
ABORIGINAL CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL

SPECIAL ISSUE NEWSLETTER: 1998 FULL COUNCIL MEETING

17 APLIN ST OR PO BOX 6512, CAIRNS, Q, 4870.

PH (07) 4031 2623 FAX (07) 4031 2534 EMAIL acc@iig.com.au

Time for true feeling - ACC Chair

Changes to the political landscape in Australia have profound implications for Aboriginal people says Aboriginal Coordinating Council Chairperson Wayne Connolly.

During his address to the annual Full Council Meeting of the ACC Cr Connolly said it was time to let others know "what our true feelings are".

He called for the development of effective responses to these challenges and unity between Aboriginal organisations.

"This is not the time to sit back and wait, it is time to face the issues directly with courage, conviction and determination," he said. "But for us to succeed we must remain undividedly united."

He said the policies of "divide and conquer" had been used by the government and others for too long and called on delegates to consider a regular annual meeting with all the organisations representing the interests of Aboriginal people. He said *unity* was the key to indigenous communities moving forward.

The ACCs Full Council Meeting had just three days to discuss the issues of housing, health, infrastructure, land and economic development within the communities.

Cr Connolly said in the light of the results of the Federal election it was essential for the communities to come together and work on a path for the future.

"The resolutions which came out of this meeting affect the direction all our communities will take well into the next 12 months," he said. "There was such a broad range of issues we had to cover, as with any local council but under difficult circumstances."

The Full Council Meeting was held at the Novotel

Palm Cove Resort Conference Centre from 13-15 October.

It was addressed by Minister for Police and Corrective Services Tom Barton, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy & Development Judy Spence, Queensland Auditor General Len Scanlan, Queensland Indigenous Working Group representative Tony Johnson and Department of Housing Director General Linda Apelt.

One of the most significant resolutions passed by the Full Council Meetings was agreement to undertake a review of the *Community Services Act (Aborigines) 1994*.

Other resolutions passed by the meeting included calls to resolve the issue of home ownership on communities, provision for a dialysis machine for the Northern Peninsula Area, to seek funding for apprenticeships and training on communities, and support for the work of the Queensland Indigenous Working Group.

Home ownership was one of the major concerns of the Aboriginal Councils who are forced to collect rent from their constituents because the land tenure conditions of Deeds of Grant in Trust communities do not allow for individual ownership.

Executive member of the ACC Steve Walsh Snr said Aboriginal people should not be expected to pay rent for the rest of their lives with no prospects for owning their own home on their own land.

Ms Spence said the issue was further complicated by native title applications which made the need for resolution of the land tenure vs home ownership issue more pressing.

ACC Executive Members at the 1998 Full Council Meeting

Welcome to the latest issue of the ACC Newsletter featuring a spotlight on the 1998 ACC Full Council Meeting. Inside.....Ministers address Full Council Meeting, Housing Issues, Audits & Awards, Training & Employment Initiatives, Native Title and Suicide Prevention...By the way, if you can think of a better name for this newsletter let us know by the New Year and be in the running for a \$100 prize!

Councils to review Community Services Act

A Taskforce Review Committee for the *Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984* has met for the first time to define its terms of reference and *modus operandi* following calls from Cr Connolly last year to see the Act reviewed.

The ACC has taken the initiative to review the Act themselves at a time when there is growing interest in community development.

"As we move forward we must ensure the Act which provides

the basis for governance on our communities truly reflects our aspirations and expectations," Cr Connolly said.

Members of the Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council unanimously supported the establishment of their own review of the Act during the final session of the Full Council Meeting.

Delegates also agreed to undertake the review themselves and to seek funding from the Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander

Policy & Development Judy Spence.

During her address to the meeting Ms Spence invited the ACC to approach her office about funding the review.

The *Community Services Act* is the governing legislation over the Councils and was deemed to "no longer adequately meet the present and future economic, social, cultural and local government needs of the residents of Aboriginal communities" by the meeting.

Minister flags outstation plan and community police change

Queensland Police and Corrective Services Minister Tom Barton flagged the announcement of a new system for dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders at the ACC Full Council Meeting.

Mr Barton said plans had not yet been finalised for looking at using a revised system of outstations to deal with the problem of a culturally inappropriate corrective service system.

"We're looking at expanding or certainly changing the focus of existing programs," he said.

"We want to consider very carefully whether we can have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people go through the outstations first rather than through a regular prison.

"We think that it's much more effective for them to be with their own people in their own areas rather than bringing them down to other prisons."

Mr Barton said he was expecting to be able to make an announcement in the "not-too-distant" future.

Chair of the ACC Wayne Connolly said other concerns raised with the Minister included

the transfer of Community Police into the regular Police Service and the amount of money spent on jails within the communities which could not be used.

"Jails have been built within communities with Deaths in Custody money but they are not being used," he said.

"It's waste of money when the government is always talking to councils about accountability and yet we have these white elephants here.

"We're saying that the government should come to the party and put money aside for the training of watch house keepers within our communities so they can access that watch house in the community."

