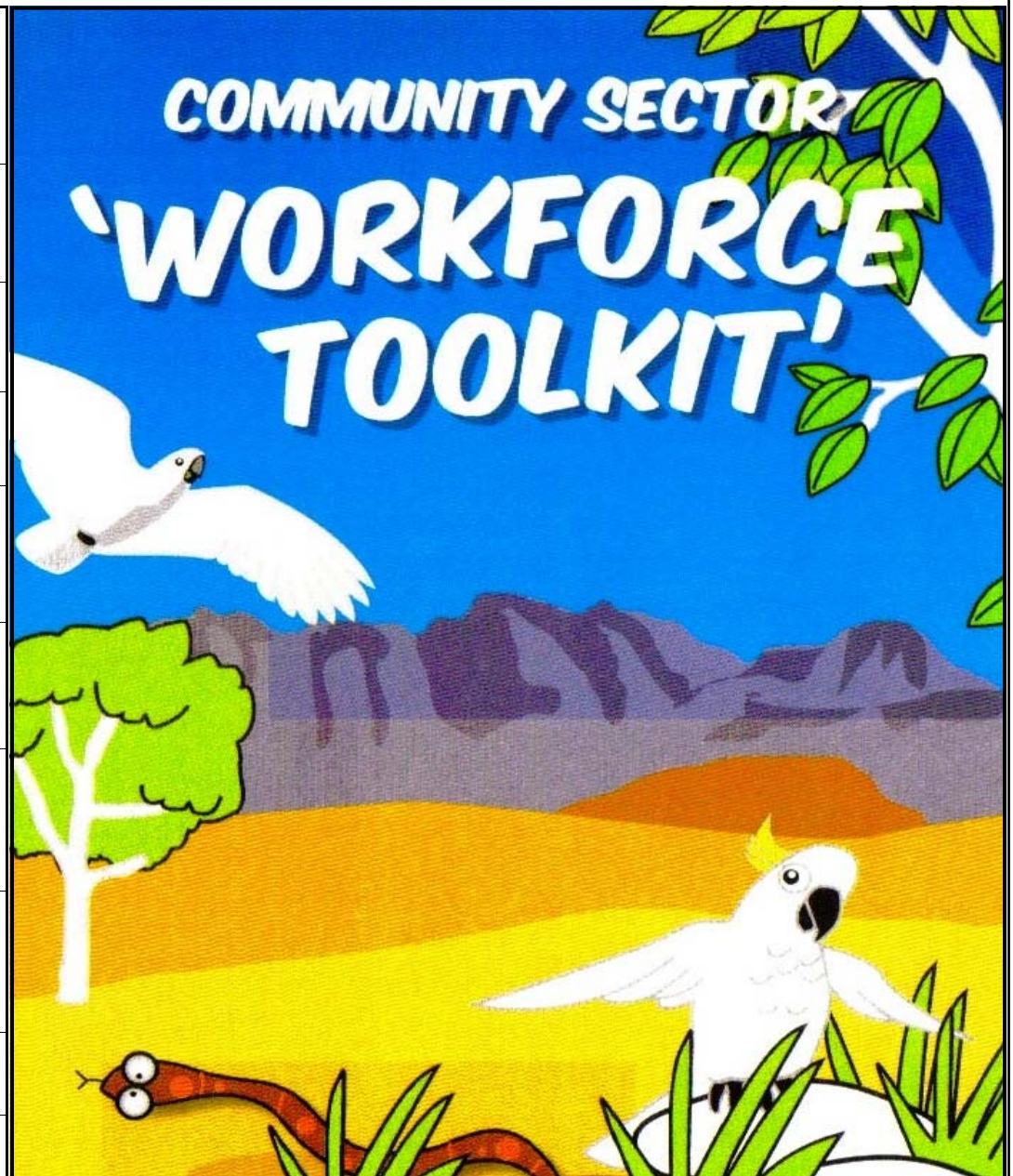




Northern Territory Council of Social Service Inc

Newsletter - March 2009

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The exciting news for Sector development at NTCOSS is the completion of the Workforce Planning & Development Project for the NT Community Sector see page 8 for details



from the director's notepad...

WHY NTCOSS COUNTS



Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2009.

The interests of disadvantaged Territorians are all too easily overlooked. Many Indigenous Australians live in desperate circumstances. People with mental health issues or drug and alcohol problems often struggle, even as the nation prospers. Those who are unemployed, or living with disability often find themselves marginalised.

NTCOSS and its member organisations provide a voice for those affected by disadvantage and inequality. We seek a fair, inclusive and sustainable Northern Territory where everyone can participate fully in the community.

In practical terms, this means talking to our member organisations and others, so that we can fully understand the circumstances of those who are missing out. In consultation with our members, we seek to develop strategies to help overcome disadvantage, and then to represent these positions to government.

We do this through formal submissions to the NT Government, such as our annual pre-budget submission, which offers key recommendations across a range of sectors. We follow up this submission by seeking face-to-face meetings with Ministers to explain and reinforce these recommendations.

We also respond as required to government policy initiatives, and have just completed a submission to the 2030 Strategic Plan Steering Committee. The NTCOSS document calls on the Government to institute a system of 'Social Inclusion Impact Statements' to protect the interests of disadvantaged Territorians.

In 2009, NTCOSS will endeavor to assist community organisations in the difficult task of recruiting and retaining staff members. Pay and conditions in our sector do not compare well with those that are on offer in government or private enterprise.

NTCOSS is continuing to campaign to increase public awareness of this situation and to raise the profile of the community sector. Our message is that a strong community sector makes for a healthy Territory.

Our recently produced 'Community Sector Workforce

Toolkit' offers community organisations a user-friendly guide to advertising vacancies, interviewing applicants, and undertaking workforce planning.

A copy of this kit will soon be provided to all member organisations.

We continue to work with our members to strengthen the sector. Most recently we have been working with the youth sector and the Alcohol and Other Drug sector to push for a fully funded peak for those sectors in the NT. It is a reality that the small population in the NT may make it difficult for the NT to have as many funded peaks as other states. However these are 2 sectors where the need for a funded peak is vital.

