

# Yabber

News July 2015

## What is 'Yabber'?

On Saturday 30 July, 1910 it was reported in 'The Queenslander' that an Aboriginal Parliament had been formed in Yarrabah - named 'Yabber'. Described as a 'forward step' the aim of Yabber was to build a Yarrabah nation of self-respecting people. Members of Yabber were elected and meetings were held "with dignity". "A far finer feeling of the responsibility of every member of the body in the common good of Yarrabah is being surely brought out."

## Yarrabah Summit looks to change



### THE CONCEPT:

The Coalition concept came initially from two key areas:

1. Negotiation Table framework – but switching it from government driven to community driven.
2. Frameworks used by Canadian First Nations People.

It became clear with further research that Yarrabah has a history of developing various community governance frameworks and the Coalition is just an updated version of what has already existed at various times in Yarrabah.

### AIMS OF THE SUMMIT:

- Developing ways for Yarrabah organisations to work together;
- Develop common goals that all organisations worked towards;
- Develop a process to drive our issues with government; and,
- Developing ways to support Yarrabah organisations in becoming all governments' preferred provider for services.

The Summit was held in June 2015 and attended by more than 100 community representatives.

***How do we think strategically about protecting the community and making sure the community is making decisions about community, directly and indirectly?***

Approximately five years ago a small group came together outside of work hours over a BBQ to talk about our community.

We were specifically concerned about what will it be like living in Yarrabah when we are older, what opportunities can be developed to give our children choices and what needs to change.

We also talked about the hard work that local service providers are doing and yet it often seems like we are not making much of a difference – the Government keeps reducing the funds, making it harder, and then they fund more external organisations to deliver services in our community.

Indigenous people in different parts of Australia and all over the world have similar struggles so we



looked at what they were doing eg Canadian First Nations people.

It was clear that there are some really good ideas out there but not all of them may suit our needs in Yarrabah.

In June this year we were finally ready to move

forward with this idea of seeking agreement from all the local organisations to work together and stand united with one voice.

The dream is to work hand in hand with every person in Yarrabah to make our community the best place in Australia.

The Coalition is asking for local service providers to commit in writing to a set of principles that guide how we work together as stated below:

1. Affirm mutual respect, recognition and support of each of the Parties for one another
2. Formalise a cooperative working relationship of the Parties to politically represent the interests of Yarrabah People and develop the strategies and actions to bring positive change in our Community
3. Each Party is mindful that they each represent a diversity of perspectives on community issues
4. Each Party is committed to working towards the advancement of Yarrabah people's interests at the political level with governments and other appropriate organisations
5. Each Party is able to represent their respective membership in any discussions that directly involve government and industry.

The Summit was the first step taken and outlined to the right are our next steps.

At this moment we are at STEP 2.



## Step 1:

Host a one-day Summit and present information about the Yarrabah Coalition to all the Chairs, Directors and CEO's of the local Yarrabah Organisations. Community members who attended on the day included the Elders Group and others who came to listen.

## Step 2:

Follow up after the Summit with each local Yarrabah organisation to see if they were willing to become a member of the Yarrabah Coalition.

## Step 3:

Host an official launch of the Yarrabah Coalition where all members will sign the Accord committing them to a set of key areas.



King Jabaan said, "We are here today because we want to become better community, unite as one and be as one. "Today is about organising so we can all say we tried, we did it. "We should all be on the same road trip. "Today is about what our old people did, we have the skills and the knowledge, now we're in the middle of the road. "To take control means we have to be prepared to take responsibility. "Some people have, some people haven't. "When there was failure no one wanted to take responsibility. "When we make mistakes we encourage each other and try to improve. "If at the end of this summit we unite, we will become strong, we won't turn back. "Unity gives us strength."

The Elders group at the Summit gave their blessing for this project to go ahead.



## Step 4:

Undertake community consultation in various ways to understand the concerns of the community, learn how to do things better, identify the community issues and aspirations.

## Step 5:

Develop a report that captures all the information collected from our community and invite the Government to sit across the table from the Yarrabah Coalition and negotiate a way forward.

# COMMON GROUND

Community Visions identified at the Summit included:

- we want to deal directly with the Federal government in terms of what is rightly ours
- we need to work with the Council to develop a town plan
- organisations need to have their own identified roles and responsibilities
- we're talking fair dinkum
- outstation for people caught up in justice system
- more housing, jobs
- bring back CDEP - lots of projects owned by community, esp rangers - signs they made still there
- beautify community
- public transport
- homestead for elders to sit down and teach
- better facilities for elders and disabled - shouldn't be sending them away
- mental health hub facility for families struggling with mental health
- homework, healing, cultural centres
- dental services at school
- more farmlands
- functioning and viable community with economic development at the forefront
- healthy, happy, safe and sustainable
- modernised community (but no high-rise)
- need to be adaptable and flexible with changes
- freedom of choice
- to be proud Aboriginal people without any government legislation imposition
- RDA needs to be put into practice
- recognition for sacred sites
- more single/self-contained apartments or units for young people
- get message out re DV
- continue support and unify
- unified community
- young people in leadership positions
- pride in identity
- basic human rights - to be acknowledged as real people
- animal control
- tourism
- unity

## The Summit Statement:

# Yarrabah Summit looks to change

A dozen or more frontline service delivery and community organisations, including Native Title Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs) and a representative of the Council, met in Yarrabah today to decide on their own terms how to progress their town and their people into the future.

Key concepts such as pride and unity underpinned a collective desire to find ways of working together to make their community the best it could be. Every organisation's Chair, Board of Directors and CEOs (council) were invited to the summit to discuss how they could work together in the future to ensure they were the drivers of decisions made concerning their community.

Aims of the summit included:

- Developing ways for Yarrabah organisations to work together;
- Develop common goals that all organisations worked towards;
- Develop a process to drive our issues with



government; and,

- Developing ways to support Yarrabah organisations in becoming all governments' preferred provider for services.

It was unanimously agreed it was important for locally run organisations to work within a framework of reciprocal accountability between themselves and all levels of government.

Where funding dollars came from and went to was high on the

list of discussion over the day.

Also strong was an acknowledgement of the history of the community, how they got to where they are today and the need for action so the fights of those present and their grandparents were not the same fights their children would have to take on. In the long term, it was agreed, the community needed to act now to take their own affairs into their own hands, and that change was needed.



## Do we need help...? ...YES!

At this time all the work to date has being completed by volunteers and donations from our local organisations. We operate on the saying of: "We may not have everything, - but everything we got, we got it together"

Are you interested in helping in the community consultation?

You will note many of us come from different areas such as Land, Culture, Health, Sport, Faith, Arts, Economic Development etc but we are trying to

put aside our differences of opinions and/or our priorities to focus on the one Vision. In fact it is our differences that make us strong.

**Contacts** (please note some of the people listed below will not hold membership on the Coalition, they are volunteers in the working group only): **Elverina Johnson, Ailsa Lively, Ruth Fagan, Sue Andrews, Vincent Mundraby, Cleveland Fagan, Ross Andrews, Gillian Bann, Larissa Kynuna, Vincent Schrieber**