

WALGETT YOUTH PRIORITIES

a whole-of-community plan

produced by the Dharriwaa Elders Group
with the
Walgett River Towns Service Provider Network

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1. Introduction

The Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) wrote to Bob Carr in February 2004 requesting services for youth in Walgett. The letter cited the need for supported youth accommodation, local work training programs for juvenile offenders, counselling for troubled youth and their families, supervision of young offenders by elders and services that promote more opportunities for elders and youth to mix including a Granny and Pop Patrol. The DEG spoke of its intention to co-ordinate a whole-of-community submission to government for services and facilities to address the needs of young people in Walgett.

The DEG asked for the assistance of the River Towns Service Provider Network (RTSPN). The Network wholeheartedly supported the proposal and suggested that the Walgett Shire Council's draft "Youth Plan" should conform with the submission. They also suggested that a survey of current Walgett youth services would be a useful tool to reveal where the gaps are.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group undertook a "Walgett youth services" survey. A spreadsheet was emailed to Walgett youth service providers. Six responded and another 12 were questioned over the phone, with the spreadsheet completed on their behalf. No analysis of the services occurred. The results of this survey were discussed by a meeting of the RTSPN and the results are presented below. "Existing resources" listed are so far suggestions from the DEG and have not been endorsed by other organisations. Recommended motions have been included to simplify meeting processes and clearly define the community's resolutions.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group offers this submission to the Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (GGCWP) and a whole-of-community meeting for comment, with the aim of presenting a completed submission to COAG and the Premier Bob Carr with their endorsement. The NSW Dept of Aboriginal Affairs has offered to assist the DEG to organise a whole-of-community meeting.

2. Recommendations

- a. A 24-hour supervised supported emergency, casual and halfway house accommodation for youth will be provided in Walgett using (venue) which has been appropriately renovated and refurbished. This service will be managed by
- b. A 24hr mobile community patrol program using trained elder volunteers shall be resourced to outreach Walgett youth and deliver them to services as required
- c. A Walgett youth complex shall be built which incorporates a youth centre and multi-purpose sports complex. A community board will supervise the management of the complex and service. The service shall be operated by Skilled case management youth workers will operate the service. A train the trainer program will be established to train locals to provide ongoing casual workshops for youth and sports activities. Mental Health and other services will be provided from the youth centre.
- d. People skilled in starting up new enterprises will be brought in to mentor the establishment of new tourism and other businesses. A program will subsidize on-the-job training schemes in these new enterprises. A program will provide no-interest loans and other incentives including mentoring for Aboriginal start-ups. An on-the-job skills development program will be established that produces locally-needed infrastructure and accredited labour.
- e. Circle Sentencing and other initiatives that will provide more appropriate sentencing for Walgett juvenile offenders will be trialled, assessed and implemented if appropriate. Provide a service from a property between 30 – 70 kms away from Walgett where counselling and other healing services for troubled youth and juvenile offenders will be linked to a work and training program. This service will incorporate post-jail-release programs and a caravan park for families so they can participate in transition and rehabilitation programs.
- f. A range of measures will be introduced in Walgett to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol and gambling including “dry days”, the reduction of poker machines by 50%, smart cards which limit cash spent on gambling, stop club badge draws, limit housie and bingo. The impact of these measures will be assessed by the community after a reasonable period and the decisions reviewed accordingly.
- g. A position will be created to work with local organizations, to commission the local production of cultural awareness resources and to deliver cultural awareness training in Walgett. Production costs will be borne by funds pooled by service providers. This position will be supervised by an advisory committee which will perform welcoming activities voluntarily using funds provided to cover costs.
- h. A team of community-building experts will visit Walgett to investigate and measure the effectiveness of local services and train local service providers to measure their own effectiveness. This team will provide a report to the CWP and oversee the implementation of changes and improvements through the CWP.

3. Supported accommodation

- a. **Need:** There is an obvious need for 24hr supervised supported emergency and casual accommodation for youth. The Dharriwaa Elders Group, DoCS and Police expressed this need, and Walgett SAAP services supported it as they cannot accommodate children who are not accompanied by their mother, or any boys over the age of 12yrs. DoCS and Police need a place to take children who are at immediate risk and need to be removed from their homes. Youth and children wander the streets at night – sometimes because they do not have a safe place to go home to.
- b. **Answer:** A supported accommodation complex for youth shall be established that includes single units for older youth, and group units for younger children. Units will be grouped around a shared kitchen, dining room, activity centre area. The service shall be operated by skilled staff supervised by an Aboriginal Board.
- c. **Resources**
 - i. **Existing:** Management - Walgett SAAP Services. Euragai Goondi, the old Nurses Home or Leisureworld could be used if renovated appropriately
 - ii. **Required:** funding to set-up and operate the service
- d. **Recommendation:** A 24-hour supervised supported emergency, casual and halfway house accommodation for youth will be provided in Walgett using (venue) which has been appropriately renovated and refurbished. This service will be managed by