He said another area of concern was the transfer of Community Police to State Police.

"There's a concern that most of the Community Police are being paid for by the Community Councils themselves so the issue of training is there and that they're not fully qualified to go out there and address the issues that tend to face our communities," he said.

The issue of culturally appropriate jails was also raised with the Minister.

"For example with the jail at Mareeba, there's a concern that it's not culturally appropriate within the northern region because there's so many different clan and tribal groupings all put together at one correctional centre," he said.

"So the issue was raised by some of our Councillors about having a correctional centre put somewhere in the north Queensland area."

Mr Barton said his department had already spent some time considering the matter.

"There are some cultural concerns about that but the other way is that if you were to put a correctional facility into the Cape that was essentially staffed by European Australians who were locking up Ab-

original & Torres Strait Islander people in that area, we think it would have a detrimental effect," he said.

Mr Barton said the ACCs Full Council Meeting was important to both the Government and Aboriginal communities.

"The meeting is very important because many of the issues that are impacting on Aboriginal communities around Queensland do relate to law and order and the police service and the correctional services departments in particular," he said.

"Some of them aren't easy issues to address but we're working our way through them and we do have too high a proportion of our prison population being Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people."

"We're looking at expanding or certainly changing the focus of existing programs."

New Minister announces funding control over essential services

The ACC has welcomed the announcement and implementation of a funding agreement that will strengthen Aboriginal control over essential services and infrastructure.

Queensland Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy & Development Judy Spence announced the funding changes to last month's Full Council Meeting.

ACC Chairperson Wayne Connolly said the changes were not before time.

"There is still a lot to be done and these initiatives will only be introduced gradually but they are certainly a step in the right direction," he said.

"The release of this \$6m to our communities has given an enormous boost to self-determination or self-management within our communities and also a sense of ownership because a lot of infrastructure within our communities has been very poorly constructed.

"We'd like to have a training program in place where we can fully train our own people to maintain that infrastructure which is an important step forward in itself."

He said the new funding will mean people living on DOGIT communities will be able to tackle their problems with a degree of certainty into the future.

"Up until now a piecemeal approach to infrastructure and services was the best we could hope for," he said.

"But with the recognition being given to the ACC as well as control over spending being gradually given back to the communities themselves at least we know that we can try to do the best for our people on a longer term basis."

A range of other issues which fall under Ms Spence's portfolio were openly discussed with ACC Councillors including housing, health and community justice systems in a session lasting well over an hour.

Mr Connolly said home ownership was of major concern to communities.

"It's about having that sense of ownership and that

goes down to owning your own home which is the great Australian dream," he said.

Council member for Palm Island Steve Walsh told Ms Spence it was not possible for people on DOGIT land to own their own housing because of tenure.

"For us in communities it seems like home ownership is only a step away but we can't touch it," he said.

Ms Spence said she had not yet considered the issue but would be meeting with the new Minister for Housing and members of the Department of Housing next month.

"I'll make sure home ownership gets on the agenda, obviously it's a problem with tenure and we'll have to resolve some of those difficulties," she said.

"I give you that commitment that that's something we'll talk about."

Ms Spence also committed to taking a range of other issues back to her own office for further consideration including plans for the hand over of community police to the state police system and whether or not the community

justice system on communities should be replaced with a magistrate system.

She also promised to take some of the issues raised to other departments including the proposition that the Education Department should consider paying levies to Councils for staff accommodation on DOGIT communities and the issue of payroll tax and workers compensation to the Treasurer.

She said it was acknowledged by both federal and state governments that better coordination between departments was necessary and there was a need for better communication within departments.

Ms Spence also said the sooner Aboriginal people could be represented in Parliament the better.

"In the meantime I can only try to understand how you must feel about having one Minister after another representing you," she said.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy & Development Minister Judy Spence hands over the first instalment of \$50,000 to the ACC Chair Wayne Connolly at the Full Council Meeting

Focus on Housing...

DOGIT tenants rights go with responsibility - Residential Tenancies Authority

Tenants on DOGIT communities should soon have all the information they need about their rights and responsibilities at their fingertips. The primary purpose of a project managed by the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) is to provide information to communities about the *Residential Tenancies Act 1994*.

The project will also be an opportunity for the RTA to learn more about the needs of indigenous people and it is anticipated that the improvement of RTA services and resources will be an outcome of the project.

The RTA's project will happen in line with the ACC's Housing Management Strategy.

The ACC Housing/Infrastructure Unit Program shows a number of areas where the ACC and the RTA can work together.

Project Officer Julie McCabe commenced in October 1998.

Originally from Cloncurry, Julie has worked on DOGIT communities in the past and brings a variety of skills and interests to the RTA.

She will be travelling with Rod-

can meet people and begin the process of consultation.

The ACC's Housing Facilitators will be key contacts for Julie and the RTA hopes they will provide support and direction for our project.

In turn the RTA will assist the Housing Facilitators in whatever way possible.

The RTA recognises that there are some key issues, such as rent payment and maintenance for DOGIT communities which need to be addressed sensitively and appropriately.

