



NTCOSS NEWS SHEET – February 2011

After the traditional slow start to the year in the NT, business is again brisk at NTCOSS.

NTCOSS Conference

Preparations are on in earnest for the 2011 NTCOSS conference to be held on the 14th and 15th of April at the Darwin Airport Resort. The conference theme is 'Towards a just NT – Designing the future together'. Major issues on the agenda include child protection, income management, partnerships, transport, asylum seekers, and youth policy. We would urge all member organisations to send delegates to what promises to be an informative and thought-provoking couple of days. We welcome Kerrie Taylor who has come on board as conference organiser to take a key role in planning the event.

The NTCOSS conference will be preceded by a one day Alcohol and Other Drugs forum on Wednesday 13 April entitled "Forging the Future – Practical responses to contemporary issues". Dr Ian Webster AO, a highly regarded thinker in this area for many years will be the keynote speaker. More details from Barry White at NTCOSS.

Prison Visiting Hours

NTCOSS and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) have taken the lead role in a public campaign to encourage Corrections Minister Gerry McCarthy to reconsider a departmental decision to significantly reduce the hours during which prisoners at Berrimah Prison can receive visitors. We are very pleased to advise that the Minister has decided not to proceed with the new arrangements at this time. We acknowledge the Minister's willingness to meet with community organisations and to consider our views.

Child Protection

The Department of Children and Families has produced a strategic framework called 'Safe Children – Bright Futures' which provides a roadmap for the implementation of recommendations from the 'Growing them Strong Together' report. One of the key recommendations is for AMSANT to oversee the establishment of an Aboriginal child, youth and family peak body. NTCOSS has worked collaboratively with government departments to ensure that NGO views are heard, and continues to consult with the sector in urban and remote areas.

Media

February has been a quiet month for media. NTCOSS issued a media release warning of the indifferent results achieved by compulsory alcohol rehabilitation programs. The *NT News* picked up a brief grab from the media release on page two quoting NTCOSS Central Australian Policy Officer, Jonathan Pilbrow, where he described such programs as 'costly and unproven.' Jonathan also recorded a radio interview about the issue with Daryl Manzie on Territory FM.

We are looking forward to having Wendy Morton resume her role as Executive Director in mid-March as she completes her recovery from a medical condition.

Regards from the NTCOSS crew.