

This week Kowanyama Mayor Thomas Hudson revisits the issue of alcohol and government decision-making in his community...



One of the things I want to raise this week is a couple of things about Kowanyama being at the end of the road.

Mareeba is doing a great job on grading the road up to a point but at this stage it's still only open to light vehicles with permit only.

We've had to bring in fuel from Normanton, instead of Cairns, and our shelves are running low in the store.

The roads are our lifeline, so we're hoping they'll be fixed up very quickly by our neighbouring shires, and if not we should be able to reach an agreement so we can work on them from here.

On a different note, the worst thing about the road being open from Kowanyama to Normanton, is still not having our canteen.

I don't like to say it, but we're going to lose more lives on this road if people have to drive so far to get alcohol, and if they make the wrong decision at the wrong time to drive, then it's only a matter of time.

No-one wants to lose a family member, none of us want to lose community members, we've already lost five on that road and I hope we don't lose any more.

But in this current climate if the government doesn't change some of their decision-making on this issue that's what will happen.

There is an application for our liquor license, it

was first put up before July last year, when it was knocked back.

There's been a lot of obstacles in terms of some of the conditions the applicant has to meet.

The thing is that some other new things have been brought to our attention that don't happen in the mainstream for people who want to apply for a liquor license.

I think we have to get that out in the open, I think it is discrimination in that mainstream applicants don't have to reach the same standards as community applicants.

We are being treated wrongly.

There is a no carriage limit on Kowanyama, then there was also the announcement that we couldn't have home brew.

So we don't have carriage limits, we don't have home brew and we don't have a canteen.

Other communities have carriage limits if they don't have canteens, we should have a choice of something because they will never stop grog from coming into our community, and I'll say that forever.

They will still take grog in, whether it's by car, boat, walking or whatever, there will still be grog in our community.

Our own community survey across everyone over 18, drinkers and non-drinkers, indicated that people want a liquor outlet in the community.

But it's still not there, and the government still hasn't done anything to replace it or support us.

They've talked about different programs but nothing has happened, they are taking a very long time.

There's a lot of things we've been promised that haven't happened.

This happens all the time, they want us to meet goals in their sense, why don't they start meeting some

community goals too?

I think they are one-sided, they like to get heavy-handed on one-side but without being answerable or accountable for what they do in the community itself.

That's standard fare, even though it should be a two-way street.

We're all aiming for the one thing, and that's to try and improve peoples' lives, which is commonsense.

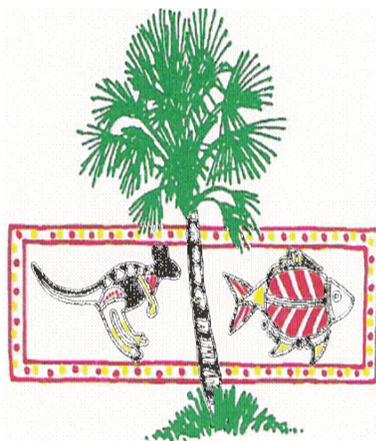
Our communities have been trying to do that from day-one, but the government is not taking any notice of what we're trying to do, they just keep bringing in blanket solutions and trying to run things from Brisbane.

I think they should change their views, look at what's on the ground and what community leaders and other organisations on the community are doing, and try to support them.

I'll say this too, and that is if the government does not turn around and start looking at initiatives the communities come up with, the gap will never close.

They're crying about closing the gaps and crying that we have to be like mainstream, this will never happen, never ever, until they do that.

Every community is doing a lot of good things that government is not recognising.



Government employment services to change

Job seekers will begin receiving letters outlining changes to the Australian Government's employment services.

Centrelink has began sending letters to job seekers informing them that from July 1, the current Job Network will be replaced by the Rudd Government's \$4 billion new employment services, *Job Services Australia: People, Skills, Jobs*.

Job Services Australia folds seven separate programs into a 'one-stop-shop' and provides job seekers with more personalised services.

The new services will provide more access to training under the Government's \$2 billion Productivity Places Program.

The Minister for Employment Participation, Brendan O'Connor, said the letters are part of steps the Government is taking to ensure a smooth transition to the start of *Job Services Australia* on July 1

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