Julie will be spending the first couple of months consulting with communities to develop the best strategy for informing tenants about their rights and responsibilities. Only after this

period will she commence implementing information strategies for tenants with each community.

The project will run for two years until October 2000.

It is anticipated the RTA program will have the following outcomes:

- **awareness among tenants of DOGIT community councils that the Act applies to their tenancy agreements with council;**
- **understanding of the role and services of the RTA;**
- **understanding of tenants' rights and responsibilities under the Act;**
- **understanding among community Council Chairs, Councillors and relevant council staff of the amendments to the Act;**
- **advice to the RTA about adapting services and resources to the needs of indigenous clients.**

ney Goodbun to the ACC's Housing Management Workshop in Weipa in November and then on to all the workshops that follow (Normanton, Cooktown, Bamaga, Cairns) so she

Yarrabah Community Council

ACC Delegates: Vincent Schrieber and Lloyd Fourmile at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Yarrabah Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Yarrabah, Q 4871

Ph (07) 4056 9120
Fax (07) 4056 9167

Home ownership on the agenda

The issue of home ownership was an important one for ACC delegates at the Full Council Meeting.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Program (ATSIHP) General Manager Alex Ackfun addressed delegates about his Program and was questioned on the issue, as was Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy & Development Judy Spence.

"We'll be trying to resolve that particular issue at a series of workshops in the near future."

He said Ms Spence had already raised the issue at meetings with the Advisory Committee for Housing and Infrastructure.

"She has met and spoken with us already, and our Minister has also spoken on the issue," he said.

The Department of Housing through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Program (ATSIHP) provides grant funding for housing to the ACC member councils and the shires of Mornington Island and Arukun.

ATSIHP provides design, technical and project management assistance to community councils and is assisting communities in developing the capacity to look after their own tenancy and asset management.

In 1998/99 ACC communities will receive \$18.8 million for replacement of substandard and new housing.

The funds will also be used on projects to address the backlog of repairs and maintenance projects and upgrades of existing housing.

The Department of Housing, through ATSIHP, is keen to see its Capital Works funding to DOGIT communities not only generate employment and training in rural and remote communities but also ensure self-sustaining communities are developed over time.

The Department has identified Indigenous Housing as a priority in its Strategic Directions Statement.

Health and Safety Upgrades of existing community council housing in the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) will continue to be a priority for ATSIHP.

In addition, ATSIHP's Community Housing Management Strategy, which funds the ACC for the employment of a facilitator in the NPA, will continue with five communities (Injinoo, New Mapoon, Umagico, Bamaga and Seisia) benefiting from the development of tenancy and asset management policies and procedures for councils. A Facilitator Program operating at Doomadgee has been extended to the Western Cape communities of Mornington Island and Arukun. Napranum and Old

Mapoon will also be assisted under the same program. Also, as part of the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, the communities of Napranum, Hopevale, Yarrabah, Lockhart and Palm Island will benefit from a capital works program enabling each community to employ an extra two apprentices in capital works programs.

Community councils will be able to better plan their housing after Minister for Public Works and Housing, Robert Schwarten recently approved a Five Year Plan for DOGIT communities.

The Plan will result in 80% of housing needs being met with the most needy communities to be addressed as a priority.

In addition to the extra funds planned, the Community Housing Management Strategy will be extended to enable community skills development to occur.

Information from the ACC's Housing Needs Survey contributed to the Plan being developed.

Community residents can obtain further information on ATSIHP and its services from Bob Allen, Regional Manager, Northern Construction on (07) 4032 3633 and Michael Hutchison, Regional Manager, Southern Construction on (07) 3225 1231.

Wujal Wujal Community Council

ACC Delegates: Marie Creek and Agnes Walker at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Wujal Wujal Council can be contacted:

**C/- Post Office
Wujal Wujal, Q 4871**

**Ph (07) 4060 8155
Fax (07) 4060 8250**

Focus on Training...

TAFE offers flexible program for Community Management

The Far North Queensland Institute of TAFE's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Management program is open to all indigenous communities and organisations throughout north Queensland.

ACC members were addressed by the course's Program Manager Graeme Hooper during the Full Council Meeting.

He said most students were employed by Community Councils but there were also students working in state schools and other government and non-government organisations.

"The aim of the program is to provide indigenous people with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in administrative, clerical and managerial areas," he said.

"In January 1999 the Community Management course will be designed to meet with the National Administrative and Clerical Competencies as well as Local Government recommendations.

"This is a nationally accredited course which will allow Community Management students to take

their qualifications anywhere in Australia."

He said training would focus on the seven main areas of these national competencies.

They were:

- Information Handling and Communication;
- Technology (computing);
- Organisation and Teams;
- Business and Financial;
- Indigenous Cultures;
- Local Government; and,
- Enterprise.

"Students will be assessed on their existing skills and specific training programs will be organised according to their level of skills in these areas," he said.

"Our course offers flexible methods of delivering this training.

"Training may take place in the student's workplace with learning tasks being taken from the actual office environment in which the trainee works.

