadcast and printed several interviews.

The Dialogue closed with concluding remarks by participants/observers, Lew Owens, Aaron Stuart, Deborah Fuschtei, City Manager Greg Perkin, Pat Dudgeon on behalf of herself and Peter Hancock, Mayor Joy Baluch and Kym Thomas (Welcome to Country). Their remarks are recorded in Section 5.2 Participants views on the Dialogue.

3. STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTICIPANTS

The core stakeholders for a better future for Port Augusta and its communities are the residents of Port Augusta. Approximately 17 percent of the community is Aboriginal and the vast majority of them have a much lower quality of life than the non-Aboriginal population by any measure, including health and life expectancy, housing, income, employment, education, sport and recreation, imprisonment, participation and representation in civic affairs (see *The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports*, SCRGSP, 2005/7). Aboriginal community members are therefore the most significant stakeholders in this Dialogue and its outcomes.

With the help of City Council staff networking in the Aboriginal community we identified and invited a significant representation of concerned Aborigines and informal Aboriginal groups, including Males in Black, Aboriginal Grannies, Aboriginal entrepreneurs and Davenport Aboriginal Community. In addition, several of the service provider entities were represented by Aboriginal persons. Thirty of the attendees were Aboriginal, being 43 percent of the total.

The non-Aboriginal community seeking to overcome Aboriginal disadvantage in Port Augusta are also important stakeholders. This includes a large range of government agencies and NGOs and their dedicated staff. Their representation included teachers, judiciary, police, prison director, the mining industry, churches and service clubs and local business, as well as State and Commonwealth Members of Parliament and the Port Augusta City Council.

A list of those who participated and their affiliations is given in Appendix 2

4. CURRENT SITUATION, ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS AS OFFERED BY PARTICIPANTS

General Statement

The issues that attracted most attention, brought forward from the identifying issues sessions, fall into eight key areas:

- **Housing and Davenport Community**
- **Health**
- **Education**
- **Employment**
- **Family/Domestic/ Lateral Violence, Healing, Counseling and Elders**
- **Justice and Prison System**
- **Duplication and Coordination of Services**
- **Racism**

Other issues identified were relationships and unity, family and elder values, welfare dependency, substance abuse and gambling and culture art and sport. These other issues were in part tackled directly or indirectly as subsidiary cause or effect issues within the context of the main eight issues.

Several participants, noting the bad press that Port Augusta receives from the media highlighting problem incidents, emphasized that positive things have happened and are happening in Port Augusta, but they are not promoted, especially through the media. They proclaimed that while there will always be challenges to be worked through, Port Augusta has many assets and its achievements need to be recognised and celebrated. It was unanimously recognized that Port Augusta has the potential to become a leading community in Australia, and to create models of unity for other communities.

The following Sub Sections 4.1 to 4.9 are the authors' summary reporting and integration of the participants' stated views of the issues, solutions and how solutions should be achieved.

4.1 Housing and Davenport Community

General

Inadequate supply, poor maintenance and overcrowding of housing was raised as a major problem, which in turn causes serious health, education, substance abuse and domestic violence problems. Frustration was expressed at the consistent sale of Housing SA infrastructure in Port Augusta where there is an obvious shortage of available homes. Homelessness was expressed as not only having a roof over your head but of people having to live in stressful situations with extended family members because they do not have a place of their own.

There are often 15-20 people living in three-bedroom homes. Such overcrowding in housing creates poor education and health outcomes because it is not a conducive environment for students to study with no safe, quiet place to do homework; and in terms of people with chronic health conditions, they often do not take their prescribed medication because they have no safe place of their own in which to store it. The poor and inadequate housing situation of many Aborigines clearly causes other serious problems which in turn further deteriorate their poor housing and home environments.

It was also stated that when people are given a house they also need to be given the support and skills to look after it so that they understand what it is to be a tenant and their responsibilities. Also, there is the issue of having no household items to furnish a home when one does become available. This leads to little or no maintenance being undertaken

by the tenant and multiplied across households this creates daunting maintenance backlogs.

Davenport Community

The Davenport Community is on Aboriginal Trust land and it was stated that there are no funds available to it for adequate servicing of housing and essential infrastructure. The Davenport Community feels that it has been abandoned in dealing with its housing and related challenges. There were concerns that Davenport is seen as being separate to Port Augusta when it should be the responsibility of all Aboriginal people in the area. The chairperson of Davenport Community said the current situation in Davenport, with little support or government funding, has forced residents to make a decision on housing which will see them sign a 40-year lease with Housing SA with only 10 year guarantees for tenants. Residents are concerned what will happen after 10 years and fear that they might then not have a home for their children.

The Davenport Community generally has poor housing conditions and there is great concern about sewerage backing up into houses with no services provided to do anything about it. Some discussions have taken place with Housing SA, who have promised to improve conditions, but residents do not have confidence that this will occur in light of the current poor condition of SA Housing houses in Port Augusta. In terms of income for the community, the Bungala facilities are within Davenport Aboriginal Trust land but do not pay rent, neither does Lakeview.

Other issues creating major problems afflicting Davenport as stated by Davenport Community representatives:

- Health services are provided by Pika Wiya Aboriginal Health Services Inc. but are available only one day a week.
- Dogs: unwanted dogs are dumped at Davenport, creating problems for residents.
- Dust from Yorkey's Crossing Road is a major ongoing problem.
- Street lighting is damaged.
- Broken water meters do not get repaired which means non-payment for water.
- Lack of public telephones: there is only one public telephone which is often damaged, so residents cannot call police when there is an altercation.
- Lack of Police Action: police are not preventing altercations when called out - apparently they decline if it is seen as a family matter, this is seen as wrong and it is felt that the police should intervene.
- Substance Abuse: drug and alcohol abuse is a greater problem now that Port Augusta is a city-wide dry zone, so that drinkers have been forced out to Davenport, which is now 'a dumping ground for dogs and drunks'.
- The community office is in need of repair and its technology needs updating.

Solutions offered.

Housing in general

1. Freeze on sale of Housing SA stock in Port Augusta.
2. Education and awareness training on looking after a house and tenant responsibilities.
3. Assisting tenants with basic furnishing and how to maintain it.

Solutions offered specifically for Davenport and how to achieve them

1. Total upgrade of sewerage.
2. Maintenance of housing at Davenport.
3. Paying of rent by Lakeview and Bungala.
4. Repair damaged street lighting - ETSA Utilities to upgrade lighting.
5. Housing SA to provide a better explanation of the lease proposal and answer the community's concerns.

