

From:
To: <tom.stephens@mp.wa.gov.au>
Date: 17/09/2007 9:41:54 pm
Subject: Report of Balgo WOmEn Law Camp

Hon Tom Stephens MLA

Chair Education and Health Standing Committee

Please find attached the Report of the Balgo Women's Law Camp held at Blue Hill on 24-27 August.

The report is called "Aboriginal Women Have Answers Themselves".

We draw your attention to the 28 strategies identified by the over 100 women and girls attending the Law Camp to deal with issues of child sexual abuse and neglect, violence against women and children and many other issues in our community.

Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association sends this report to you in the hope that you can find ways to support the women of Balgo attain their goals.

Yours respectfully,

Dr Zohl de Ishtar

Coordinator, Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association, Balgo

“Aboriginal Women have Answers Themselves”

Report of the Balgo Women’s Law Camp

Blue Hill (Tanami Track), 24-27 August 2007

Please find attached from the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women’s Association of Balgo its report on the Balgo Women’s Law Camp held at Blue Hill on the Tanami Track from 24 to 27 August 2007.

The report states ...

“Aboriginal Women have Answers Themselves”

Over 100 women and girls joined in the Balgo Women’s Law Camp at Blue Hill from 25-27 August. For four days they celebrated women’s Law ceremonies. It was an opportunity for women elders to “mend” (revitalise) their Women’s Law (Yawulyu) through engaging with the Tjukurrpa (cosmos/Dreaming) and passing their knowledge on to their younger generations.

The women elders and “middle-aged” women were concerned for the well-being of their younger generations and for all members of their families and community but particularly the children and youth. They were upset about recent the events in their community which had highlighted the issue of child sexual abuse and they wanted to do something to stop it. They felt that the problems were occurring because their younger generations had lost connection with their cultural heritage, with their land and thus with themselves.

From the Kapululangu elders’ perspective the only thing that could heal the rift between Tjukurrpa and self was the practice of Women’s Law. Custodians of strong Law, the Kapululangu elders are the *tjarrtjurra* (healers) and *nintipuka* (teachers) of their communities. The well-being of their families and communities weigh on heavily on their shoulders. They wanted to “grow up” their younger generations: “strong for Law, strong for Culture”. They would achieve this through ceremony.

The elders also wanted to talk about the problems in their communities, with the aim of identifying strategies of how to eradicate those problems. The Law Camp was a response to recent government – State (Perth) and Federal (Canberra) – interventions in Aboriginal communities in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The elders wanted to show the governments that “Women have answers themselves”.

As one Kapululangu elders Yintjurru Margaret Anjule Napurrula said, “We have to show this government that we have strong Law here. They can’t rubbish it. We have got strong Law ourselves”.

The Law Camp calls on the governments to support and fund the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women’s Association as a matter of urgency. Kapululangu requires funding for its cultural programs for youth and children, particularly the Circles of Cultural Learning initiative, and the provision of a Safe House in Balgo for women and children in need. Kapululangu has been without funding for six years. It is still waiting on government funding promised for 2005 and 2006. Equally, Kapululangu calls on governments to fund and support Aboriginal women’s initiatives and projects in every community: “Local Strategies for Local Problems”.



The Report consists of three parts: Background to the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association; Report on the Balgo Women's Law Camp; Report on the Meeting held at the Balgo Women's Law Ground.

Issues discussed at the formal meeting included: Indigenous Law and Culture; Child sexual abuse and neglect; Youth; Violence against women and children; Truancy; Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling; Elders rights; Health matters; Traditional healing; Policing; and Parenting.

For further information please contact:

Dr Zohl de Ishtar
Coordinator, Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association, Balgo