4. Community Patrol

- a. **Need:** A 24 hr service is required to troubleshoot / case-manage youth. Troubled youth will not self-present, so an outreach/ proactive delivery is required (on the streets). The youth requiring emergency accommodation, nutritious meals and/or diversionary activities as a crime prevention strategy need to be found and taken to the service they require. In addition, Dharriwaa Elders expressed the desire to supervise troubled youth. There is a need to foster closer links between youth and elders so that self-discipline, cultural identity and community development can be fostered.
- b. **Answer:** A 24 hr mobile community patrol be resourced to outreach to Walgett youth. It will provide nutritious light meals (like soup & Johnny cakes etc) to attract young people at night. It will be manned by trained, rostered elders who receive non-financial incentives to participate. Participants will be resourced to undertake training in legal, crisis response and counselling skills and to develop written policies. It will be managed by which is advised by an Elders Advisory Committee. It will host activities that create better relationships of respect between youth and elders.
- c. **Resources**
 - i. **Existing:** Dharriwaa Elders Group, the model for Dharriwaa Walaays, Giyaali program, Walgett Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (CWP)

- ii. Required:** Skilled management with Elders Advisory Committee, elders participation in delivery of services, bus, program and core funding
- d. Recommendation:** A 24hr mobile community patrol program using trained elder volunteers shall be resourced to outreach Walgett youth and deliver them to services as required

5. Youth Centre and Youth Activities

- a. Need:** There is a need for case-management of youth to ensure they access a range of services including mental health, anger management, domestic violence and other types of counseling services, health and nutrition programs, supported accommodation, education and skills development, employment opportunities etc. Troubled youth will not self-present so there needs to be a place that attracts youth with skilled staff who can direct them towards the services they need, and mentor them to successfully access these services (which ideally would be under the same roof). There is also a need for youth crime prevention / diversionary activities outside of school hours which would provide structured activities in afternoons, some nights and weekends. Most agencies affirm the need to support talented young sportsmen and women. Group 15 football & girls sport activities with Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal teams needs to be restarted and supported by all agencies. There is a need to develop, promote and enforce a code of sports practice, especially for spectator behaviour, and to develop sports activities for younger children under 8. The Walgett Community College has noted the great success of its Circus Skills program. All service providers acknowledge the talent of Walgett youth in the art, music, and performance.
- b. Answer:** A youth centre which attracts youth to “hang-out”. This might mean that it includes a canteen and pool tables etc. It would be attached to a multi-purpose sports centre incorporating a gym and media and internet centre. It would provide structured and unstructured activities for youth including sports training and support including transport to sports events and other physical cultural expression activities, along with media, arts, music and performing activities. Skilled staff would unobtrusively provide mentoring and case-management services so that young people can access counseling, employment and hands-on training services which would also be supplied by the Centre working with local service providers. For example suitable local enterprises could be subsidized to provide on-the-job skills
- c. Resources:**
 - i. Existing:** Walgett Shire Council Games Facilitator position (needs to be fulltime in Walgett), Walgett Shire Council Youth Development Officer position, existing funding for football and netball, Heuristic Video (experienced media and internet training and production), Walgett Internet Centre facilities (need relocation), Police Citizens Youth Club resources, Walgett AMS counsellors, Lightning Ridge mental health team, employment agencies, Walgett Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (CWP), Euragai Goondi

- ii. **Required:** A Youth Centre that attracts young people and is staffed by skilled case-management / mentoring staff who channels youth through counselling and other activities. The Youth centre will be in a complex which includes a Multi-purpose sports centre. This would preferably be located in an area of town where noise is not a problem – ie on Duff St or industrial area not near the hospital. A “train the trainer” program will be established so that locals can be trained up to provide casual media, internet, arts, circus skills, performing arts, music, games and sports facilitation and coaching services. Management services would be needed, which should be supervised by a Community Board. Resources for core and program funding would be required. A bus would be required for travel to regular sporting and camping etc activities.
- d. **Recommendations:** A Walgett youth complex shall be built which incorporates a youth centre and multi-purpose sports complex. A community board will supervise the management of the complex and service. The service shall be operated by Skilled case management youth workers will operate the service. A train the trainer program will be established to train locals to provide ongoing casual workshops for youth and sports activities. Mental Health and other services will be provided from the youth centre.