6. Lift city-wide dry zone or impose dry zone at Davenport and Mobile Assistance patrol Unit to remove drunks from people's yards.
7. Approach Telstra regarding the one public phone.
8. Encourage Davenport residents to report illegal dumping of dogs. Adopt a dog registration process at Davenport in conjunction with Port Augusta City Council through the Davenport Community Council.
9. Seal Yorkey's Crossing Road - Port Augusta City Council and Transport SA should resolve and seal Yorkey's Crossing Rd issue and upgrade the road into Davenport.
10. Although police have provided posters with correct number to call for assistance the correct contact number for Police needs to be given to residents so they can call when needed.
11. Improve health facilities - Request Pika Wiya open a five day a week service at Davenport.
12. Make parents accountable for children not attending school.

4.2 Health - including substance abuse and support for elders

The average life expectancy for Aboriginal people in Port Augusta is 48 years for males and 52 years for females. This is much lower than non-Aboriginal and national life expectancies. It was stated that this is not so much because of chronic illness but more a result of people feeling they have nothing to live for – "a result of loss of connection to land, spirit and body". This in turn leads to mental and physical health issues, many of which come from grieving and loss. Elders are vital to supporting and advising families, but elders themselves need support with medication and follow-up by specialists and health care providers.

Solutions:

1. Local service agreements and aligning action plans to deal with drug and alcohol issues.
2. Manage opening hours of pubs and pokie (poker machine) venues.
3. Establish a rehabilitation centre.
4. Establish an Elders committee.
5. Establish a meeting place which is also a healing centre/social club – a "sharing and caring environment/place".
6. Adopt a culturally appropriate Men's Shed/Ladies Shed project.
7. Have an Elders group teaching respect and what it means – such as by building it into a project.
8. Extend existing legislation to make glue, petrol and other substance inhaling and offence and ensure an individual's safety in regards to inhaling.

To achieve the above

1. Progress the Rehabilitation Centre through the Alcohol Management Group.
2. Provide improved information to community on basic health and available services such as Medicare and cheaper medications using flyers, advertisements, etc.
3. Through a Liquor Licensing Accord, which is achievable, negotiate with the Aboriginal Community and Liquor Licensing Gambling Commissioner to address opening hours in dry areas and other control matters and get the police to drive the process.
4. Develop a MOU/Local Service Agreement through a one day workshop with all agencies to coordinate an agreement. Employ a project officer to drive and develop a service directory as well as MOU's.

4.3 Education

It was felt that there was an expectation by both educators and the community that Aboriginal children would not succeed in education. Children who miss out on early learning of literacy and numeracy are severely disadvantaged and most likely to remain below the general educational level of their age group. One comment was "Our Aboriginal kids have to compete twice as hard to get an education". The education system was trying to find out 'why kids aren't coming to school' with many Aboriginal children missing up to 25 days out of a 47.5 day term, while the acceptable absence rate is 2.5 days per term. It was suggested more truancy officers were needed. The low expectation of teachers, students and community leaders for Aboriginal children is a major problem in education that needs to be removed.

The comment was also made that Aboriginal people who do succeed in gaining an education do so more because of self-motivation than because of support from the education system.

Vocational programs are on the decline and there are low achievement levels among Aboriginal children, with too many students below the National Benchmark level.

Greater respect for teachers by students and community is needed but it was said teachers need to be leaders and give respect to get respect.

The present style of education is a problem for many Aboriginal students and a change of style is needed which keeps core educational values but not traditional teaching methods.

Schools need to be more exciting/more attractive to make kids WANT to go to school.

Solutions offered and how to achieve them

1. Apply major focus on 0-8 years, i.e. pre-school to early primary, and follow-through with focus on educationally disadvantaged Aboriginal children through the rest of primary, secondary, vocational education and tertiary. Also, provide Adelaide University off-campus courses for Aborigines.
2. Establish an Aboriginal Community College which supports literacy/numeracy culture.
3. More scholarships to support children staying at school (such as BHP Billiton Scholarships)
4. Establish a local reference group to support education, including Elders
5. More intense training and development for teachers to raise expectations of what Aboriginal children can achieve including cultural competency training and retaining such trained teachers in Port Augusta beyond three years.
6. Pay Elders in the school system to teach cultural understandings and cultural heritage.
7. Use music and art confidence as a tool for learning.
8. Build relationships with families and children and develop a Parent-Community voice such as the former ASSPA (Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program).
9. Implement programs to work with young parents to support educating young people.
10. Examine Best Practice models and bring them to Port Augusta, e.g. attendance model at Mimilli.
11. Establish more Homework Centres.

To achieve all the above:

Set up an all sectors Aboriginal education consortium with representatives from all levels of schooling (State and private) and educationally related bodies to discuss these recommendations from the Dialogue. Find achievable solutions to the current education issue for Port Augusta children. Prior to this, bring these groups together and canvas the issues/solutions pertinent to the level of schooling.

4.4 Employment

“Employment is not only a way out of welfare dependency but also the way out of poverty”

Aboriginal people need to seek a varied range of employment such as in the retail sector, small business, especially in the main street, or become self-employed. Mining presents job opportunities in the region which can be in administration, trades, transport, catering etc. Companies such as Oz Minerals are offering training and employment and the mining sector is “desperate to get more cadets and apprentices”.

The mining industry is also powerful in that it can put pressure on its contractors and service providers to employ Aboriginal people, for example in the banking and retail sector. Port Augusta City Council has taken on two Aboriginal students in School-Based Apprenticeships where they work 2 days a week at Council, only after having attended school the first three days of the week.

Reducing Aboriginal unemployment requires more employment opportunities through traineeships and apprenticeships with guaranteed jobs.

Solutions offered:

1. Develop a community liaison strategy for Aboriginal employment.
2. A community dialogue and workshops should be held with the local business community/ Chamber of Commerce to encourage them to employ Aboriginal people.
3. Make a commitment to build skills by both mentoring school students and training them to have basic employable skills before attempting to enter the work force.
4. Workplace mentors for Aboriginal employees to prevent any prejudicial treatment and help employee accept normal requirements of employment.
5. Workplace mentors and seminars for non-Aboriginal employees to help understanding and enable racial tolerance.
6. Build community acceptance for redressing the disproportionately low level of Aboriginal employment, with efforts to gain offers of High Street ‘front of shop’ jobs and visual presentation of Aboriginal acknowledgement within the City Centre, e.g. a Cultural Hub.
7. Council, community and businesses encourage Aboriginal employment by placing their custom where Aboriginal employees are employed or welcomed.

