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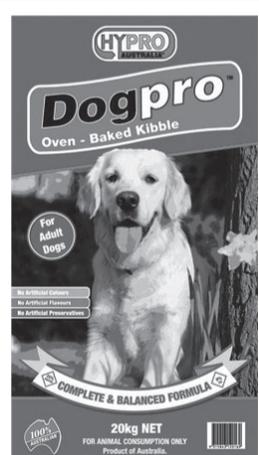
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connecting_the_cape

Bringing you what's new (and news) from Cape York Aboriginal communities
— compiled & edited by Christine Howes

This week Aurukun Mayor Neville Pootchemunka tells us what's going on down his way...



My Councillors and I are always working hard in Aurukun but as always there are issues we have to deal with, both positive and negative, and the same as any other shire.

At the moment the Council is interested in looking into the Aboriginal Land Act under which we exist and the Shire of Aurukun is expected to enforce and abide by.

Since 1978 Aurukun and Mornington Island have been shires under these Acts, which talk about how people can access the Shire.

The police can act on behalf of the Council, but the Acts themselves have

never been properly recognised by other parties who travel into our Shire without any consultation or approval from the Council.

This is an important message I want to deliver.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was the Alcohol Management Plan which was imposed on our community.

Now it's affecting most of our communities, especially because it's causing people to take the risk of travelling by boat or car to smuggle alcohol into our community.

At the end of the day it's the Council's responsibility to rescue people who get stuck along the way, maybe a hundred or more kilometres away at times, and that's getting very difficult.

So I hope that the other Councils in the area have joined us in passing a resolution to review the AMPs.

There are good people in our community who deserve to have a cold beer at the end of their work.

Here we are trying to achieve things, the Government and Liquor Licensing is expecting us to achieve things, but they keep moving the goal posts.

It's affecting our community, now a lot of people have moved down to Cairns and elsewhere where alcohol outlets remain in the community.

They are leaving families behind to chase after alcohol.

The Government needs to recognise the

rights of people and I think that has to be taken into account.

We're trying our very best for the community of Aurukun, we're trying our very best to make this work, but \$20,000 has gone down the drain.

I guess we tried anyway.

I'm happy to say there are improvements on our community from the Welfare Reform initiatives, especially with the Family Responsibilities Commission in place and how they fit in with some of the government departments, police, education, etc.

But I think there needs to be some more thought put into what sort of resources need to be given to support the FRC.

At this moment we have a few problems with understanding between the FRC, the school and the community so we all need that support to make it work.

*Aurukun Mayor
Neville Pootchemunka*



Cape York to benefit from Federal Government's digital investment

Member for Leichhardt Jim Turnour has welcomed an additional \$60 million for telecommunications in regional, rural and remote Australia by the Rudd Government.

Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, announced the package in response to the Regional Telecommunications Review (RTR), chaired by Dr Bill Glasson AO, which examined the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of the country.

Mr Turnour, who wants to see real improvements in regional communications in Tropical North Queensland, has

closely monitored the progress of the Review and is pleased the Federal Government's initial response has resulted in a significant investment that will directly benefit communities across Cape York.

He said, "Importantly, the funding includes an expansion of computer and internet access for remote Indigenous communities. A further \$3.7 million will be invested in a refocused \$30 million Indigenous Communication Program."

"Improving telecommunications in Indigenous communities and backing it up with relevant training and support, is another step in helping to close the gap in life outcomes between Indigenous

and non-Indigenous Australians."

Mr Turnour also highlighted the greater access to satellite phones the Rudd Government's package would offer remote residents.

"In remote areas, satellite phones can often be the only available form of mobile communications, but the fact is these are expensive," he said.

"The Rudd Government has acknowledged what people living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile phone coverage are facing and have increased subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets to 85 per cent."

The Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme was scheduled to conclude on June 30 with applications closing on April 3. On March 5 the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy announced the enhancement of the Scheme and its extension until June 2013.

Eligible consumers include individuals, small businesses, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, Indigenous corporations, volunteer emergency services and educational institutions. The cap on individual subsidies will remain at \$1000 per handset.

For more information, visit www.dbcde.gov.au/regionaltel or contact the Office of Jim Turnour MP by phoning 1300 301 917.