"Residential block training will be offered in Cairns or at remote communities depending on the availability of training resources such as computer rooms.

"Community Management also offers individual or group training according to the needs of the community or organisation.

"This flexibility allows students to attend training sessions with as little interference to their workplace demands as possible."

He said the Community Management Program provided training relevant to today's office needs.

"The training is based on realistic duties and responsibilities of workplace procedures and assessment tasks are both appropriate and relevant to the students and employers needs," he said.

For further information on the course commencing in 1999 please contact:

Graeme Hooper
Program Manager
Community Management
Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE, Cairns
Ph (07) 4042 2470
or
Bill Gordon
Student Services Officer
Ph (07) 4042 2658
Fax (07) 4042 2418

Task force to put the brakes on unemployment

The Queensland State government has introduced a range of employment initiatives to boost employment for Queenslanders says Employment Task Force Director Graham Smith.

Graham said part of the new initiatives, under a scheme called Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, were to increase the numbers of traineeships and apprenticeships delivered through the public sector.

"In total they want 2000 traineeships each year for the next three years, totalling 6000, and an additional 500 apprenticeships they hope will be put on in the first half of next year," he said.

"They will be for public sector agencies like QRail, electricity generating boards and similar agencies as well as local government.

"So I attended the ACC Meeting because I want

to make sure that Aboriginal people get their fair share of these numbers.

"And I want to make sure that Aboriginal councils are in on the ground floor and are not forgotten in this process.

"I would be confident that councils could take on 5-10 trainees because we need to ensure people are placed in a good training environment.

"We've got an obligation to the people going through this program that they're going to get proper training."

He said he would like to secure the positions as soon as possible.

For further information contact either the ACC or Graham directly on (07) 3406 2091.

& Employment...

Bama success on job network front lines

Bama Ngappi Ngappi Executive Officer Ian Kuch addressed the Full Council Meeting about a contract the organisation has secured as a provider for the new Job Network System which replaces the CES.

He explained why the organisation felt it was important for them to be involved.

"Bama Ngappi Ngappi has always been very proactive in addressing the training needs of our community particularly with young people," he said.

"I guess when you look in the old large reserves in Queensland there's a history of neglect.

"People realised they needed to acquire new skills particularly in order to manage their communities because self-management has only been around for a few years in Queensland, and in Yarrabah's case since 1986.

"So Bama Ngappi Ngappi had to become very proactive in putting training opportunities there for young people whether it be courses, apprenticeships, traineeships or a whole variety of different programs."

He said the programs were an investment in the future.

"The reason we got involved in the Job Network was that we saw the treatment government departments gave to Aboriginal people was not necessarily of the best quality.

"A lot of people felt marginalised through contact with a largely non-Aboriginal bureaucracy and there wasn't a great level of trust there from Aboriginal people or indeed the other side.

"Because north Queensland has some of the largest exclusively Aboriginal communities as well as being one of the most densely populated Aboriginal centres in the

EmployNET Staff outside their Offices at 53 Sheridan St, Cairns. Ph (07) 4031 9494 or 1800 000 016.

country it was necessary that there be an Aboriginal player within this new job network.

"We serve a large area from Weipa across to Lockhart on Cape York, south to Cardwell and west to the Territory border and up to the Gulf.

"So it includes most of the DOGIT communities in Queensland except for Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Palm Island.

"We had to be there and I guess that if anything needs to be changed then at least there is a voice from the inside.

"I believe we've already achieved positive changes there that address the needs of indigenous clients.

"We've had success putting Aboriginal people into mainstream employment and as far as I know we're the only Aboriginal community organisation that got one of these contracts in Queensland.

"And a lot of our work is indigenous people placing non-indigenous people into employment which is a good little bit of irony.

"Really I know we're going to try hard to get you a job because we don't get paid unless we do."

Woorabinda Community Council

ACC Delegates: Archie Sullivan,
Alan White and Garry Doyle at the
1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Woorabinda Council can be
contacted:

C/- Post Office
Woorabinda, Q 4702

Ph (07) 4935 0160
Fax (07) 4935 0187

Direct debit option on the Centrelink cards

Centrelink Indigenous Service Unit Manager Kathy Lakatos told the ACC Full Council Meeting that a Direct Deduction Facility (DDF) is now on trial for customers who wish to have voluntary payments taken from their Social Security payments.

She said the facility would assist with the payment of ongoing expenses such as:

- rent, rent arrears and other housing related costs;
- charges for household utility services;
- court fines and reparation orders;
- regular agencies or services accessed by individual customers;
- contributions to-

wards future services such as funeral plans.

"The benefits to a customer would be to assist with their overall budgeting, provide them with peace of mind with their financial position and allow them to avoid charges for other methods of payments," she

said.

"The initial implementation of the facility is on a trial basis only in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

"But once it is seen to be working properly will be rolled out nationally in 1999."

She said Centrelink was already operating a Rent Deduction Scheme which would be amalgamated with DDF during 1999.

She also said organisations would be required to sign a contract access DDF payments.