To achieve the above

1. Establish an Indigenous/Employer liaison committee convened by the Council and including local business and Aboriginal community working together. It would provide advice and information to employers. Refer to the Ceduna (Far West) Project.
2. Hold discussions with business and Aboriginal community about employment options and opportunities.

4.5 Family/Domestic/ Lateral Violence, Healing, Counseling and Elders

Violence

Domestic violence is a major issue with a high level of drinking at home. Mothers do not want problem drinkers in the house in front of the kids which leads to violence. Children and others at risk need a safe place to go. Violence includes family violence and lateral violence. Lateral violence occurring in feuding between family groups, was acknowledged as a major issue.

Elders are hurting in the community. They are often care-providers for grandchildren who do not respect themselves or their Elders. Elders need help in supporting their grandchildren to become engaged in society.

The importance of family values, cultures, morals and principles was acknowledged as fundamental for a stable and more harmonious family life. More support is needed to keep at-risk families together.

Aboriginal Elders need to share their culture with the younger generation.

Families also need education on positive parenting for the benefit of young people.

It was also stated that communities have a vital role to play in pulling together to stop offending occurring before people end up in the court system.

Counseling services for Aboriginal Men/Cultural reclamation

The role of Aboriginal men in the community was raised. The need for culturally appropriate counseling for men was called for to address loss and grief, internal conflicts, and anger management. More counselors are needed.

Many Aboriginal people have mental anguish and baggage that comes from living in a segregated society. Domestic violence is still not a criminal offence and some Aboriginal men do not appreciate what domestic violence is or that it is highly unacceptable and damaging behaviour.

The Males in Black (MIB) program has been established in the local Aboriginal community to create positive role models for men and to provide them with support and access to employment. It is run with little financial support by a group of dedicated men. It was said that Aboriginal males have an identity crisis and MIB is reflective of what the community needs. By supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of men, the big winners are families. Culture camps are run by MIB to help men reconnect with their culture. MIB also helps men with education and employment.

Solutions

1. Men's counseling/education
2. Adoption by the Criminal justice system of penalties that don't punish the victim
3. Address underlying issues such as drugs and alcohol.
4. Counseling and education for women, whole families and youth
5. Victim support and protection – In dealing with the offender, **don't at the same time punish the victim, instead take out the offender before the violence escalates.**
6. Cool-down house where people can go as an interim measure
7. Safety plans for family and children to escape to safe houses
8. Risk assessment government and community support agencies to be integrated.
9. Education through sporting clubs about saying no to violence
10. Programs for domestic violence offenders in custody and in community
11. Mandatory reporting of violence by hospitals, clinics and Doctor's surgeries

12. Transport for people back to their homes or refuge after treatment for injuries from domestic violence
13. Aboriginal Sentencing Court where victims and Elders are involved on a cultural level. Need for Aboriginals sentencing Aboriginals (See also 4.6 below justice system)

To achieve the above

1. Make Domestic Violence a criminal justice issue.
2. Form an Elders Group as an advisory body to stop the numerous committees that eat up funding which is being diverted to them instead of going to service provision on the ground.
3. Address issues continuously using working groups instead of assuming or hoping they can be solved in one meeting.
4. Elders Group to work with Community Justice Group e.g. as operating in Queensland, being embedded in legislation as an outcome of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This is funded by Attorney General's Department.

4.6 Justice and Prison System

There is a huge over-representation of Aboriginal people in the prison and justice systems with Port Augusta Prison having a 55 per cent Aboriginal population compared to the average Aboriginal population in Port Augusta of 17 per cent. Frustration was expressed by both the prison and justice system representatives over shortcomings in the current system related to alcohol and drug use, and a "lack of pro-social alternatives" contributing to the number of Aboriginal people appearing in court and being imprisoned. They are also being imprisoned for minor offences. For young offenders there was concern about them being held in custody in Adelaide away from their 'country' and any Elder influence while there is no facility in Port Augusta to detain them.

The judicial system is under-funded, under-resourced and the magistrates overworked. There are not enough Aboriginal people in the justice system. Many Aboriginal offenders are not adequately aware of what is going on when they are in court. Interpreters are not valued enough and the courts need to be more user friendly.

Existing drug and alcohol programs are mainstream and do not fit or work well for Aboriginal people.

A major concern with the entire justice system is that it punishes the victim as much as, and at times more than, the offender. Women and children are twice or even thrice punished in domestic violence incidents that come to Court, namely by the initial violence, then when the offender's support is removed and later as a result of the offender's resentment at incarceration on his return to the home.

People from the APY Lands (in the far northwest of the State) who are released from prison in Port Augusta have one chance at a free bus ticket to take them home. The bus leaves late at night and there is nowhere for them to wait to catch it. Many end up at relatives' houses and miss the bus, leaving them stranded in Port Augusta leading to risk of further conflict and offending.

Mediators for family conferences are desperately needed.

On a positive note, the Aboriginal community was commended for facing up to domestic violence in the community. Youth-at-risk programs are run by the police but require more resources to have the necessary wide impact.

The Port Augusta Prison is running some innovative and successful programs. One is in partnership with BHP Billiton which saw 23 low-risk offenders take part in a program, 16 of whom are now in full-time paid employment at BHP Billiton's Roxby Downs Mine. Other states are now looking at this program.

Another prison program has just commenced for high risk 18-23 year olds with compulsory sport, discipline, marching, drills, education (literacy and trade skills), cultural studies, and health. It inculcates teamwork through working together and is showing some good results.

Solutions

1. More public awareness/education on the role of the justice system
2. More Aboriginal Justice Officers, lawyers and magistrates - Aboriginal justice officers work well
3. A rapid response mediator for family feuds
4. Cultural programs for youth - to address issues in family conferencing
5. Culturally specific drug and alcohol programs
6. Accessible programs for anger, women's issues, life skills and budgeting
7. Acknowledge good behaviour and values
8. More resources for effective youth-at-risk programs
9. More pro-social activities – involvement in service clubs, sports, theatre, arts.
10. More community corrections officers in remote areas
11. More legal resources to improve representation
12. Acknowledgment that court system in Port Augusta is innovative e.g. Aboriginal Justice Officers and Community Liaison
13. A community safety group (e.g. neighbourhood watch, police, mobile assistance program, health representatives) and justice group to talk about issues in the community
14. A local Justice Board
15. Provide prisoners from APY Lands with flexible transport home
16. Gambling avoidance/minimization programs
17. More interpreters

To achieve the above

1. Form an Elders Group (as in Section 4.5)
2. Develop young leaders in the community to relieve Elders of the endless round of committees. Young leaders would be developed through working with Elders.
3. Form a Community Justice Group funded by the Attorney General's Department, formed by legislation with appropriate powers, and is Aboriginal specific (As in Section 4.5). This would provide a specific Aboriginal voice in the Criminal Justice System.
4. Form a Community Safety Group, separate from the community justice group and which would be an Aboriginal Advisory Group.

