



# Northern Territory Council of Social Service Inc.

Newsletter-December 2010

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## Building a bigger, better NTCOSS

Another year is almost over and provides an opportunity to reflect. I have been in the Executive Director's role for over five years now. During that time, there have been more ups than downs, as well as some significant changes at NTCOSS.

When I began in 2005, NTCOSS had five staff, including Jonathan Pilbrow working for two days a week in Alice Springs. It was a considerable challenge to try and be across so many different sectors and issues with so few resources, and to be a voice for those who are most disadvantaged in our community. Over the next few years, we gained funding from different sources such as the NT Department of Employment and Training, and we usually had around seven staff.

This year, we have received a significant core funding increase from the Department of Families and Children. We are proud of achieving this result, because we believe that these extra resources will enable us to provide a more significant contribution towards making the NT a fairer place for those who are most disadvantaged. You can read more on the new staff and their roles in this newsletter.

The biggest change is in our Alice Springs office. After seven years of working on his own, Jonathan now has four new staff to collaborate with. Our Darwin office now has seven staff. In the past, a lack of resources has limited our capacity to fully consult our members in locations beyond Darwin and Alice Springs. We hope we can now do much better in that area. The new funding will also allow us to work across more areas, in particular child safety and wellbeing, and youth.

Although we have seen changes within our own office, it is frustrating that we are talking about many of the same issues that we were seeking to address five years ago. Alcohol continues to be a significant issue across the NT. While some improvements have been achieved, much remains to be done, particularly in the area of pricing and availability. As we write this newsletter, The Chief Minister has announced that he will consider major changes in this area and we look forward to having those come to fruition.

In our pre-budget submission consultations over the last few years, the lack of affordable housing has been an issue raised consistently by every sector. Without adequate housing for all across the NT, we will struggle to deal effectively with related issues such as child protection, family violence and unemployment.

We hope that 2011 will be the year of significant improvement in many areas, including better wages for people working in the social and community sector. The pay equity case will be resolved, and expectations are high that it will be successful. This would result in workers being paid a fair wage for the amazing work they do every day. It would make a major impact on the recruitment and retention difficulties currently faced by all community organisations.

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To all our Members  
and friends

Best wishes for an enjoyable  
and relaxing Festive Season  
and a safe and prosperous  
New Year

From all the Staff  
at NTCOSS



continued....

It is a privilege for me to work at NTCOSS and I am proud of what we have achieved in 2010. I am grateful to the NTCOSS staff, board and members who have played a role. We have an amazing group of staff, many who have been with us for two years or more. Five new staff began in the last three months and I look forward to us working together on this new adventure. The new funding is exciting but also brings with it, new challenges and increased expectations.

I hope you all have a very safe and happy holiday season, and on behalf of all of the NTCOSS staff, we look forward to working with you in 2011.

**Wendy Morton**  
Executive Director

## The centre of attention

NTCOSS has expanded its operations in Central Australia over the last couple of months and we now have five positions based in Alice Springs.

It has been great to welcome Kathy Satour into the part-time Administration Officer (Central Australia) position; Tess Reinsch into the full-time Youth Policy Officer position (NT wide), Pru Gell as the part-time Central Australian Policy Officer and Jenny McFarland into the part-time Sector Development Officer position.

Despite a few teething problems with technology, we are all making ourselves at home in our new premises at 93 Gap Rd (Gap Youth Centre). Our phone number remains the same: 08 89528400

The addition of the new staff will increase our capacity to respond to critical issues facing low income and disadvantaged Territorians, as well as broader sector issues for non-government organisations. Key issues which will continue to be a focus in 2011 include: youth justice issues; alcohol and other drugs issues; income management; transport; renal health; family violence issues and child protection.

2010 has been another busy year for the non-government sector and we wish you all the best for the festive season, and hope it is a time of refreshment and relaxation, before tackling another new year.

We look forward to working with you all again in 2011.

**Jonathan Pilbrow**  
Central Australian Policy Officer  
NTCOSS

## Welcome to our new staff.....

### **Pru Gell**

Hello there I'm Pru Gell and a new member of NTCOSS's policy team as the part-time Central Australian Policy Officer, working on social policy analysis and development across a number of areas. I've enjoyed living and working in the NT for the last eight years in urban and remote settings and in Alice Springs for the last three. My background is in education, facilitation, mediation and supporting strategic development of social justice campaigns and networks nationally and in the NT.