"The organisations will then be charged a transaction fee to use the service."

She said when more information on DDF was received the information would be forwarded to the Community

Councils and Housing Organisations.

Further inquiries should go to any Indigenous Services Officer at the nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

Centrelink Mission

Building a stronger community through:

- ⇒ providing opportunities for individuals through transitional periods in their lives;
- ⇒ delivering innovative, cost effective and personalised services for individuals, their families and community groups;
- ⇒ being an organisation committed to quality;
- ⇒ making the best use of available dollars;
- ⇒ listening to the community's ideas for giving better service; and,
- ⇒ building a quality relationship between customers and Centrelink.

Pormpuraaw Community Council

The Pormpuraaw Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Pormpuraaw, Q 4871

Ph (07) 4060 4175
Fax (07) 4060 4130

Kowanyama Community Council

The Kowanyama Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Kowanyama, Q 4871

Ph (07)4060 5155
Fax (07) 4060 5124

Weipa Napranum Community Council

ACC Delegates: Ron Ngallametta and Jeff Bosun at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Weipa Napranum Council can be contacted at :

C/- Post Office
Napranum, Q 4874

Ph (07) 4069 7855
Fax (07) 4069 7445

Focus on Native Title...

LGAQ aims to hold Native Title workshops

Funding for Native Title workshops may soon be available for Community Councils from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department says the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).

Speaking at the ACC Full Council Meeting new Project Officer Marisa Menin said the LGAQ has been working on securing the funding to assist Councils with native title negotiations.

She said it may be possible for Community Councils to receive funding to assist with native title matters.

"The LGAQ has also asked the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department for funding to hold native title workshops in six regional locations throughout Queensland," she said.

"Due to the unique native title issues Community Councils are facing the LGAQ in association with the ACC will be seeking funding for a special Community

New Project Officer Marisa Menin

Council workshop on native title. "And if funding comes through this workshop will be open to all Community Councils."

The LGAQ recently employed Marisa as part of its Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy Project.

She said she was responsible for working with LGAQ member Councils on numerous Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues such as native title, reconciliation, employment and training, and participation.

Marisa said the LGAQ in association with the ACC had recently completed a Joint Needs Analysis within Aboriginal Shire Councils,

Community Councils and councils with large indigenous populations.

"This report outlines some of the major concerns these Councils are facing in being serviced by the LGAQ and other State and Commonwealth departments or agencies," she said.

She said she hoped to work closely with the

ACC addressing issues raised in the report.

She also said the LGAQ has extended its support to the ACC in changing the *Community Services Act (Aborigines) Act 1984*.

"They said they were keen to assist with the review in any way possible," Marisa said.

The LGAQ also houses the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Unit managed at state level by Jim Ralph.

Their role is to improve the number of Murri & Islander people employed in the Councils and to offer advice and assistance with training and cultural awareness.

Umagico Community Council

ACC Delegates: Phillip Wallis, Peter Lui and Charles Wousup at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Umagico Council can be contacted at :

**C/- Post Office
Umagico, Q 4876**

**Ph (07) 4069 3266
Fax (07) 4069 3115**

Focus on Native Title...

Native Title will affect DOGIT land - ACC solicitor

The Federal Native Title Act will have two quite different impacts on tenures issued under either the Aboriginal Land Holdings Act or the Lands Act on DOGIT land says ACC Solicitor Paul Waltham.

"In my opinion there will be a great difference in how the new native title act will impact on those types of leases," he said.

"I believe it's fairly clear that the issue of Deeds in Grant in Trust does not extinguish native title and the only thing that will extinguish native title over DOGIT land is the issue of a special lease under the Land Act.

"I say this because under the native title regime I believe the grant of DOGIT would have been a Category A Past Act which extinguishes native title, but there is a proviso in Section 229 which says that if the grant has been made under a piece of legislation designed solely for the benefit of Aboriginal people then it won't be considered a Category A Past Act.

"So the issuing of the DOGIT is still a valid act but it is in a category called a Category B Past Act under which means that Native Title isn't extinguished but if there are any inconsistencies between the rights of the land holder and the traditional owners, the rights of the land holder will prevail.

"Exactly what that means, I don't

think anyone will know for some considerable time so the only way to get some sort of certainty into it is on a case by case, DOGIT by DOGIT basis.

"It seems to me that that's the only way that the rights of the respective parties are going to be respected and not imposed upon the people by a court.

"That is why it is important to have Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) in place so it's not going to impact on the native title of the traditional owners but will also provide some form of security for the people who hold the lease if they are not the traditional owners.

"That's the only other solution because the Act simply doesn't go far enough to say how that's going to operate."

He said there were many questions which had not been answered by the new Native Title Act.

"The government has really left it up to the councils and the interested parties themselves to resolve these sorts of issues," he said.

"So the new Act, rather than creating any more certainty for people who are living on DOGIT communities, has thrown out a challenge to everyone concerned to come up with a solution that will balance the rights of traditional owners against

the interests of other members of the community who have a need for some sort of security over their houses and other interests.