So far in 2009, there seems to be a greater awareness from the NT Government on consulting with the community sector. NTCOSS and other community organisations have been included in many recent consultations and briefings including the announcement of the new suburb of Weddell, the impact of the Global Financial Crisis and the roll out of the Federal Government's economic stimulus package. We welcome the opportunity to input into these issues.

We appreciate the support of our members and we will seek to involve an even wider range of community organisations in NTCOSS as we work to better represent the interests of disadvantaged Territorians.

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Executive Director
NTCOSS

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TERRITORY WIDE PROJECTS



LOST IN THE DESERT

I spent 2007 based in Alice Springs as a journalist writing about the federal intervention into Indigenous affairs in the NT. Gradually, I built up a mental list of 'people worth talking to' as I sought to better understand the circumstances of Aboriginal people living in and around Alice Springs.



I was able to get valuable advice from people at Tangentyere about the town camps; from the Central Land Council about Aboriginal people in the bush; and from Congress, about health issues. But as a novice, I found it difficult to apply this specialist information in a way that enabled me to understand the big picture.

Enter Jonathan Pilbrow, Central Australian Policy Officer for NTCOSS. I was greatly impressed by Jonathan's insight into the web of complex issues that confronted the local community, and his ability to place these matters into the broader context. Needless to say, Jonathan was quickly elevated on the 'people worth talking to' list.

Later, I did some editing work for NTCOSS on their pre-budget submission. I was once again struck by the capacity of an organisation with such limited resources to so effectively address some of the big questions.

Now 2009 finds me based in Darwin, and again doing part-time work for NTCOSS. My regard for the Council and for the work of its member organisations continues to grow.

After twenty years of being a very small cog in a very large federal bureaucracy, I find it inspiring to work for a small, focused organisation whose goals are so intrinsically worthwhile.

Darwin is not a big city. Our lawmakers and leaders are visible, and there is considerable opportunity to hold them to account. Much can be achieved by thoughtful and persistent inquiry.

The crew here in the NTCOSS office are a happy bunch. It's very satisfying to work for an organisation that exists to prosecute the case for justice for the most disadvantaged in our community.

Graham Ring
Special Project Officer

SOCIAL WORK STUDENT JOINS THE TEAM IN ALICE SPRINGS

I was born and grew up in Melbourne, and moved to Alice Springs in January 2002. I started working in the Drug and Alcohol field as soon as I arrived and I continue to be involved. I am currently studying full time and am half way through my Social Work degree and thoroughly enjoying my 3rd year placement with Jonathan Pilbrow at NTCOSS in Alice Springs.



My passion is to see every individual have access to and experience the quality of life that some take for granted. I have a background in counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), holistic therapy and working with people from diverse backgrounds and varying socioeconomic backgrounds. I have a passion for social justice and equality and I feel I have an understanding of community issues.

Naomi Asling
NTCOSS Social Work Student

OUR VISION.....

The vision of NT Council of Social Service is for a society where there is social and economic equity, based on co-operation, participation, sustainability and respect.

OUR MISSION.....

Our mission is to promote awareness and understanding of the social issues throughout the Northern Territory community and to strive toward the development of an equitable and just society.

TONY FITZGERALD

1952-2009

Graham Ring's January 2009 profile of Tony Fitzgerald is reprinted with kind permission of the National Indigenous Times.

Tony Fitzgerald was born in Sydney and spent the first 16 years of his life there, before moving to Melbourne where he studied law and commerce at Melbourne University.

Fitzgerald described himself as a "fairly ordinary student" but remembers his time at Uni with some affection.

"I played a lot of rugby and met a lot of people. I got a job working for the Tenants Union at Fitzroy Legal Service for a year or so.

"I stayed in Melbourne till I was 25, then in 1978 I came to Darwin and, apart from a three-year stint back in Melbourne in the late eighties, I have been here ever since.

"The Northern Territory is a fabulous part of the world and I'm really glad that I came here."

Tony was aware of Indigenous disadvantage in an abstract sense, but like many people growing up in the south-east of the continent, had very little contact with Aboriginal people.

"I had never even spoken to a blackfella before I got to Darwin," he recalls.

"I came up here to take a job with the Aboriginal Legal Service. I had a contract for a year and I thought I would stay here for 12 months and then go overseas. When I was introduced to the staff, that was the first time I had ever spoken to Aboriginal people."

Tony spent four years with the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, then worked as a lawyer and barrister in private practice before taking a job with the Legal Aid Commission.

In the mid-nineties, Tony left the law and got involved in dispute resolution.

"I was interested in the idea of a neutral third-party sitting between people and helping to resolve their difference, as distinct from the adversarial side of the law."

In 2002 Fitzgerald commenced in the role of NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, with an extraordinarily

wide remit.

The objects of the Act include the promotion of the right to equality; the elimination of sexual harassment; and the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, sexuality, age, marital status, religious belief or political affiliation.

The commissioner is a statutory office holder whose job is to try and resolve complaints, rather than represent the complainant.

"I don't advocate for either side," Fitzgerald explains. "I try and get parties to resolve their situation and if they can't, I'll hear evidence and make determinations.

"I can make orders, award damages and require people to submit to training so they understand their rights and responsibilities."

The Commission is also funded to provide public education and training, and to advise government on human rights issues.



Tony is keen to see the Commission take a higher profile in the bush, but says that the organisation is restricted by resource limitations.

"We are not a high priority for government. We don't have an office in Alice Springs and in my view this severely compromises access to justice for people in Central Australia.

"We need to be there promoting the issues, and talking about respect and

tolerance.

"We should also be doing a lot more work in remote locations but we can't because we don't have the money."

The Anti-Discrimination Commission made a detailed submission to Peter Yu's NTER review team. Fitzgerald is scathing about the intervention, particularly the imposition of unilateral welfare quarantining.

"It's an expediency approach. A short term, knee-jerk response to the major problem of disadvantage in remote communities.

"The government styled the intervention as an emergency, but they had known there was a problem for at least 40 years.