4.7 Duplication and coordination of services

An issue raised many times was that the service providers in Port Augusta with no inter-agency coordination caused people needing help to commonly have to go to many service agencies to first find out who to go to and then likely again to achieve delivery. There is also competitiveness, rather than collaboration, between groups vying for the same funding. The comment was made that even though there were so many agencies there were not enough services for families, and that it was not always clear what agencies were providing. It was felt there is a strong need to make better use of the many resources and

organisations that are in Port Augusta. **This is also the central point and conclusion of the *Lew Owens Report*.**

There are examples of where agencies do work together and the good intent and efforts of the individual agencies and their employees are acknowledged. However, recognition of the general lack of inter-services coordination in delivery and the lack of knowledge within these services and the community as to who does what for whom presents an opportunity for greater cost-effectiveness and better outcomes. It was stated that even the Port Augusta City Council has no clear overall picture of what each agency does, making referral difficult.

It was strongly felt by the community and the Local Government that an audit of all services and **all** the agencies needs to be conducted and a register of agencies collated. From this all services would be evaluated. The results of the audit then need to be made readily available in a simple publication as an explanatory register, so that the community, Local Government and the agencies themselves know what services are available, who provides them and how to access them, whether it be through a one stop shop or otherwise. It was felt the audit and evaluation of all services was a key to resolving many issues in the community. It was pointed out that work was begun on this by the State Government a few years ago, but that it was not completed. This was very frustrating for Council and the community, who now see this as a priority to press for – that the process should be started all over again **and this time completed and covering all the agencies, both government and non-government.**

An example of duplication and lack of coordination was given by the Port Augusta Youth Centre representative, expressing her frustration at the number of youth services that run separately from the Centre - maintaining that they could be more successful if they operated together and shared funding and resources.

Solutions

1. Mapping of services through an audit of services including funding, resources, staffing and overlaps in resources.
2. Develop a service directory.
3. Address the 'silo approach' in inter-agency groups.
4. Have a one-stop shop for delivery of services or referral if required.
5. Employment of a senior level person to undertake audit and then have an ongoing service coordinator in Port Augusta to maintain the register.
6. Partnerships/coordination must not be based on personal relationships but on a mandate to provide good services.
7. A locally driven process of coordination based primarily on Port Augusta community needs rather than on service provider interests.
8. Port Augusta City Council in partnership with State Government should take the lead.
9. Apply flexible policy funding and guidelines.
10. Provide a two-tier approach:-
 - Strategic Group (higher/decision makers)
 - Local Service Group.

To achieve the above

1. Adopt the recommendations in the Lew Owens Report dated August 2010, from page 10 onwards, and appoint an appropriate person for Solution 5 above as soon as possible by 12 November 2010.
2. **Form and executive committee representing all service provider organizations, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to oversee process with Ministerial appointment of an independent chair.**

3. The executive body to appoint the senior level person to undertake the audit/service mapping and to develop the service directory.

4.8 Racism

Racism is real, is historical and impacts on Aboriginal people today. It was acknowledged that racism exists in society against many minority groups, particularly towards Aboriginal people. The differing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perceptions of the degree and extent of racism was discussed in a frank and courageous manner. Aboriginal people said that overt, covert and historical racism was still an issue in Australian society and in Port Augusta, including institutionalised racism. The racism experienced by Aborigines was perceived by some non-Aborigines as cultural segregation/exclusion such as occurs between peoples of different European cultures. Aboriginal participants stated that acknowledging that racism is experienced within and between Anglo and non Anglo Australian groups does not take away from the profound effects of colonization and the racism that Aboriginal people have experienced and continue to experience.

The abolishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (rather than its reform) was seen as an example of racism as was the expectation that Aboriginal kids would not succeed educationally. It was also acknowledged by Aboriginal people that forms of racism existed towards non-Aboriginal people, and also between the different groups/clans of Aborigines. The latter was explained as the result of jealousy of the advantages that others may have in terms of jobs, housing and possessions. Jealousy was stated as an important issue leading to lateral violence and/or an indicator that all Aboriginal groups do not have equal access to advantages.

Aboriginal representatives maintained that the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organizations need to come together and be a united voice. Solutions to issues need to be driven by the Aboriginal people but also supported by non-Aboriginal people. Self determination was a key issue in that Aboriginal people need to be empowered and supported to address disadvantages and participate in local governance. The power of strong relationships was seen as key to a successful future for Port Augusta.

Covert racism was seen to include informal exclusion, including non-Aboriginals comfortably accepting Aboriginals as not being a part of main stream Port Augusta community organizations – for example, Aboriginals are generally not members of service clubs. Aboriginals find that they feel and/or are made to feel unwelcome, even though no formal ban or policy on their exclusion exists nor would be legally permissible. The Lions Club representative expressed empathy and said his service club would henceforth reach out, invite and welcome Aborigines to join.

Role of Art/Culture, and Sport in addressing Racism

Sport was seen as a great “equaliser” but the high expenses associated with engaging in sport meant many Aboriginal children could not participate.

It was also stated that “Art and culture in Port Augusta is the one thing that allows us (Aboriginals) to maintain our culture” and create a strong identity, not just an Aboriginal identity but a Port Augusta identity. Previous arts and cultural events had been perceived as being just for Aboriginal people or just for non-Aboriginal people when they were meant to be for the community generally. An inclusive cultural event is needed to foster togetherness.

Solutions

1. Acknowledge that racism does exist.

2. Acknowledge that racism is real and does hurt, creating anger and affecting development.
3. Identify the history of racism in Port Augusta.
4. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities of Port Augusta to come together as a whole community for shared activities and events.
5. Yarning about racism and being open and honest about it.
6. Cultural awareness and education

To achieve the above

1. Have a locally grown, combined community event to bring people together like Yarnballa and Desert Fringe.
2. Have an Aboriginal Councilor. Encourage someone to stand at the next Council election and encourage Aboriginal people to vote.
3. Australian history starting 50,000 years ago should be part of the school curriculum.
4. Use Art as a community glue to bring people together. Combine the Arid Lands? Sculptural Festival with another Arts Festival.
5. Promote local good news stories through the media.
6. Employers to provide Aboriginal cultural awareness training to their employees.
7. Address racism here and now. Know your rights and do use legislation.