"Now this isn't going to be an easy procedure for councils, traditional owners or historical owners, it's going to take quite a fair bit of work and good will on the part of everybody.

"Otherwise it is difficult to find a sense of place in the community unless they can be given some form of security over their land.

"The ILUAs under the Native Title Act can be quite useful because they can act in a way that councils can reach agreements on what's going to happen with parts of the DOGIT without extinguishing native title.

"It's a major concern for traditional owners that any decisions they make might have an affect on people in the future, if they sign away their native title rights now, what is that going to mean for the future.

"But under ILUAs you can have agreement between the parties which will act as a contract agreement as to how it's going to operate without affecting the native title rights of the parties."

He said it would take a lot of work and would not be easy.

"There is a great role there for councils to help to sort out these problems that have been foisted upon us by the actions of governments and the churches over the last hundred years by placing people on land which hasn't been appropriate," he said.

Palm Island Community Council

ACC Delegates: Josephine Geia,
Frank Hughes, Steven Stumbo
Walsh at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Palm Island Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Palm Island, Q 4816

Ph (07) 4770 1177
Fax (07) 4770 1241

Queensland Native Title shaping up

The Queensland Government has tabled its second Bill of native title legislation and says it is leading the country with its legislation and consultation process.

But Queensland Indigenous Working Group (QIWG) representative Tony Johnson says the state of play is not looking good.

Speaking at the ACCs Full Council Meeting Mr Johnson said the latest government proposals appeared to have wavered in their commitments to a "good deal"

for indigenous people.

"But we're hopeful that with the help of community, union, other groups and political forces that we can get the best deal possible," he said.

"We've just enlisted some considerable support from the Queensland branch

of the ACTU who are about to embark on a campaign directed at the QMC for their repeated lies and mistruths they have put forward about the right to negotiate proposals.

"They're saying that the right to negotiate in effect a veto - that is not the case, there has never been a veto by Indigenous people on a mining project in Queensland."

He said the Queensland Government had also been forced to amend its legislative timetable.

"The Queensland Government had intended in-

roducing a Tribunal and a cultural heritage provision into this raft of legislation," Mr Johnson said.

"We're now told that this won't be possible and that in fact there will be a third part of the legislation to be introduced some time in November or early December.

"We think that this situation reflects what we said to the Premier at the outset of the process, that his timetable was too ambitious, it wasn't realistic and

that the job needed to be done properly, not just by a time line.

"Time will tell what the quality of those provisions are but QIWG certainly put forward to the Government a very principled, logical and reasonable set of propositions and we

The Premier's Department now has a new Native Title Services Office (NTS) located at: Qld Minerals & Energy Centre, Level 1, 61 Mary St, Brisbane. Their phone number is (07) 3222 2978 and their fax number is (07) 3227 8004. They also have a web page at: <http://www.qld.gov.au>

The NTS has a range of functions including: Historical & Anthropological; Negotiation; Legal; Tenure Analysis & Claims Processing; Communications; and, Administration.

Their goals include:

- Participating through the Premier's Taskforce in consultation with stake holders regarding the Queensland Alternative State Provisions;
- Providing seminars for dissemination of historical and anthropological information;
- Provide procedures for dealing with Native Title in all Departments that comply with the amended Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and ensure they work as intended;
- Developing and implementing Alternative State Provisions under the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth);
- Negotiated determination of Native Title claims; and,
- Successful right to negotiate processes.

implore on them to give us a fair go."

Speaking at a briefing on the new legislation in Townsville recently Queensland Premier Peter Beattie said the Bill had come about after three months of detailed discussion with stake holders. "We are the only state in Australia that got the three stake holders together, that is the indigenous leaders, mining companies and pastoralists, to sit down and discuss it," he said.

"Now of course not everyone agrees with every part of it, I know that, but in a difficult issue like this I don't think we were ever going to get that."

He said the emphasis of the bill was on making every effort to reach agreement outside of the court processes.

"If negotiation doesn't work there's going to be a Queensland Tribunal established," he said.

He said the Tribunal would be an impartial process and on the basis that all parties needed to respect its decisions.

He also said further native title briefings would be held around the state over the coming month.

New Mapoon Community Council

ACC Delegates: Colin Bond and Edna Mark at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The New Mapoon Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
New Mapoon, Q 4876

Ph (07) 4069 3277
Fax (07) 4069 3107

Need for community approach to suicide

The ACCs Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention Project is on track as Councillors had the opportunity to meet and discuss the issues in the lead up to the Full Council Meeting and at a three-day forum held at Yarrabah recently.

ACC Chair Cr Connolly said the Government would be asked to extend the project which is due to run out at the end of this year.

"Given the importance we attach to this project, we would like to see it becoming a permanent feature of our Community Council structures," he said.

He said all the communities faced enormous problems in the area which needed to be faced and dealt with.

"If we can address this problem our communities would be much happier places to live in," he said.

"There is nothing more painful to a community, to a family, than the sudden unexpected but often avoidable death of a young person.

"This project should give our people hope - hope in the future and hope for our communities."