"The Territory government and the federal government have systematically under-funded remote communities."

Tony argues that quarantining should be made voluntary, or at least based on fault, rather than being imposed across the board on the basis of geography or skin colour.

Continued on Page 5

TONY FITZGERALD

1952-2009

Continued from page 3

The controversial Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation not only suspended the federal Racial Discrimination Act in prescribed areas, it also suspended the operation of the NT Anti-Discrimination Act in respect to matters associated with the intervention.

"The suspension of the Act strikes at the heart of the human right to be treated equally."

Fitzgerald's submission to the NTER Review recommended the restoration of both pieces of legislation. He called for the scrapping of the NTER in favour of long-term initiatives designed to overcome remote disadvantage, particularly in relation to housing, health, education and employment.

The submission noted the importance of constructive engagement with remote communities and the need for flexibility of policy design and delivery to incorporate regional variation.

Finally, the Commissioner made the novel suggestion that the recommendations of the Little Children are Sacred report - a document widely touted as the trigger for the intervention - be properly considered by governments. Fitzgerald expresses disappointment at the way in which Aboriginal people in the Territory are so readily demonised, and made to carry the can for wider social problems.

"Child abuse is a problem Australia-wide. It's not just an Indigenous problem - we shouldn't lose sight of that. Alcohol is not just an Indigenous problem, it's a problem right through the Territory."

"Government must lead," Tony responds when asked about the economic development of remote Indigenous communities in the Territory.

"The private entrepreneurs are not going to go in unless they see that there is a stable, safe environment that they can operate in.

"At the moment, few of the people in the bush have any option beyond unemployment benefits.

"We need to improve the delivery of training and education in the bush so that people can opt to be involved in a commercial economy."

Fitzgerald notes dryly that while remote Aboriginal communities are subjected to increasing pressure to demonstrate their economic viability, struggling whitefella townships across Australia are much less likely to be called to account.

The idea of the ALP's long-promised 'national representative

Indigenous group' finds favour with Fitzgerald, at least in principle, but he is quick to impose a caveat.

"I think it's important that the government gets it right. The concern that I have is to ensure that the advice from such a group does not take the place of consulting locally with Indigenous leaders all around the country. "Decisions should not be made in Canberra or Sydney about remote communities unless the issue has been run past the community that will be affected.

"One size will not fit all, because Maningrida has different issues to Yuendumu."

Beyond the office, Tony is dad to a couple of kids, and describes the responsibility as "pretty full-on but really enjoyable".

Fitzgerald, a self-confessed 'rugby nut' who has captained NT representative teams, is a keen watcher of sport. When it comes to real football, Tony confesses to being a Sydney Swans supporter - which Black and White is prepared to overlook - and having a 'soft spot' for Collingwood - which we are not.

Tony also has a substantial vinyl record collection, includes albums by Pink Floyd, Creedance and Chicago, and he plays the tenor sax - apparently with more enthusiasm than finesse.

During our yarn, Fitzgerald returns on a number of occasions to the importance of elevating the administration of Indigenous affairs beyond the capriciousness of three or four year electoral cycles.

"We need to get Indigenous funding out of the electoral cycle because it so critical that funding remain constant.

"The long-term change must be generational.

"It's going to cost a lot of money and the broader Australian community needs to support it."

This is surely a telling observation from a man who is in the business of ensuring that people get a fair go.

Graham Ring

NT GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES A PLAN FOR YOUTH



Youth sector agencies met with the former Minister for Central Australia, Alison Anderson prior to Christmas, and were subsequently invited to a Youth Forum held in December where a range of issues were discussed with Government and Non-government agencies.

The forum established a Youth Tasking and Coordination Group, of which NTCOSS is a member, to bring together agencies responsible for the funding and provision of services to young people and their families in Alice Springs. The new group will foster a more co-ordinated and strategic response to issues for 'at risk' young people.

On 19 February 2009, the Northern Territory Government announced an 'Alice Springs Youth Action Plan' to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs. The Action Plan was a response to issues raised at the December forum, and concerns expressed by all Central Australian MLAs, and Alice Springs Mayor, Damien Ryan.

This plan includes:

- Setting up a staffed Police Beat this year in the Todd Mall and continuing CBD security patrols until the Police Beat is established;
- Establishing a new position within police of Youth Services Coordinator to ensure government and non-government services are effectively coordinated;
- Establishing a Youth Hub, including a Police Citizens Youth Club, at the Anzac Hill campus;
- Creating an Alice Springs Middle School, uniting Anzac Hill and Alice Springs High campuses;
- Setting up a boarding school facility for young people in Alice Springs who cannot live at home;
- Making available additional safe house and emergency beds;
- Supporting the development of a voluntary 'no school no service' code with local businesses;
- Providing additional funding to the Gap Youth Centre to provide recreation services;
- Supporting the expansion of Alice Springs Town Council ranger services and the better coordination of transport services to make sure kids are off the streets and in a safe place late at night .

A number of additional initiatives including CCTV monitoring, and security and community patrols will also be considered. A meeting between Central Australian MLAs and senior police will discuss establishment

numbers, the effectiveness of juvenile diversion programs, and the effectiveness of existing police powers to detain young people.

NTCOSS welcomes this intense focus and commitment on the part of the NT Government to addressing youth issues, however some significant concerns remain. For example the 'No School, no service' voluntary code, raises many issues about how young people in shopping centres during school hours will be treated. We believe that there are more effective ways to re-engage young people into the education system.

It is critical that appropriate resources are put in place to allow agencies to provide the intensive work required to re-engage young people with the education system and support them to stay at school. This is one area where further resources employed now could make a big difference in the short and long term.

IMPROVED TRANSPORT SYSTEM ON THE WAY – BUT SUPPORTS CRITICAL

Lack of access to transport for school students - particularly Indigenous students on town camps - is a critical problem, and has been for many years. The NT Government has begun extending public bus services in Darwin, and has recently introduced free transport for students on public buses, which offers a substantial saving to many families.