I look forward to meeting and working with people so together we can advocate effectively and respectfully for the needs of disadvantaged Territorians.

### **Tess Reinsch**

Hi there, my name is Tess Reinsch and I am so pleased to be joining the NTCOSS team as the new Youth Policy Officer. A born and bred Melbournian, I am a recent Alice Springs resident and looking forward to this challenge in such a dynamic area of policy work. My background is in community development, having worked for the past 4 years with Oxfam Australia, most recently on their Mozambique program.

As Youth Policy Officer, I am looking forward to learning about the many challenges and opportunities that exist for the youth sector, and working with you all as we move towards a safer and more secure life for our young people in the NT.

### **Kathy Satour**

Kathy Satour is a local Eastern Arnerntre woman who has previously held a variety of positions within local Aboriginal organisations including Aranda House, the Institute of Aboriginal Development and the Gap Youth Centre. Kathy has also worked for a number of Government Departments including ATSIC, the former Department of Social Security and up until recently the Department of Housing & Local Government. Kathy is pleased to join NTCOSS on a part-time basis as the Administration Officer for Central Australia. Kathy's hobbies include gardening and being involved with her grandchildren.

### **Jenny McFarland**

Jenny McFarland has just joined the NTCOSS team in Alice Springs, as the Sector Development Coordinator for the Central Australian region. Jenny has a strong background in community development, including working as the Remote Area Night Patrol Coordinator at Tangentyere Council for close to ten years, working with NT Legal Aid as Coordinator of the legal education Outreach team, and setting up the Remote Disabilities Brokerage (still running) back in the last millennium, when Waltja was the Family Resource Centre. Jenny has just completed a Masters degree in Criminal Justice. Jenny is delighted to be part of the NTCOSS team in Alice Springs, having admired the work of NTCOSS for many years.

# Community Sector Development

## Food for thought - Managers Skill Swap Breakfasts

The 'Managers Skills Swaps' kicked off in February this year in response to feedback from member organisations who felt there was a need for a network where workforce issues specific to the NT community sector, could be discussed. This was especially relevant for smaller organisations that did not have the capacity to engage a human resource specialist.

The Skill Swaps are conducted as informal breakfasts for managers and senior human resource staff. Each session has an overarching theme with varied topics such as performance management of staff, recruitment, award modernization, ramifications of the pay equity case and the introduction of the 'Working with Children' card. The ninety minute sessions are full of discussion and exchange of ideas, contacts and resources.

Six breakfasts were held in 2010 with a total of 49 people from various organisations in attendance. The unique opportunity for smaller organisations to network and swap skills with colleagues from larger organisations was of great value. Many participants formed supportive relationships reaching well beyond the meetings.

The skill swaps are also very cost effective, with NTCOSS taking a coordination role and other member organization offering to share the hosting load. Thank you to the Somerville Community Service, Anglicare, and NT Chamber of Commerce who supported the breakfasts this year.

The managers skill swaps make use of the wealth of existing knowledge within the NT community sector, and the generosity of the participants to engage and guide each other is overwhelming. NTCOSS has made a commitment to continue to facilitate the skill swaps through 2011, with the first meeting to be held in February. If you would like to be on the mailing list for these events please contact Janine Sims on 8948 2665 or email: [janine@ntcoss.org.au](mailto:janine@ntcoss.org.au)

**Janine Sims**  
Sector Development Coordinator

**Does your organisation need help  
in understanding how  
Income Management works?**



**8982 1111  
1800 812 953**

**Darwin Community Legal Service -  
Income Management Community Legal  
Education**

Darwin Community Legal Service's (DCLS) Welfare Rights Team are running a project on the new income management system. As part of this project DCLS can support your organisation's work with income managed individuals. DCLS offers training sessions and workshops on income management to staff and volunteers of agencies as well as individuals faced with income management. Training can cover the income management legal framework including exemptions, review and appeal rights and practical tips for dealing with income management.

For further information please contact  
Jennifer Scott on 08 8982 1111 or  
[Jennifer.Scott@clc.net.au](mailto:Jennifer.Scott@clc.net.au)

## Protecting the Children

I have recently been appointed as the Child and Family Development Advisor within NTCOSS. My position is funded by NT Families and Children and has been created in response to the 'Growing Them Strong, Together' Report. I started this position on 5 October.