4.9 Other Issues

Other issues touched on but not specifically addressed in the workshop sessions included championing of Aboriginal betterment by non-Aboriginals, Aboriginal participation in Governance, Celebrating Port Augusta, and physical and cultural planning for Port Augusta. These important issues are incorporated in our analysis (Section 6).

5.0 ATMOSPHERE AND IMMEDIATE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIALOGUE

5.1 Gerlach Media reported:

Among the participants there was pride in what each of their agencies/organisations is achieving, often with very limited resources. There was an awareness of the real progress in Port Augusta over the past 20 years from a situation where there were very few resources for Aboriginal people; and an acknowledgement that there are many programs that are innovative and unique to the city and gaining concrete results. The vast majority of participants were positive, actively looking for solutions and not dwelling on the negatives. There appeared to be a real willingness and readiness for change. There was also an acknowledgment that change needs to be driven by the Aboriginal community, but with support from the non-Aboriginal community.

5.2 Participants views on the Dialogue

The Dialogue was summed up in concluding remarks by participants/observers, Lew Owens (Consultant) , Aaron Stuart, Deborah Fuschtei (Aboriginal community members) , Mayor Joy Baluch (Welcome to City) and Kym Thomas(Welcome to Country); with comments by way of information and thanks from City Manager, Greg Perkin and Pat Dudgeon and Convenor/Co-facilitator Peter Hancock. Their remarks summarised below remind everyone of the focus to be maintained, opportunities to be grasped and relationships to be built for the long road ahead for the betterment of Port Augusta and its Aboriginal communities.

Lew Owens:

- **Calling for this Dialogue and commitment to it by the Mayor, Council and City Manager sends a strong statement that Council is in it for the long haul.**
- **The energy and determination evident in the room demonstrated a willingness to discuss anything, including things that many may have been uncomfortable about. This is a good sign of what can come and shows a commitment to tackle hard issues.**
- **The residents of Port Augusta have demonstrated their pride in their town and excitement in the opportunities for the town to build a cohesive community and be a role model for the rest of Australia.**

Aaron Stuart:-

- **We thank the Mayor, Council and service providers for their participation.**
- **This Dialogue is a gathering for us to help ourselves because that is how we can move forward, working together while keeping and accepting our relationships, our differences and our different thoughts.**
- **But, remembering what has been said about racism today – it is people that discriminate against each other, not words.**
- **By helping ourselves and working together we can make Port Augusta a better place.**

Debbie Fustchai:

- **This Dialogue is a positive step forward by Port Augusta.**
- **Positive solutions have been brought forward – if we can commit to them as a community we have the possibility of achieving good outcomes – it is up to us to achieve outcomes for our future.**

Mayor, Joy Baluch:

- This Dialogue has highlighted goodwill, a large amount of energy and determination in support of the Owens Report.
- The time has come today for the Aboriginal community to come together and support a nominee for Local Government Election.
- Goodwill exists on Council for an Aboriginal Councillor in the coming election.

City Manager, Greg Perkin:-

- My job is to build positive development for Port Augusta. Community development needs to come first on which to build other aspects.
- This requires a commitment to work to build a strong and harmonious community.
- This Dialogue is a vehicle to have the issues addressed including immediate things – particularly sewerage at Davenport.
- Next year Council is required to develop a Strategic Plan for the city under a new Council following the imminent Council Elections. This Dialogue will inform the new Council and the Strategic Plan.

Co-Facilitator, Pat Dudgeon:-

- This Dialogue could go somewhere – trigger something new.
- We, Peter Hancock and myself, hope that our time here has further instigated the positive social change process that is already evident in Port Augusta.
- Port Augusta has so much potential – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have got a great history here together, and an opportunity to set the scene for the rest of Australia.

Kym Thomas (Welcome to Country)

and in closing comment:

- Recounting a personal journey of his father and himself - the father is only as happy as his children and his father was only completely happy when he, Kym, the eighth child, got his first job. Likewise, Port Augusta will only be happy when a happier situation exists for ALL its citizens.

6. ANALYSIS OF VIEWS AND PROPOSALS FROM THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

A recording of the Dialogue discussions was made which is invaluable for assessing the concern, collaboration, determination and due consideration of proposals from the wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representatives. The recording, together with the summary report by an independent professional journalist, has facilitated and enriched our analysis. The Dialogue process delivered a sense of ownership to participants, a momentum and a determination to have solutions carried out. Overall the authors, the Convenor/Facilitators, felt that the Dialogue was very successful and trust that this report with its analysis and recommendations will increase the potential for positive social change that we saw in Port Augusta.

6.1 Coordination of service delivery and community and agency awareness of where and how to access services

The many causes and effects of Aboriginal disadvantage and inhibitors of harmonious development in Port Augusta are interlinked. Severely overcrowded and poor housing negatively affects health, education of children, care and maintenance of housing and quality of family life. Unemployment, poverty and despair at prospects for a better future leads to substance abuse, gambling, offending and domestic and inter-family violence. Racism whether overt, covert or institutionalized hurts those discriminated against and is a key issue interrelating with all the above. With issues impacting on each other, Aboriginal disadvantage and discord is reinforced and becomes entrenched from one generation to another.

Service providers' best efforts by hard working dedicated staff are largely focused on the one or two issues for which they were established and funded. This is referred to as the silo mentality. It was repeatedly highlighted in the Dialogue and is a fundamental finding of the *Lew Owens Report*. The fact that issues are linked and have cause and effect on each other makes it clear that a coordinated approach is needed for better and more cost effective service delivery. For example, Families SA see many of the underlying causes coming home to roost in dysfunctional families with violence in the home against women and children, but they are not charged or able to deal with these underlying causes. They are the responsibility of other agencies and many problems fall through the gaps between services.

Some of the proposals made at the Dialogue can be carried out locally without external resources. Others are beyond the limited capacity of local government or fall within national and state responsibilities, structures and controls and therefore require external resources. However, all need to be better coordinated for a more cost effective and more user-friendly application.

The State Government is at present reducing expenditure. This increases the urgency of extensive and dedicated collaboration between the three levels of government and non-Government agencies to 'close the gap' for the disadvantaged.

Local Government is charged with servicing and being accountable to all its citizens as well as responsibility for the physical and cultural development of the township and local authority region. It is therefore particularly aware of the interlinking cause and effect relationship of the issues and hence the need for coordination of the services within and between the three levels of government and the non-government agencies.

There is a strong belief born of Port Augusta's local government and community experience that progress in resolving the long-standing problems and achieving more effective use of the available resources requires local coordination of

services and local decision-making. We consider that this would not only build beneficial local accountability, but also build in the recipients of services a greater sense of responsibility.