There are historical difficulties with town camp students accessing regular transport to school. Some camps are a significant distance from a bus stop, and not all schools provide specific buses for the town camps in their catchment areas. Pressure on support services has increased, with many non-Government organisations working overtime to ensure children can get to school.

NTCOSS applauds the establishment of additional bus-stops near town camps over last couple of years, implemented by Dysons Cobb & Co Coaches, who work closely with both the Department of Planning & Infrastructure and the Department of Education & Training. In addition, further school supports have been put in place to assist the students from town camps who have been catching the school bus.

In recent weeks, NTCOSS has been liaising with a range of non-Government Services, the Department of Education and Dysons, to look at developing further sustainable solutions to address some of the transport gaps which still remain. In early March, the Department of Planning & Infrastructure (DPI) advised that Dysons school bus routes will be altered to include pick ups at four new bus stops to provide) access to students from other Town Camps. These new routes commenced on 9 March.

These recent developments are very much welcomed, and NTCOSS acknowledges the commitment of the NT

Government, Dysons and Town Camp support services to make these new changes work. Many organisations and services have been advocating for improvements to school bus services for many years, and the new routes are a promising start. However, NTCOSS firmly believes that as well as ensuring there are accessible transport options, it is critical that intensive support is available for families whose children have been disengaged from school.

Support will be required to assist students in using the school bus system. In addition, intensive support is needed to help get students back to school, who were previously disengaged from the education system. The assistance of a youth worker, or family support worker, can be the difference between a young person staying at school, or dropping out. Significant long term (recurrent) resources need to be put in place now, to ensure the effectiveness of the school transport systems now being established.

While the needs of town camp students are receiving due attention at the moment, children living on outstations also face significant disadvantage when it comes to getting to school, with some children 40 or more kilometers away. While families can claim a conveyance allowance, the benefit presupposes regular access to a car. NTCOSS will continue to work with Government to address issues for students from outstations as well.

An improved transport system for all students will play a critical role in schools achieving the Government's recently announced target of 90% attendance rates, and thereby improve educational outcomes for Indigenous children.

BOOST FOR INTERPRETER SERVICES

The NT Government has provided additional funding to the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to enable non-Government organisations to use the service without charge. Prior to this change, which came into effect in July 2008, most non-profit community organisations were required to pay for interpreting services for their Aboriginal clients, placing a significant financial burden on these organisations. Further funding has also been allocated for two new Community Liaison (Interpreter) services has also been increased.

NTCOSS also welcomes these announcements which will increase the number of interpreters available for Aboriginal people, migrants and refugees seeking access

Aboriginal people, migrants and refugees seeking access to housing, social services and legal advice. This is critical to improving the health and well-being of disadvantaged Territorians.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

Various measures have been introduced in Central Australia in recent years to break the destructive cycle of alcohol abuse which blights the region. The Menzies School of Health Research currently is undertaking an independent evaluation into the effect of Alcohol Management Plans and other alcohol policy measures.

In Alice Springs the evaluation will examine initiatives implemented since October 2006 including: restrictions on trading hours and the supply of certain products, the introduction of the "dry town" restrictions, and the new Alcohol ID system.

In Tennant Creek, the evaluation will look at supply restrictions introduced in June 2006 and the new supply plan put in place in August 2008 and the development of Tennant Creek Alcohol Management Plan Initiatives such as 'Thirsty Thursday', which operated from 1995 to 2006. The evaluation is expected to be completed towards the end of April.

The People's Alcohol Action Coalition (PAAC) in Alice Springs (of which NTCOSS is a member) has responded to calls from the Responsible Drinkers Lobby to remove the current restrictions on takeaway alcohol sales. Statistics indicate that these restrictions have been successful, with a 14% decline in the sale and consumption of pure alcohol in Alice Springs.

Prior to the current restrictions, the consumption of alcohol in Alice Springs was almost twice the national average at about 17 litres of pure alcohol per person. Drinking is now at its lowest level for 5 years, and this reduction has been achieved despite the fact that drinking in other regional centres in the NT Has continued to increase.

PAAC has been vocal about the need for Alice Springs to continue down the path of evidence-based strategies and to collect key data to assess the effectiveness of these policies. NTCOSS sees the current alcohol evaluation exercise as crucial in reducing the harm caused by alcohol misuse in the Territory.

Jonathon Pilbrow

Central Australia Policy Officer

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YOU ARE NOT ALONE...

In these bewildering economic times, striving to do more with less has its limits. When your team is dwindling at the same time your demands are mounting, pressure is rising and the pace of work accelerating, there comes a point when doing any more with the little you have is no longer possible.



Announcing the release of the NT Community Sector Workforce Toolkit...a flexible set of tools to help you **recruit** and **retain** your most valuable asset – your workforce.

This **free** Toolkit has been designed and distributed by NTCOSS with the valued support of Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training. The Toolkit represents the culmination of a significant research effort to determine the specific issues associated with the recruitment and retention of an effective Community Sector workforce in the Northern Territory.

Your copy of the Toolkit has been mailed to your organisation over the last few weeks – if you haven't received your copy then you can download one from the NTCOSS website at www.ntcoss.org.au

Please take the time to get a copy of the Toolkit, particularly if you have some responsibility for recruitment, retention and workforce strategies in your workplace. Print and hang the Toolkit poster and distribute fact sheets throughout your organisations' common areas, such as meeting rooms and lunch rooms. Encourage colleagues to spread the word and use the materials in the Toolkit or load the NT Community Sector Workforce Screensaver on your workplace PCs. Imagine if you or a colleague pick up **ONE GREAT IDEA** out of any of these tools, your investment in time would have been well worth it.

Thank you to all of those people who participated in the NT Community Sector Staff Survey and Stakeholder interviews for their cooperation, insight and willingness to become part of the effort that developed the NT Community Sector Workforce Toolkit.



A FINAL WORD ...

NTCOSS sponsored Workforce Planning and Development workshops will be conducted throughout the NT in April and May 2009. Make sure you reserve your workshop place – for more information, please visit the NTCOSS website at www.ntcoss.org.au

DID YOU KNOW?