Suicide Prevention Strategy Coordinator Alfred Lacey said the ACC's task was to ensure that all needs including social needs were developed on communities.

"As Coordinator I'm hoping to assist communities in negotiating and putting in the proper strategies to overcome the issue," he said.

"In a lot of our communities it's a hard issue to talk about and sometimes it's very difficult to come to terms with.

"I think one of the important things is the ACC has set up a steering committee to guide this project and gives the project good direction on how to set up strategies on communities."

He said while the issue was "touchy" it was good to see some communities reviving and/or developing programs to tackle the problem head on.

"I think what this project has to do is to revitalise a lot of those programs and support systems in the community so there's people there like Life Promotion Officers who have the skills to assist people on the counselling side of things," he said.

"I think when we look at the infrastructure side of things we're basically disadvantaged in the sense of recreational or youth centres in our communities.

"In some centres there's not even sporting facilities

which are important to community development especially in regard to helping our young people move into the sports arena.

"One of the things I'm finding is that someone needs to concentrate and put a lot of energy into ensuring that the communities have those types of facilities because if we look at it at the end of the day a lot of it stems from boredom.

"Most of us would be aware that unemployment is a big problem in our community and a lot of community people are talking about economic development.

"Secure employment instead of CDEP lifts up self esteem and creates a sense of hope.

"So it's about meeting those requirements and assisting in developing strategies for how the community wants to deal with that sense of hopelessness.

"And it's not only young people, there's a range of age groups in the community that get depressed at times.

"It's important to realise that the depression stems from of a sense of hopelessness."

He said the Palm Island Vision Plan may prove to be a model other communities could work from.

"Hopevale has also looked into that area and Yarrabah has also improved, picked up and maintained quite a few things," he said.

"I'm not saying it will put a stop to it, what I'm saying is that it will certainly put a lid on it or bring the risk rate right down.

"The risk as we know is always there."

"So I think this position and the ACCs position is to highlight or enhance proper strategies and assist communities.

"It's just a matter of getting people to coordinate

and work together to ensure there's good community strategies in place," he said.

"And young people need to take an active role because the future depends on them to ensure that our communities will be better places.

"It's important that we care and we share about our young people and we care and share about our community to make sure it's a better place to live in.

"So if you want to talk more on what I'm particularly doing I'll be quite happy to talk to you."

Suicide Prevention Strategy Coordinator Alfred Lacey

The main objectives of the Project are:

- to assist communities to promote positive life choices and strategies among Indigenous young people;
- to assist communities to identify the impact of factors that lead to young people undertaking self-training behaviour; and,
- to increase the capacity of Indigenous communities and their families to respond to self-training behaviour.

Focus on Finance...

Financial year of awards and commendations for ACC

The administration and accounting team of the ACC has achieved recognition for its outstanding Annual Report presentation and audit reports over the past two years.

For 1996-7 and 1997-8 respectively the ACCs Annual Report has been presented with the President's Award and Certificate of Commendation at the Queensland Public Sector Annual Report competition.

In both cases the award was presented by then-Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Joan Sheldon.

This year was also the second year in a row an unqualified audit report has been passed by the Auditor General's office for the ACC.

ACC accountant Gerry Massey said they were "very pleased" with this year's results.

"We've got a good accounting team and we all work together," he said.

In a letter received by ACC Chair

Part of the team: ACC Accountant Gerry Massey (seated) and Administration Officer Chris Marshall

Wayne Connolly in September this year, the Queensland Audit Office said: "The auditor has not raised any matters for reporting to Council and the Council is commended for maintaining a high standard of financial management."

Gerry said it was the second year in a row that Price Waterhouse had carried out the audit which he said "went very well".

"They said the audit was easy and there were no problems," he said.

"Nothing came up for comment and they passed that on to the Auditor General who subsequently commended us for our financial management.

"It's also the second year running we've had that sort of report so that shows it wasn't a fluke and we appreciated the comment."

Gerry said the ACC had already changed their accounting system from cash management to an accrual system, as recommended by the Auditor General's office.

"It's more complicated because you've got to put costs in the right period which is when the costs were incurred as opposed to when the cash has actually been paid out, so it's slightly different," he said.

ACC Executive Director Peter Opio-Otim said a number of Community Councils had already volunteered to try the accrual system with the aim of having all communities on line by the year 2000.

Lockhart River Community Council

ACC Delegates: Johnson Chippendale, Gary Butcher and Rodney Accoom at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Lockhart River Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Lockhart River, Q 4871

Ph (07) 4060 7144
Fax (07) 4060 7139

DOGIT Council audits improve over 2 years

Aboriginal councils have seen a marked improvement in their financial performances over the last two years although there is still room for more says State Auditor General Len Scanlan.

Mr Scanlan addressed the ACC Full Council Meeting with a positive report about the financial performances about most of the councils and said he was confident that improvement would continue.

"I do expect and am reasonably quietly confident that that improvement will continue," he said.

"There has been significant improvement overall but there is still scope for improvement in a number of the councils and I certainly wouldn't want to give an impression that all problems have been resolved.