One suggestion put to us is that Port Augusta be trialed as a Local 'Cost Centre'. Costs of government services and welfare benefits (other than age pensions) to Port Augusta residents would be accounted for in total. Where the cost of these benefits, such as unemployment and sickness benefits, are reduced through employment initiatives, the funds saved would be allocated by local decision-makers for use in programs for further improvement in the level of employment and health.

6.2 Cultural development, racial discrimination, stereotyping and self-help

The Dialogue acknowledged that racism existed, discriminated against and hurt Aboriginal people in Port Augusta. Discussion on racism at the Dialogue and in our preliminary one on one discussions with participants was encouragingly frank. Some non-Aboriginals felt that today racial discrimination was perceived rather than real, feeling that it was just negative stereotyping and informal discrimination as exists against any cultural minority dependent upon welfare. Ironically, this is what racism is. It is difficult for Aboriginal and many non-Aboriginal people to accept that they live in a society that has a history of colonization, racist practices and ideology. Racial discrimination is now illegal and not formally acceptable, yet many Aboriginals are still subject informally to racial discrimination. Aboriginal people who participated in the Dialogue reported that discrimination against Aboriginals, such as expectations of low educational and employment performance, also the long history and living memory experiences of overt racism, were and still are painful.

It is useful to think of racism as operating at three different levels: individual, institutionalized and cultural. Racial discrimination for the Aboriginal people of Australia is a reality that has only recently been addressed in meaningful ways. There has been a period of social change that augurs well for positive race relations in Australia. However, overt and covert racism, as well as institutionalized and cultural racism remains a challenge for society. In urban centres with relatively high proportions of Aboriginal people such as Port Augusta, racism in all its different forms needs to be addressed. This presents a fundamental challenge for all the community and in planning the cultural and physical development of Port Augusta.

Other between group oppressions form part of the community dynamics of Port Augusta. Another form of racism or lateral violence between Aboriginal families and tribal groups was recognized during the process of the Dialogue. Reverse racism from Aboriginal people towards non-Aboriginals was also mentioned. Oppressive behaviors from Aboriginal people towards other Aboriginal people who have attempted to better themselves and worked for or carried out business with 'whites' was also mentioned. These members of the Aboriginal community who have succeeded or tried to be successful in 'white ways' are referred to as coconuts (being dark on the outside but white on the inside) reflecting a resentment for crossing over into mainstream Australian world of advantage. This is another form of oppression towards those who made such life choices.

Investigations into possible ways to overcome Aboriginal disadvantage in Port Augusta have prioritised practical needs and highlighted improved and coordinated service delivery to better provide for them. However, better service delivery alone is unlikely to provide the desired results. Alone, it may increase rather than diminish debilitating welfare dependency and disempowerment and thus further entrench negative stereotyping. Fundamental to almost all the problems is the need for a cultural change and better community harmony. This requires thoughtful combined efforts from Port Augusta's Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. It requires self-help by the Aboriginal community and it

requires non-Aboriginals to outreach to the Aboriginal communities to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginality and Port Augusta's rich and 50,000 year old Aboriginal history.

The Dialogue was acknowledged by Aboriginal participants as a gathering for Aboriginals to come together to help themselves to resolve their own problems and disharmony, and to do so with the help of championing by non-Aboriginals. This is contrary to the discriminatory stereotyping of Aboriginals being only interested in further 'hand-outs' evidenced in the many blogs posted anonymously by non-Aboriginal readers in response to the Adelaide Advertiser's summary of the *Lew Owens Report*.

The Aboriginal representatives of Port Augusta at the Dialogue engaged with non-Aboriginal representatives and demonstrated an excellent grasp of the issues, balanced judgment and willingness to collaborate. The Dialogue also brought forward non-Aboriginals from the community, government, business and the mining industry eager to support and champion Aboriginal participation in the community, employment, education, health services, local government, justice system, business and cultural enterprise.

A great potential has been opened up by the Dialogue for Aboriginal communities of Port Augusta to come together with a unified voice and initiate self-determination by working towards some of the excellent proposals that they identified collaboratively. To ensure that their voice will be heard, Aboriginal empowerment should be strongly supported by the local non-Aboriginal community, as well as by governments and the private sector. This can make a huge contribution to collaborative development of the culture of Port Augusta.

The Dialogue has opened a door for collaboration to change the local culture, improve the safety and quality of lives and to develop a more harmonious Port Augusta. This door may now be open wide enough for all to go through it together, to commence the journey for this long desired change.

6.3 The Road ahead with: Leadership, collaboration and Aboriginal participation in governance

The Mayor and the City Council have shown vision and leadership in calling for this Dialogue. The community has responded by engaging positively. Momentum for change has been created, but it must be built on quickly if it is not to fade away. Carrying out the recommendations in the *Lew Owens Report* for a better workable governance system will be an important and helpful step, but it will not alone solve the fundamental cultural problems of Port Augusta or provide the physical and cultural planning of the city for a more harmonious future. The *Lew Owens Report* acknowledges that cultural and safety issues have to be resolved for Aboriginal advancement and community harmony. These issues can only be resolved by the communities themselves collaborating in governance and planning of the physical and cultural future of the city.

The large range of excellent proposals made by the Dialogue participants presents a challenge for those who proposed them, be they service providers, elected representatives or members of the community in need of services. It will be difficult to find enough people and resources to plan, establish and carry them all out. Priorities will need to be allocated. Leadership, continuing community engagement and collaboration will be required, particularly Aboriginal participation in governance. Aboriginal participants demonstrated energy, goodwill and leadership in the Dialogue. They will need to engage with each other and non-Aboriginal representatives to press for the changes that can be made with available resources.

Many of the proposals could be carried out with little or no funding by harnessing community and corporate goodwill. Some of the proposals, such as festivals that bring

communities together, present opportunities to generate funding through sponsorships and selling concessions to traders. Training and employment can be further provided by local business and the mining and other industries in meeting their good citizen obligations and in serving their own long-term interests.

Acknowledging that how people feel about themselves and others is fundamental to positive engagement and collaboration. In view of blatant racism in the recent past and continuing informal racial discrimination, the Aboriginal communities need to feel genuinely welcomed. The Mayor, Joy Baluch, made a helpful start at the conclusion of the Dialogue by welcoming Aboriginal candidates to stand in the forthcoming Council elections (reminding all that with 17% of the population they would be guaranteed a seat if they all Aboriginals supported one Aboriginal candidate). However, in Port Augusta the different Aboriginal communities will need to come together as the first step in building Aboriginal participation in governance.