The 3 most valued work conditions (if available) identified by the respondents to the Northern Territory Community Sector Staff survey were:

1. **Higher rates of pay**
2. **Portable long service leave across the sector**
3. **Less stressful work environment**

Source: NT Community Sector Staff Survey 2007

DID YOU KNOW?

77% of participants in the recent NT Community Sector interviews—especially medium and small organisations - felt overwhelmed by the time required to recruit new staff - they expressed concern about complex HR and IR issues.

Source: NT Community Sector Organisation Interviews 2007

ADVERTISING YOUR JOB?

REMEMBER

The responsibility for the message rests with the communicator - not the listener.

Unknown

HOW DO YOU FIND THE PEOPLE YOU NEED?

Easy. You've got your wonderful job description, now all you have to do is put an advert in the local and interstate papers and on the relevant web recruiting sites. Sounds simple, but in the interest of maximising the return from your recruitment activities you need to be strategic in your advertising. Don't worry, it can be done! You may not even have to spend anything. There are lots of creative things you can do to get the word out about your vacancy. To begin your search, it will help to create a realistic profile of the successful candidate. Consider the salary you have to offer, the minimum requirements of the job, and where on someone's career path this job is likely to be. Also take into consideration your location. If you recruit outside your area, who is likely to move to where you are? Remember that candidates are looking for flexibility, advancement opportunities & job satisfaction.

While many people from all walks of life work for the Community Sector, there are two pools of people who may be more available in this tight labour market; young people and retirees. Young people will see the experience as a particularly valuable currency, while older adults and retirees may appreciate opportunities to serve their community, utilize their skills, and mentor others. Keep this in mind as you search.

Here are some additional suggestions:

- * Look close to home first. Is there a current employee who could move up? Does anyone in your office know someone who would be good for the job? Filling the position from within is great for morale and indicates to your staff that they are valued and respected.
- * Put the word out to your Board. They may know people, too.
- * Use your network! Ask colleagues in your field if they know of anyone.
- * Contact Australian Apprenticeships NT on **1300 137 130** - to investigate taking on a trainee or apprentice. Go to www.australianapprenticeshipsnt.com.au and www.deet.nt.gov.au/training/employers/apprenticeships/aant.shtm for more information.
 - ▶ Contact the career services in your local university, college or school. Generally they are happy to post your advert for free as a service to their students.
- * Utilize message boards at relevant venues (e.g. shopping centres, libraries and community halls) around your area.

- * If you have a web site, post your job vacancy. If your peak organisation has a web site, create links to your site or share a job announcement page.
- * Look for online resources that provide free or voluntary contribution advertising to non-profits <http://www.cnet.ngo.net.au/employment.html> or <https://jobsearch.gov.au/>
- * Ask a local reporter to do a story about your organisation, or the benefits of working in the non-profit Community Sector, and mention that you're hiring.
- * Check out JobWise - a site dedicated to promoting mature age employment at <http://jobwise.gov.au/>
- * Develop encouraging recruitment processes that target specific groups like mature-age workers or trainees. The things that people 50+ want may differ from those that the Generation Y's want, e.g. part-time and flexible working arrangements.
- * It's a competitive market - develop an advert that makes your job look more interesting than the rest.
- Pinch ideas from others. Constantly keep your eyes on the employment pages and sites you might find a catchy headline or job title – learn what works from other organisations and industries!

DID YOU KNOW?

54% of respondents to the NT Community Sector Staff survey found their present job via "Word of Mouth" ...this is a good indication of how important using your formal and informal networks can be.

Source: NT Community Sector Staff Survey 2007

Donna Blackler
Workforce Strategy Project
NTCOSS

In the course of developing this Pre-Budget Submission NTCOSS met with many different sectors and organisations across the Northern Territory. The similarities in the kinds of issues raised is notable not just within particular sectors but across sectors. There are a range of issues which have been highlighted over many years by all sectors, yet, priorities remain unaddressed. Community sector agencies report feeling undervalued by those in Government. Given the continued high social needs across the Northern Territory, the challenge remains for the community sector to seek out innovative ways to alert Government and the broader community to the needs of low income and disadvantaged people, and the vital role our sector plays in addressing these needs.

Recruitment and retention remains a major concern for community organisations. A recent survey undertaken by NTCOSS indicated that the average annual turnover rate of staff in community organisations was greater than 35 per cent. The ageing of the community sector workforce was also identified as a serious concern, with one-third of the survey respondents over 51 years old and only 14% under the age of thirty.

Previous NTCOSS Pre-Budget Submissions have highlighted the need for Government to work with the community sector to address recruitment and retention issues, and with each passing year the issue grows ever more urgent. This problem must be approached from several different angles. There is a pressing need for an improvement in wages and conditions in the sector, as well as the development of a portable long-service-leave scheme. A marketing campaign to improve the profile of the sector is also long overdue. The key message is that Government needs to work in co-operation with the sector on these issues, and that this work needs to commence immediately.

Concerns about the lack of available and affordable housing have been raised repeatedly through this Pre-Budget Submission process over many years, yet little progress has been made in addressing the issue. The situation is now at crisis point. Every sector has identified housing as a major concern requiring urgent attention.

The impact is most significant for people needing to move on from supported accommodation services and into affordable private rental or public housing.

Rental costs in the NT are now so high that welfare organisations are reporting an increase in working families approaching their services for assistance. A clear message from all the sectors was the importance of Government addressing the issue of housing shortages

and overcrowding in conjunction with the closely related priorities of getting children to school and reducing antisocial behaviour. These issues should not be considered in isolation.

Organisations report that their clients are presenting with ever more complex issues which demand the provision of flexible services designed to meet widely varying individual needs. In this climate of increased demand for services and ongoing funding constraints for many organisations, the challenge remains to deliver quality services to the many Territorians in need. Many of the recommendations in this submission are again informed by the principles of prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and support. NTCOSS recommends approaches based on sound evidence which is likely to provide long term solutions to deeply entrenched problems.

NTCOSS wishes to acknowledge the NT Government for this year providing sufficient funding for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to be made available without cost to all community organisations. NTCOSS has long called for this initiative and we applaud the Government for taking action.