My position will assist in identifying the roles, capacity and resources needed of community organisations, in particular Indigenous organisations, in a new child protection system. There will be a specific focus on the Territory Growth Towns. The aim of the position is to build collaborative relationships between the Department of Families and Children and the community sector. Our task is to design a new service system which has the capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect by better supporting vulnerable children and families.

The report 'Growing Them Strong' found children and their families were experiencing significant unmet basic needs. The statutory system in the culturally complex setting of the Territory, is overwhelmed by the workload, and the community sector activity in the sector is under-resourced and under-developed.

I have started my consultation process by talking to many Indigenous and non-Indigenous services here in Darwin, and facilitating a forum to hear the sector's concerns. The well-attended forum started a discussion about the short-comings of the current system, and developed some ideas on how the system could be improved into the future.

I have been down to Katherine for a KWILS (Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service) Annual Forum. This gave me the opportunity to listen to women's voices from the Katherine region, from Timber Creek, and all the way to Borroloola. I also went to Alice Springs and to Ntaria to get a picture of issues in Central Australia.

Issues identified in urban centres have been mainly concerned difficulties in building collaborative relationships with the Department of Families and Children - something the department is very much aware of and is committed to changing. The need to better include families and communities into decision making was also highlighted. Workers were also concerned about the lack of funding and resources within the sector.

Concerns in remote areas so far have focused on the lack of infrastructure for services, the time-frames around the negotiation of land leases and the lack of housing for workers, to the point that funding for family services has to be returned to funding bodies as positions cannot be filled due to accommodation shortages.

The fear of 'payback' if local people notify child protection or DV incidents is also a big issue in remote communities. People expressed feelings of disempowerment as a consequence of the local government reform and the shire roll out. Many people who were formerly employed by the community councils are now unemployed, partly because the shires' recruitment processes cannot be accessed without comparatively high levels of literacy and computer skills.

The partnerships I work with are:

The still to be established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NT Children, Youth and Family Peak Body. The Peak body will take on a sector development, policy and training role.

The Department has now appointed Lee-Anne Jarrett Sims to work in partnership with me to develop a coordinated approach so the government and the community sector can better support families and children in the NT.

I am looking forward to working with government and community organisations in an effort to substantially improve the child protection system as it operates here in the NT.

**Lava Kohaupt**  
Child and Family Development Advisor

## Working for change: Building an Indigenous Community Sector Workforce Project

It's a common lament: Many non-government community organisations which are not Indigenous, but whose users often are, need Indigenous workers, but have enormous difficulty attracting them to their workplaces. Some services have specific positions which can only effectively be carried out by an Aboriginal person; others recognise the richness of experience and understanding that Aboriginal workers could bring to their organisation, and are keen to include such workers in their workforce. While a few organisations are successful in attracting Indigenous workers, many aren't. And often, once a worker is employed, they do not stay long.

In response to this issue, NTCOSS developed a project to support organisations in finding ways to attract more Indigenous workers to their workplaces. In an environment of limited and transient workers, as well as prohibitively expensive housing and relatively low pay rates for NGOs, attracting and retaining workers in the Northern Territory is difficult at the best of times. Attracting and retaining Indigenous workers is more complex because of the different needs of many Indigenous workers relating to community and family responsibilities. An organisation must find ways to honour those needs while maintaining an integrity of service.

The essence of any success in supporting staff effectively is building relationships and developing trust. Doing this with Indigenous staff also requires a willingness to embrace new cultural values and to turn some long-held practices on their heads if necessary, such as modifying job advertisements and the interview process, making the language of work more accessible, being flexible in managing work hours, and being willing to discuss and assess each new circumstance as it arises. But most importantly it comes back to building strong relationships both with the whole Indigenous community as well as with a new worker.

Building relationships and modifying workplace practices require time – that rarest and most precious of resources in community services work. The workers I've met are deeply committed to social change and to making a difference in their communities, both with their colleagues and their service users. While limited funding and increased demands often mean that there is little time to work through the plethora of issues

associated with developing different employment strategies, they are still finding the time somehow to develop strategies to adapt to these complex needs.

