Anindilyakwa Land Council

Media Release

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Empowered communities: Aboriginal-led initiatives deliver remarkable outcomes

Data provided to the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) data unit has revealed offending has halved in the past 12 months since the Northern Territory's first Community Court and Community Justice Group was established on Groote Eylandt.

There were 130 offences recorded in the last 12 months compared to 1,041 in 2019.

Regarding youth offences there has been a significant decline, 28 offences were reported in the past year compared to 267 in 2019.

The ALC first announced the Community Justice Group initiative in November 2024.

Under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, law and justice groups in remote NT communities such as Groote Eylandt help inform judges of culturally appropriate punishments for crimes, through newly re-established community courts.

ALC Chair Cherelle Wurrawilya said the reduction in crime reflects the ALC's work in addressing the issues with a community led approach that is "right for our people."

"This is the way we want to lead and address justice for our community. These numbers are a huge success for Groote Eylandt and the Anindilyakwa people and it is thanks to the Community Justice Group and programs such as their Peacemakers, which has turned the statistics around and helped the community achieve these results," Mrs Wurrawilya said.

"The Anindilyakwa Peacemaker Program is an example of a community-led, culturally responsive program built on nationally recognised training frameworks and accreditation," she said.

Instead of traditional Police managing issues, the Peacemaker Program aims for the communities to try to solve problems between different people and groups within the communities through negotiation.

A 32-bed Healing Centre facility on country was also completed earlier this year in March, a key priority of the Law and Justice LDM Agreement

The Healing Centre is also now available to men aged 17 to 25 who have been referred to the program through community services and the newly established community courts, which came into effect early last year. The community court works in conjunction with the NT Local Court to provide judges with additional sentencing options and culturally appropriate punishments.

"Funding these programs is critical for our community to feel safe and to manage our community conflicts in a practical and positive way," Mrs Wurrawilya said.

"A lot of work has been done through the local decision-making agreement to establish these programs, and the outcomes speak for themselves."

Community Justice Group member Matthew McKenzie said the Healing Centre is something Elders on Groote have been advocating for.

“We know this is the road to better outcomes for our community and reducing the disproportionately high rates of incarceration amongst our Anindilyakwa men,” he said.

“Residents at the facility are being given skills training and cultural education to help them rediscover their pride in belonging to the community.”

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