Finally, NTCOSS thanks everyone who has been involved in developing this Pre-Budget Submission. We look forward to genuine and fruitful discussions with Government about the many urgent challenges which face the community sector.

For full details of the 2009/2010 Pre-Budget Submission Recommendations visit the NTCOSS website:- www.ntcoss.org.au

TOP END MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER ORGANISATION (TEMHCO)

is a not-for-profit, Palmerston based, member driven, community organisation that promotes good mental health and the reduction of stigma surrounding mental illness.

The organisation is opening a new office and consumer meeting space in Humpty Doo and is in need of furniture.

Can you support TEMHCO by passing on any unwanted items?

Please call Bev on 0418 780 467 or email temhco@bigpond.com



NT MENTAL HEALTH COALITION UPDATE



The NT Mental Health Coalition is the peak body for mental health representing non-government organisations that provide services to people with mental health needs. It operates as a sub-committee of NTCOSS.



The Coalition also holds a seat on the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA), the national peak body for mental health. The Coalition is a member of Community Mental Health Australia which is a national alliance of state and territory peak bodies.

What's new?

Hi all, the NTCOSS newsletter is finally here, we are excited about the concept but sadly now we all have to put fingers to keys and produce something meaningful for all our avid readers or potential readers! That said there is a lot happening with the Mental Health Coalition this year so the news is really positive.

The NTCOSS website has now been "made live" as the lingo goes so the Coalition info is much more visible than it used to be. I had a lot to do with the design of the new site so I hope you all like it and if you don't like it please keep that to yourself!!

Seriously though if you find any information that is outdated please understand that much of the site is still under construction and we are updating on a daily basis so if you find anything that is glaringly wrong or needs to be changed please email us and let us know. If you like it then please let us know that too. Contact email admin@ntcoss.org.au.

We are still growing and our membership has now just passed 30, which for a coalition that boasted 5 members for the first 2 years is pretty phenomenal, we are excited anyway.

We have had our first round of meetings for the year and are looking forward to our annual planning day which will be on the 30 June this year, last year we announced 7 priorities that we were to work on and much of that work has been initiated and some is complete, the results of which will be posted in our section of the NTCOSS website. Keep your eyes peeled for that.

On the serious side of things we produced a couple of pieces of work in the last few months; one of those was the submission to the 2030 strategic plan currently being

worked on by the Territory Government. We are looking forward to being a part of the process for the implementation of that plan in future times. We were also asked to do a submission for the Senate Enquiry on Men's Health which we finalised last week and sent in on time.

A few of the things we have been involved in over the last 12 months are as follows:

- Presented submission to senate committee on Mental Health
- Called as a witness to senate enquiry on mental health in Darwin
- Secured project for "building capacity in community mental health family support and carer respite" through affiliation with national coalition (CMHA – Community Mental Health Australia)
- Presented submission to senate enquiry on Men's Health
- Presented submission to NT Government on 2030 strategic plan.

Mental Health Promotion

Our steering committee has met and we are currently working on plans for 2009 with promotion and the various events we will be supporting and running this year, much of this information will be sent to you all and will be posted on our website for future information. We had such a huge response to Jonathon Welch last year that we are madly trying to find someone for this year who will be equally as popular if not more popular, keep your eyes on the information on the web.

That's all for now,
Cheers

Phil Dempster
Program Coordinator
Mental Health Coalition



Jonathon Welch (Choir of Hard Knocks) with Minister McCarthy at the MH week Dinner in 2008

CROSS SECTORIAL SUPPORT & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT



Comorbidity - Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD) and Mental Health

The Cross Sectorial Support and Strategic Partnerships Project, has been running at NTCOSS since the appointment of a Project Coordinator in March 2008. Funded by the Department of Health and Ageing, NTCOSS was the best placed organization in the NT to manage this national project, in the absence of an Alcohol and Other Drug Peak.



Initially planned as a three year capacity building project, one year of funding to cover the Darwin region only was provided. The announcement for the further two years of funding, due in December 2008, has not yet been announced and the Project, under the 'Improved Services Initiative' is one of the five Council of Australian Government (COAG) programs currently being focused on to hand from Commonwealth management to State management.

NTCOSS has run out of funding and has had to wrap up the project during the first week of March 2009. Luckily the project approach and the working group, consisting of NTCOSS and the AOD non-government organisations also funded under the initiative (Amity Community Services, Banyan House, Centacare-NT, Salvation Army and NPY in Central Australia), attempted to manage this possibility from the beginning. As a result capacity building was conducted in a way where local service providers and people using service could benefit regardless of ongoing funding. Information, links and documents about comorbidity in the Darwin Region and further afield are available at: <http://www.ntcoss.org.au/news/2009/02/cross-sectorial-support-strategic-partnerships-project>

Some of the outcomes of the project, that we hope will be of value to some of you either now or in the future are:

- Website source as a starting point for information about Comorbidity.
- Comorbidity Stakeholder Training Provider Group is exploring training delivery and development in a collaborative way.
- A summary of identified training needs and priorities of non-government AOD organisations in the Darwin Region.
- A report outlining the views of sixty-nine service providers across government and non-government, alcohol and other drug, mental health and general health and community service providers about how they see the issues and the

best way forward to improving services in the future.

- Several presentations providing local information and show-casing local expertise and development in this area were provided and are available in power point form on the website.

Thank you to the many of you who have contributed to this project during the last year.

Loris Semple

Project Coordinator NTCOSS

Cross Sectorial Support and Strategic Partnerships Project
Funded and supported by the Department of Health and Ageing

Building Capacity in Community Mental Health Family Support and Carer Respite Project Update

The Building Capacity in Community Mental Health Family Support and Carer Respite Project is part of a national reform process in the area of Mental Health family support and carer services and is funded by the Australian Government under the Mental Health Respite Program.

The project aims to facilitate the establishment of localised community partnerships that will apply for funding from the National Respite Development Fund to deliver innovative and sustainable respite services.

Another important outcome of the project is to nurture a well trained community Mental Health family support and respite workforce and feeding back information regarding sector needs to government.