"But credit ought to be due where it lies: with the councils, that they have made marked strides forward in terms of their overall accountability arrangements."

He said the number of unqualified audits had improved from three to eight out of the 14 councils, which was the best result since 1992.

"Unqualified means that auditors are able to sign off a financial statement and give a total opinion of the accounts that says that everything is essentially in order and

with the councils themselves in the first instance."

He said he was pleased to see councils moving in the direction of improved accountability.

"It seems to me that the councils are moving towards an improved accountability framework and regime for instance with accrual accounting which really amounts to mainstream accounting practices," he said.

"And I think the gradual progression from cash to modified cash has been

the case but the next step to accrual accounting will represent an enormous leap forward in terms of making councils as accountable as any other public sector entity in this state.

"To this point Aboriginal councils are not yet subject to full accrual accounting but in terms of the normal expectations as far as approvals by council and having good internal controls in place you could say that the requirements are comparable to other mainstream organisations."

ACC Chair Wayne Connolly said he was pleased at the willingness of State Auditor General Len Scanlan to address the ACC delegates.

During his presentation to the Full Council Meeting Mr Scanlan outlined a series of steps he recommended should take priority. "I see these as being vital foundations in terms of future improved accountability," he said.

They were:

- ⇒ **the need for regular monitoring by Councils of expenditure and internally generated revenue against budget;**
- ⇒ **adequate documentation to support expenditure;**
- ⇒ **proper control of receiving and banking functions, including the prompt finalisation of bank reconciliations at the end of each month;**
- ⇒ **proper management and regular reporting of Council enterprise activities; and,**
- ⇒ **the formulation of realistic business plans by Councils.**

He also said it was a positive step to see many Councils producing Annual Reports as well as maintaining financial procedures manuals.

there are certainly no matters of major concern in relation to those accounts," he said.

"There would be a range of reasons that would apply to the other councils but essentially it gets back to poor accounting control, lack of adequate documentation to support payments and essentially a lack of accountability in relation to the activity of those councils.

"So I would still say that there is still scope for improvement but my office will do its best to continue to assist councils although essentially the responsibility rests

Injinoo Community Council

ACC Delegate: George Ropeyarn at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Injinoo Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Injinoo, Q 4876

Ph (07) 4069 3252
Fax (07) 4069 3253

More Council Contacts...

Hope Vale Community Council

ACC Delegates: Lloyd Bombie & Tim McGreen at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Hope Vale Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Hope Vale, Q 4871

Ph (07) 4060 9133
Fax (07) 4060 9131

Doomadgee Community Council

ACC Delegate: Clarence Walden at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Doomadgee Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Doomadgee, Q 4830

Ph (07) 4745 8188
Fax (07) 4745 8185

Cherbourg Community Council

ACC Delegates: Ken Bone, Gordon Wragge, Percy Stewart & Warren Collins at the 1998 Full Council Meeting.

The Cherbourg Council can be contacted:

C/- Post Office
Cherbourg, Q 4065

Ph (07) 4168 1866
Fax (07) 4168 1727

Old Mapoon on track to Full Council status

The ACC will do everything it can to support Old Mapoon in its bid for full council status says Executive Director Peter Opio-Otim.

Speaking at the recent Annual General Meeting on the community, Mr Opio-Otim said the ACC would also assist with training for newly elected Board members.

They are: Merv Wales, Gina Blanco, Michael Murphy, William Busch, Ray Walters, Doug Williams and Malcolm Koitop.

Mr Opio-Otim congratulated the new Board and thanked the old Board for their contribution.

He said he was pleased at the level of community participation in the election and reminded them that with the exercise of their democratic rights there was also duty and responsibility.

“Responsibility on the part of the board members to act in the best interest of the community and on the part of the community to support their board members,” he said.

He said thanks should also go to ATSIC and the Queensland Department of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, who sent delegates to attend the Annual General Meeting, and to Comalco for assisting with transport on the day.

Display success prompts open invitation

A pottery and produce display by the Yarrabah Aboriginal Council was an outstanding success at this year’s Full Council Meeting.

The display created a great deal of interest and prompted ACC Executive members to issue an open invitation to all councils for next year’s meeting.

“We would like to invite all the councils to come with their displays next year,” ACC Executive Director Peter Opio-Otim said.

Roy Gray with the Yarrabah Display - everything from pottery and t-shirts to artifacts and their own-brand of Yarrabah bottled Tea Tree Oil

Where would we be without.....?

This hard working pair will eventually get through the 5-700 pages of minutes and transcripts from this year’s Full Council Meeting. Always there when we need them are Paula Cochrane & Annie Wren...

If you have any stories, contributions, letters, photographs or achievements other Community Councils should know about please let us know so we can feature them in our next newsletter. Call the ACC soon to find out when the next deadline will be.

And what would an End of Year Party be without the extraordinary talents of ‘Cadbury’ (no one seems to know his name but we all remember his guitar skills!). His performance of ‘Ballroom Blitz’ was a knockout!