Aboriginal self-governance for Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal participation and representation in wider governance of Port Augusta is the most essential component for advancing Aboriginal betterment and a more harmonious Port Augusta. Representation of all the family/tribal groups will be required. If they can come together in a representative body and take ownership of their future then Local Government and the wider community will not only have to listen to them, but also, with the goodwill in waiting that we have observed, they will welcome them. They could not be ignored being 17% of the citizenry.

Unity and a representative body cannot be imposed on the Aboriginal communities, but as stated by Aboriginal representatives in the Dialogue, they need encouragement and some practical help to start their own engagement process. Respected non-Aboriginals meeting in a follow-up Dialogue with willing Aboriginal participants from this Dialogue, together with others whom they may recommend, would be a useful first step and would capture the momentum built to date.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on our analysis of the concerns and proposals raised at the Dialogue and discussed in Section 6 above. They are based on our assessment of what is most likely to work from our own experience and observations and discussions with participants during the Dialogue process.

- 1. The 'good will in waiting' and momentum generated by the Dialogue can and should be harnessed without delay with further gatherings to keep things moving for positive change (maintaining the 'vibe' is a condition for positive change). Waiting for a newly elected Council to settle-in should not be allowed to delay these gatherings, which if necessary should be called by another party such as a widely trusted and recognized NGO. Goodwill and ownership of issues and ideas as generated at the Dialogue are powerful tools for resolving the longstanding problems of Port Augusta, but will be lost and wasted if not utilized quickly.**
- 2. As a priority and first step to build on the goodwill and momentum, we strongly recommend a dialogue on Aboriginal representation and participation in governance between all the different Aboriginal community representatives at the 3 September Dialogue, and others whom they wish to invite, together with a few respected and trusted non-Aboriginals. Elected Local, State and Federal Government should be present as observers and as an information resource only and NOT as active participants. The Aboriginal communities can be assisted in developing models of participation in governance, but they must make their own decisions and own the process of coming together with representation of family/clan groups to have effective participation in governance.**
- 3. The Port Augusta City Council, in addition to enabling recommendations 1 and 2 above, should pursue the solutions proposed for coordination and better delivery of services by Federal, State, Local Government and NGOs as proposed by the Dialogue and set out in Section 4.7 above and discussed in Section 6.1.**
- 4. This report and analysis of the Dialogue should be widely circulated by the City Council amongst the Port Augusta Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities because it is written for them. Organisations and individuals should consider the solutions relating to themselves and in the spirit of goodwill carry out the proposed solutions raised by their representatives and others. The City Council, while able to carry out some of the proposals has neither the resources, reach nor influence to carry out such a large range of proposals, many of which are more appropriate to State and Federal agencies and NGOs such as Service and Sporting Clubs.**
- 5. Further dialogue type meetings with workshops should be held by the workshop groups in each of the eight areas (see Section 4) to follow-up on their proposed solutions and how they should be carried out. An excellent example is set by the Education Workshop Group which not only identified and set out the parties to be brought together, but also how they should be brought together to discuss advancement of their proposals (see Section 4.3). We recommend that each workshop group should consider themselves the core of a Task Force, bringing into it others that they consider relevant and helpful to refine and drive their proposals. This process should also be encouraged because it will assist Aboriginal communities coming together to participate in governance across all the**

issues and also improve Aboriginal - non-Aboriginal relationships (see Analysis Section 6.3).

6. The special Aboriginality of Port Augusta and its other natural advantages should be celebrated and incorporated in the cultural and physical planning of the city, bringing local and Australia-wide interest and respect for its diverse Aboriginal communities and history.
7. Lack of readily available funds is always a problem that discourages pursuit of goals such as those proposed. Opportunities exist for external funding and in-kind support from local business, large corporations, philanthropists and existing Federal and State Government programs for Aboriginal development and community harmony. The natural advantages of Port Augusta and the goodwill and potential unveiled at the Dialogue offer great opportunities for successful application of donor funds that meet philanthropic or business objectives and bring recognition for good works.
8. The interest and support of both the State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs should be fostered. Port Augusta, with its natural advantages and its momentum and potential for change, presents an opportunity for a successful model for the many other centres troubled with Aboriginal disadvantage. It is therefore very much in the State and Commonwealth Governments' own interests in 'Closing the Gap' for them to support both the *Lew Owens Report* and Port Augusta's locally driven initiatives set out in this report.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Mayor, Ms Joy Baluch, and Council of Port Augusta for instigating the Dialogue; the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Hon. G. Portolisi for her support; and the previous Minister, Hon J Weatherill who committed the funding for the Dialogue.

This report was not included in the budget for the Dialogue. It has only been made possible by creating a residue from the budget through the generous in-kind support of the Port Augusta City Council, the in-kind contribution of the ANU Centre for Dialogue and the authors' goodwill contribution to this important cause of community harmony and Aboriginal advancement.

The authors are also pleased to acknowledge Mr Lew Owens for his supportive interest and attendance as author of the *Lew Owens Report* on service delivery issues at Port Augusta, Magistrate Rosanne McInnes for her helpful preliminary information and Cherie Gerlach for arranging supportive publicity and media interviews.

Professional services of written and sound track recording were provided by Gerlach Media and Sharp Sound respectively. They have proved a useful resource for this report and will be a valuable resource for parties researching the issues or working on their solutions.

The authors are particularly grateful for the personal efforts of Port Augusta City Manager, Greg Perkin, who worked with the convenor and co-facilitator, Peter Hancock, over a period of ten months in planning and promoting the Dialogue; also Council Officers, Melanie Jenkins and Bernadette Reichstein, who assisted.

The authors, as convenor and facilitators, are grateful to all the Dialogue participants for their goodwill, enthusiasm and mutual respect; enabling a successful dialogue event that what would otherwise have been an overwhelmingly difficult task with such a large and diverse gathering for dialogic methods. In addition to the community representatives we note and gratefully acknowledge the dedication and supportive contributions of the range of government and non-government service providers (see Appendix 2).

It has been a privilege beyond normal professional satisfaction to help make some positive difference for Port Augusta. We hope it will now start a process of change that will be an example for all the other Australian centres with disharmony and Aboriginal disadvantage.

9. References

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APPENDIX 1 INVITATION TO DIALOGUE

F10/2396
AR10/3062

Office of the Mayor

Monday 9 August 2010

«Name_1»

YOUR INVITATION TO DIALOGUE:

Dear «Name_2»

In order to provide our Aboriginal residents with the best chances in life I and my Council need to develop a better understanding of the needs of Aboriginal people. We have therefore gained the expertise of the Centre for Dialogue at the Australian National University to run a Dialogue event which in essence is a forum for talking and understanding. This event will take place on Friday 3 September 2010 and I have invited you because I believe you too want to make Port Augusta a better place for all. If you have already accepted the earlier invitation for the 21 August date, now postponed because of commitments by other key invitees and the Federal Election, we hope that you can still attend but please reconfirm your acceptance for the new date.