Analysis of the strength and gaps in local Mental Health family support and carer respite services in Alice Springs and Darwin has been completed and commitment has been made to two community partnerships that await tenders release.

Anyone who has questions about the project please contact the NT project coordinator, Janine Sims, on 8948 2665 or janine@ntcoss.org.au.

Janine Sims

Project Co-ordinator
Mental Health Coalition





Increase Allowance for Jobless by \$30pw

ACOSS is urging the Federal Government to introduce a paid work experience scheme for long term jobless people and to increase the unemployment allowance by \$30 a week.

Releasing its recommendations for the Federal Budget 2009-10 in January, ACOSS outlined costed measures to assist job seekers overcome barriers to work while also avoiding financial hardship.

Under the ACOSS proposal, Newstart Allowance payments for single people would rise by \$30 to \$255 per week. This increase would close the gap between types of social security payments - the current Newstart Allowance for a single person is \$50 per week less than the Age Pension payment.

Labour Force figures for December 2008 released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show there are now half a million unemployed Australians. We need to ensure people without jobs can afford to live and support their families while looking for work. Job seekers, especially long term unemployed people, should be given the best possible chance to find work. ACOSS Budget Recommendations outline a paid work experience scheme to help keep people engaged with the workforce. Planning for this program should start now.

Under existing arrangements, funding for work experience placements decrease once people are unemployed for over a year. The ACOSS proposal would

"ACOSS has been calling for the Government to invest in the construction of affordable housing and improve energy efficiency in low income housing."

provide jobs in mainstream employment for long term unemployed people.

Employment would be in the community or public sector and paid at a training wage and offered for six months. The program would be designed so that in the event of a major economic downturn it can be expanded into areas with high unemployment to prevent long term unemployment becoming entrenched.

Download: Social Inclusion and Economic Security: Recommendations for the Federal Budget 2009-10: www.acoss.org.au

Nation Building Plan Welcome but more Assistance for Jobless Needed

ACOSS has welcomed the Government's \$42 billion Nation Building plan to create jobs and fund infrastructure projects in housing, schools and roads

announced in February 2009. Disappointingly, unemployed Australians – who are most affected by an economic downturn – will receive very limited assistance and still must get by on a weekly payment of just \$225 a week.

"We are delighted that social housing has been given a much needed boost with the promise of 20,000 extra dwellings to be constructed. There is a drastic shortage of public and community housing dwellings and long waiting lists," said Clare Martin, CEO. "More than 750,000 people currently struggle with housing costs and this investment will help some of those Australians get secure housing."

"The Government is expecting unemployment to rise from 4.5% to 7% next financial year. ACOSS is concerned that those most affected by the downturn have received limited support in the stimulus package. It is only fair that people who are unable to find work get adequate assistance and support and ACOSS has been urging the Government to increase unemployment payments by \$30 a week," said Clare Martin.

The home insulation program and solar water rebates are welcome steps to create green jobs, lower energy bills and reduce emissions. Low income households will be greatly affected by climate change. We encourage the Government to invest in other energy efficiency measures targeted at low income households such as energy audits and appliance upgrades.

ACOSS encourages the Government to ensure that all of the new school buildings and homes funded by the stimulus package meet best practice standards in energy efficiency.

ACOSS National Conference 2009

The ACOSS National Conference 2009—*Building a fair Australia in tough economic times*—is on in Sydney on 2-3 April 2009. Speakers include Geraldine Doogue, ABC, Dr Ken Henry, Treasury Secretary, Jeff Lawrence, ACTU, Ian McAuley, University of Canberra, Senator Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion, Father Frank Brennan AO, National Human Rights Consultation Committee. For more information, go to www.acoss.org.au or call 02 9310 6200.

NEW LOOK WEBSITE FOR NTCOSS!!!



The new look NTCOSS website is finally up and running after many months of development and implementation phases and some minor tweaks.

NTCOSS has worked in partnership with Infoxchange Australia, who were engaged to redevelop the NTCOSS website with a range of enhanced features.

Please log in to our website: www.ntcoss.org.au and take a tour. The site is still under construction and will be updated on a regular basis until finalised, so if you see any glaring mistakes please email us at: admin@ntcoss.org.au.



BYTE CAFE

Since October 2008, the Byte Café has provided great coffee and food to Darwin residents, but it also offers much more than that. The cafe is managed by Top End Association for Mental Health (TEAMhealth), and provides flexible and supported vocational training and work experience opportunities for TEAMhealth clients.

Since its inception, under the guidance of cafe manager Kate Delbridge, there has been **10** clients participate in the hospitality training program. Training is offered through TEAMhealth's Day-to-Day-Living program, with clients receiving instruction in cooking, food hygiene, food preparation, stocktaking and customer service. Five graduates from the program have been employed at the Byte Cafe and other hospitality organisations, and the latest class of trainees are expected to gain employment at the Cafe soon.

Kate has observed first hand the benefits to clients involved in the program. "Initially new employees lack confidence in dealing with customers, and are apprehensive about taking on new responsibilities. But they quickly become more self-assured and proactive as they become aware of their own capabilities and the service they are offering to the community".

The financial benefit to the clients also provides an incentive to participate in the program.

TEAMHealth Chief Executive Officer Kirsty Carter said one in five people suffer mental illness, with more than 3000 people in Darwin and Palmerston experiencing serious mental illness. "We had been looking at running an employment program for some time and when centre management approached us about the café, we jumped

at the opportunity," Ms Carter said. "Our employment programs will be tailored to suit our clients and provide the necessary support and flexibility critical to their success in the workforce".

The Byte Café offers a funky and inviting space for patrons to catch up on news and local activities, conduct business meetings, and, as the only internet café between Casuarina and the city, spend some time browsing the web. The cafe features artwork from local artists, including artwork from Day-to-Day Living clients, which is available for purchase. The food at the cafe is freshly prepared, and features nutritious breakfasts, sandwiches, wraps and rolls, hot lunches, and a daily selection of cakes and desserts. The cafe also has an extensive corporate catering menu.