As the worker employed in this project, I've had the privilege of meeting some remarkable people as I've gathered information and consulted with services. One of the outcomes of the project will be a resource outlining and discussing the wide range of strategies which people have been willing to share and to try. Yet there are no easy answers, and each new strategy will have to be tried and modified to fit the needs of the specific organisation and worker. But in the long run that's what this project is about – learning to think outside the square and becoming creative in the development of inclusive workplace practices, and building strong, vibrant relationships within the Northern Territory community sector.

**Helen Beeby**

Building an Indigenous Workforce Project Officer

**NT Council of Social  
Service Inc**

*Working for a fair and  
sustainable  
Northern Territory*

## Red Cross in the NT Community

Red Cross is committed to working with the most disadvantaged people, at their most vulnerable times, in the most disadvantaged places. To ensure we are effective at doing this we have focused our efforts on seven priority areas. Following is a list of those areas, and what we are doing in the Territory to address them.

**1. Strengthening disaster and emergency services.** Red Cross has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health and Families and Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services to ensure a suite of services are provided during times of disaster. These include personal support, taking registrations and inquiries for people affected by a disaster, transportation of vulnerable people to and from cyclone shelters in Darwin, management of public appeals and provision of after emergency support designed to aid recovery. To strengthen community resilience during a disaster, we undertake a range of training programs and provide materials and information that people can use to better prepare themselves for any emergency.

**2. Addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage.** Our Family Support program in Palmerston and the Tiwi Islands works to strengthen vulnerable families with children up to 12 years old. Our youth engagement programs work to improve life choices and outcomes for young Aboriginal people through engaging them in positive activities that promote pathways to better health and well being, community capacity building and participation in school, work and social networks.

**3. Overcoming social exclusion by building bridges back into the community.** Telecross is a service where volunteers provide a daily phone call to socially isolated people (who are often elderly) to check on their well being. Meanwhile, we currently provide Personal Helpers and Mentors in Katherine and remote Top End Aboriginal communities, whereby trained mentors support and encourage people living with mental health issues to manage everyday tasks.

**4. Tackling entrenched locational disadvantage.** The return of Red Cross to Tennant Creek in 2009 allows us, under a place-based approach, to work closely with community members and organisations in the Barkly Shire, identifying and addressing gaps in service delivery.

**5. Addressing the impact of migration.** Through the Migration Support Program, many families torn apart by conflict have been reunited in Darwin after years of separation. Migrants in Darwin can also access the program to trace loved ones, receive support and access essential services. In accordance with our principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality Red Cross undertakes regular visits of Darwin immigration facilities.

**6. Championing International Humanitarian Law (IHL).** Globally, Red Cross is the champion of the Geneva Conventions – the laws of war which aim to limit the effects of armed conflict. As a champion of these laws it is our responsibility to educate the general public about the Geneva Conventions. In Darwin our IHL officer coordinates free IHL seminars that are open to the public.

**7. Increasing international aid and development.** Improving issues around health, water supply, sanitation and community health programming in the Asia Pacific continues to be a focus of our work. In Darwin we provide training and professional development for staff members of Red Cross in Timor Leste, which in turn enables them to share these skills with their colleagues and volunteers in Timor Leste.

To find out more about any of these services and others that we provide in the Territory, please contact 8924 3900, email [ntinfo@redcross.org.au](mailto:ntinfo@redcross.org.au) or visit [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)



**Australian Red Cross**  
THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Our new website is now up and running at [www.ntcoss.org.au](http://www.ntcoss.org.au). Check it out and let us now what you think. Please send comments to [admin@ntcoss.org.au](mailto:admin@ntcoss.org.au)



## NT Council of Social Service Inc.

*The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) is a peak body for community service organisations. Our key role is to advocate for social justice on behalf of people and communities affected by poverty and disadvantage.*

 

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### Latest News / Media Releases

- ▷ NTCOSS News Sheet October - November 2010
- ▷ "Minister McCarthy-please reconsider prison visits" - NTCOSS Media Release

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### Projects

- ▷ Child and Family Development
- ▷ Youth Policy
- ▷ Improved Services Project - Alcohol and Other Drugs

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### Submissions

- ▷ NTCOSS Submission on Alcohol Reforms 30 Nov
- ▷ Pre-Budget Submission 2011-2012
- ▷ Child Protection Inquiry

### Sector Development

- ▷ Jobs/Training Board
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