PURPOSE OF DIALOGUE

Port Augusta has the largest Aboriginal population of any town in country South Australia. It is important that the image and nature of the town highlights and celebrates this rich Aboriginal heritage and culture. It is also critical that it become a safer, more harmonious place providing opportunities for better lives for all of its people.

Aboriginal people need to be heard. Council, Service Agencies and the community need to listen to and respect the views of Aboriginal people. This Dialogue event is an important start to that process. It aims to identify and reach agreement on how Aboriginal people can be more involved in the opportunities that the town provides and in the planning for its physical and cultural development.

Communities are created by individuals who dream and plan together. The Dialogue event is for you to share your concerns, desires and ideas with other community members and together start creating the future.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You have been identified as a person who can help make Port Augusta a strong and united community. I would greatly appreciate you coming to the Dialogue event and sharing your views and ideas for a better Port Augusta. You will also be able to bring a companion with you to share ideas and provide support to you.

HOW THE DIALOGUE EVENT WILL WORK

There will be around thirty (30) other people seated at tables joined together in a circular setting. There will be an equal number of Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal people. After the welcome and introduction of everyone and their particular interest you will have an opportunity to state your concerns and goals for your community and the town. You will all be encouraged by the facilitator, Ms Pat Dungeon an Aboriginal woman committed to achieving reconciliation, to provide your views on these issues and topics and others that may be raised during the discussion.

WHERE AND WHEN

The Dialogue will start at 9am at All Saints Parish Centre, 44 Tassie Street, PORT AUGUSTA. There will be breaks for lunch and morning and afternoon tea which will be provided. The event will conclude at 5 pm.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO START THIS PROCESS?

The most important thing is for you to accept this invitation and to choose a companion to accompany you if you would like their support.

Please reply using the attached form by Monday 16 August 2010

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. J. Baluch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Joy Baluch, Mayor

RESPONSE FORM

DIALOGUE: for a Better Future for Indigenous Community and Port Augusta

**ALL SAINTS PARISH CENTRE
44 TASSIE STREET PORT AUGUSTA**

9.00am – 5.00pm FRIDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2010

Please tick one of the two boxes below and then complete the form as appropriate.

I am interested in participating.

I am unable to accept the invitation

NAME:

ADDRESS:.....

.....

Email:.....

PREFERRED PHONE CONTACT No.

FAX No (if preferred means of contact).....

I wish to bring (please name person).....with me to the event.

Please complete and return by Monday 16 August:

- in enclosed stamped addressed envelope
- or hand it in at the Council front office;
- or send the required information by e-mail to mjenkins@portaugusta.sa.gov.au;
- or provide the information by phone to Melanie Jenkins at 86419144

Enquiries to Melanie Jenkins 86419144 or mjenkins@portaugusta.sa.gov.au

Enquiries regarding Centre for Dialogue and facilitators to peter.hancock@anu.edu.au



APPENDIX 2 DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Ackland, Stacey – Resources & Engineering Skills Alliance
Anderson, Maria – Red Cross

Baluch, Joy – Mayor – Port Augusta City Council

Chamberlain, Kym – Port Augusta Youth Centre
Cugley, Robert – Salvation Army

Dadleh, Rick – Substance Misuse Rehabilitation Day Centre, Port Augusta
Dodd, Brendon – TAFESA

Edmonds, Tony – City Safe, Port Augusta City Council

Feltus, Ian Sgt – Port Augusta Police
Forbes, Priscilla – Centrelink
Fuschtei, Deborah – Aboriginal business woman Independent
Fuschtei, Valerie – Independent

Greagen, Phil – Deputy Mayor- Port Augusta City Council

Harrison, John – General Manger, Port Augusta Prison
Houseman, Michael Dr – Independent
Hurley, Linda – Families SA
Hutchison, Colleen – Dept Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

Ireland, Robert – Port Augusta Business (Mngr Northpoint Toyota)

Jackson, Elsie – Independent
Jackson, Charlie – Pika Wiya Health Service
Jackson, Noel – Aboriginal Health
Janiak, Alex Snr Constable – Port Augusta Police

Lennon, June – Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service
Lester, Noeleen – Port Augusta Family Relationship Centre
Likouresis, Dawn – Independent

Malcolm, Mark – Local Employment
Maxwell, Kelly – University of Adelaide
Milera, Veronica – Independent
Moisseeff, Marika Dr – Independent
Moosha, Elaine - Families SA
Munn, Peter Dr – Centacare
McInnes, Rosanne – Magistrate, Courts
McKenzie, Alwyn – Dept Aboriginal Affairs & Reconciliation
McKenzie, Marvyn – Independent
McKenzie, Vivienne – Independent

Nelson, Lloyd – Lions Club of Port Augusta
Ngatokoura, Lavene – Chair, Davenport Aboriginal Community

Owens, Lew – Special Ministerial Advisor -Port Augusta

Platt, Sharon – Dept Aboriginal Affairs & Reconciliation

Ramsey, Rowan MP – Federal Member for Grey
Rossiter, Barry – Red Cross

Saunders, Nerrida – Dept Aboriginal Affairs & Reconciliation
Schmerl, Rachael – Red Cross
Singleton, Rob – Housing SA
Sloane, Angela – Dept Aboriginal Affairs & Reconciliation
Stahl, Dietrich Pastor – Port Augusta & Whyalla Churches SA
Stahl, Michael – Port Augusta & Whyalla Churches SA
Stanley, Fiona – Red Cross
Stuart, Aaron – Centacare
Stuart, Heather – Independent
Sutton, John – Leadership coach, Dept Education & Children's Services

Tanner, Paul – Males in Black Program
Thomas, Kym – Males in Black Program
Thomas, Roger Professor – Dean, Aboriginal Education, University of Adelaide
Thompson, Katrina – Lakeview Accommodation Centre

van Holst Pellekaan MP, Dan – State Member for Stuart

Walker, Stephanie – SA Chamber Mines & Energy
Wanganeen, Klynton – Aboriginal Engagement
Waters, Megan – Community Harmony
Warren, Chris – Port Augusta Secondary School
Waye, Chris – Port Augusta Youth Centre
Weis, Barbara – Dept Aboriginal Affairs & Reconciliation
Wilson, Tim – Resources & Engineering Skills Alliance

(several other community members attended without recording their names)