The Café appreciates support received from organisations such as NTCOSS and CarersNT through attendance, catering and promotions.



TEAMHealth CEO Kirsty Carter and Cafe Manager Kate Delbridge outside the Byte Cafe

COMMUNITY INFORMATION



We want to hear about upcoming events, projects, workshops, seminars, etc. from all over the Territory. To include your AD in the next Newsletter please contact NTCOSS at Tel: 8948-2665 or Email: admin@ntcross.org.au

CARERS NT - Education and Training

Carers NT will continue to offer its training and education program during 2009. The flagship course offered is the Carer Education Program – a six-week program designed specifically for carers.

Some expected outcomes for carers attending this course include:

- ▶ Increased awareness and knowledge of services and supports available;
- ▶ Increased confidence to link to support services, especially respite
- ▶ Strategies for self-care
- ▶ Understanding the likely tasks and demands of caring;
- ▶ Understanding of the changing needs of carers across the cycle of caring;
- ▶ Increased sense of self-empowerment, self-worth and self-confidence;
- ▶ Reduction of injuries and minimization of risks associated with the caring role;
- ▶ Increased coping resources



Previous participants comments: *"I had a really great time being part of this group"; "I have enjoyed this course enormously and learnt a lot"; "I realise that I am not alone; there are others that feel like me about their caring roles at certain times"; "Very worthwhile. I would recommend it".*

The Healthwise workshops deal with developing positive strategies to assist those living with a chronic illness, or caring for someone who has a chronic illness. Two six week programs are planned to be run in April – one in Karama and one in Palmerston. Participants comments: *"I got a lot out of the course and feel that I am better able to deal and live with my illness. "Best thing I've done for myself."* In addition two-hour wellbeing workshops dealing with depression, sleep management, quality use of medicines and generic medicines will also be scheduled.

For further information about any of the courses offered by Carers NT, please contact Marie Stillwell, Senior Education and Training Advisor – 8948 4877, or Freecall: 1800 242 636.

CARERS NT TRAINING PROGRAM

COURSE TITLE	COURSE DURATION	DAY & TIME	DATES	VENUE
Carer Education Coconut Grove	6 x 2 hr workshops	Wed 9:30 – 11:30am	Feb 25 Mar 4, 11, 18, 25 Apr 1	Carers NT Meeting Room Coconut Grove
Sweet Dreams Non-drug management of insomnia	1 x 2hr work- shop	Friday 9:30am – 11:30am	March 6	Carers NT Meeting Room Coconut Grove
Carers NT Volunteers Program Induction Workshop	½ day	Friday 9:00am–1:00pm	Mar 14	Carers NT Meeting Room Coconut Grove
Carer Education Palmerston	6 x 2 hr workshops	Wednesdays 9:30 – 11:30am	April 15, 22, 29 May 6, 13, 20	Community Room Peter Chandler's Office Palmerston
Healthwise Workshops	6 x 2.5 hr Workshops	Mondays 7:00–9:30pm	April 20, 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25	Palmerston Community Care Centre, Farrar Medical Complex
Healthwise Workshops	6 x 2.5 hr Workshops	Fridays 9:30am – 12:00noon	April 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Karama Electorate Office Karama Shopping Centre

MEET THE TEAM AT NTCOSS



Wendy Morton

Wendy is the Executive Director for NTCOSS and has been with the organisation since 2005. Prior to NTCOSS, she was the Disability Discrimination Advocate and Outreach Worker at Darwin Community Legal Service for over 7 years. She has been involved with law reform campaigns, policy development, community education and training.



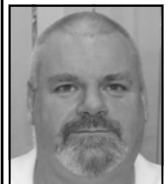
Jonathan Pilbrow

Jonathan works in the Alice Springs office full time. He has been employed as the Central Australian Policy Officer for NTCOSS since March 2004. For the previous 12 years Jonathan worked as a Social Worker in the Health and Community Services Sector, in 3 States and Territories, with experience in Child Protection, Community Health (counselling) and Hospital settings. Jonathan's role with NTCOSS concentrates on primary areas in Central Australia (which includes Tennant Creek and the Barkly Region)



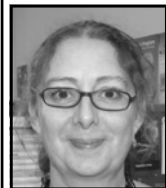
Graham Ring

Graham is a Melbourne boy who has settled in Darwin after spending 1997 in Alice Springs writing about the Northern Territory Emergency Response. He's a journalist by trade and has a particular interest in Indigenous justice issues. At NTCOSS, Graham has been involved in the writing and editing of the organisation's Pre-Budget Submission to Government. He will also take a key role in the Strong Community - Healthy Territory campaign.



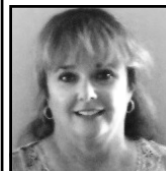
Phil Dempster

Phil is the program coordinator for the NT Mental Health Coalition. He has a strong background in Mental Health Services, coming directly from the coordinator's role at GROW in the Northern Territory. Phil enjoys the challenge of this position. He is in the process of building the Coalition with new membership around the NT as well as securing a very firm position in the National Coalition of Mental Health Peaks which is CMHA (Community Mental Health Australia). <http://www.cmha.org.au/>



Janine Sims

Janine is the new Project Coordinator for the Building Capacity in Community Mental Health Family Support and Carer Respite Project. She is also a new arrival to Darwin just completing her first year here. After 10 years living in the East Kimberley she made the move to the big city with her partner and two children. They are all very excited about the wealth of opportunities and activities the Northern Territory has to offer.



Donna Blackler

Donna takes on the Sector Development role in NTCOSS. She has a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Psychology and Anthropology. She brings an extensive business background working in organisational development, information technology, capacity building and governance to her role in Sector Development at NTCOSS.



Roma Hill

Roma has just taken the position of the new Office Coordinator here at NTCOSS starting in December. She is originally from Tasmania and moved to the Territory with her husband 9 years ago with the intention of retiring, but fate had different ideas and she accepted a position with Alzheimer's Australia NT Inc. as Administration Officer. Hmmm, seems like she forgot about her retirement, lucky for us!!

NTCOSS BOARD MEMBERS

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