6. Employment and Skills Development

- a. **Need:** The only programs for hands-on training and employment for young people are currently provided by the School-to-Work program provided by the Dept of Education and traineeships delivered through BEST Employment. There is high unemployment, a growing youth population, low school retention and a big need for basic life skills eg: drivers licenses, budgeting, literacy, written and oral communication, nutrition and healthy living, computer skills, farm working skills. There is also a need for skilled staff for the other programs in this plan. Young people need mentored work experience and mentored assistance through training programs. This includes someone with transport to physically go and get them and take them to the job or training. There is a need for new industry development as the old agricultural industries can no longer provide much local employment.
- b. **Answer:** A portfolio of enterprises including an Aboriginal cultural tourism enterprise, an eco-tourism enterprise, a tourism retail outlet, and a service station at a prime location 5 kms out of town which would incorporate oil based and hydrogen fuels, a café and vehicle repairs workshop. These enterprises will be subsidized to incorporate on-the-job training programs. An on-the-job skills development program similar to the very successful “Red Scheme” of the 1970s should be established. This will take trainees away from Walgett to train for a month in a variety of trades. After this period the trainees will decide which trade they wish to take up. They will then be mentored through an apprenticeship program which will include working on local infrastructure employment creation programs with skilled supervision so

that nationally-recognized skills accreditation is achieved. The current Walgett Saleyards was built by the old Red Scheme. Working together with the Council, the CDEP and Work for the Dole program, employment creation programs could be used to build badly-needed infrastructure for the town.

c. Resources:

- i. **Existing:** TAFE, Walgett Community College, BEST Employment, CDEP, Walgett Shire Council infrastructure programs, Nova Employment, Centrelink programs, Dharriwaa Elders Group, the Namoi Valley Structural Adjustment funding, Walgett Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (CWP)
- ii. **Required:** case-management and mentored training and employment services, funding for infrastructure employment creation projects, funding to subsidize new industries and mentor their start-up

- d. Recommendation:** People skilled in starting up new enterprises will be brought in to mentor the establishment of new tourism and other businesses. A program will subsidize on-the-job training schemes in these new enterprises. A program will provide no-interest loans and other incentives including mentoring for Aboriginal start-ups. An on-the-job skills development program will be established that produces locally-needed infrastructure and accredited labour.

7. Young Offenders

- a. **Need:** Work and training programs for young offenders in Walgett. Need supervision of young offenders by community including elders. Need counselling including mental health services targeted for youth and their families as required. Need follow-up after sentencing and jail-release including employment opportunities.
- b. **Answer:** Provide outreach case management / mentoring service to find and assess needs and refer youth to services and activities provided by youth and other services. Provide more appropriate sentencing for juvenile offenders through circle sentencing and other initiatives. Provide counselling and other healing services which can be linked to a work and training program on a property nearby which would also incorporate post-jail-release programs and a caravan park for families so they can participate in transition and rehabilitation programs.

c. Resources:

- i. **Existing:** Circle Sentencing program, Dept of Juvenile Justice Program, Dharriwaa Elders Group , Lightning Ridge Mental Health team, Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service, CDEP, TAFE
- ii. **Required:** counselling and other services, a working property, local enterprises which can offer mentored work experience training, support required to engage elders in the supervision of young offenders

- d. Recommendations:** Circle Sentencing and other initiatives that will provide more appropriate sentencing for Walgett juvenile offenders will be trialled, assessed and implemented if appropriate. Provide a service from a property

between 30 – 70 kms away from Walgett where counselling and other healing services for troubled youth and juvenile offenders will be linked to a work and training program. This service will incorporate post-jail-release programs and a caravan park for families so they can participate in transition and rehabilitation programs.

8. Family and Community Development programs

- a. **Need:** Programs to target underlying causes of domestic violence. Parenting programs eg for kids over 8, a program to address the neglect of children eg for families not making their children attend school. All agencies need reporting mechanism so that police or whoever can deal with family violence. Community mediation service / healing. Alcohol & gambling management. Air conditioned venue for entertainment that isn't a licensed premises.
- b. **Answer:** Policy and possibly legislative outcomes are required to bring in “dry days” whereby licensed premises are closed on “pay days” (FYI the majority of aged pensioners are paid their pensions on Thursday, most others on Wednesday). The number of poker machines in Walgett should be reduced by 50%. Smart cards attached to people’s bank accounts would be introduced which make it impossible for individuals to spend more than a limited amount on gambling. Club badge draws should be stopped, especially on pension days and CDEP pay days. Housie and bingo should be banned on “pay days”. The impact of these measures should be assessed by the community after a reasonable period and the decisions reviewed accordingly.
- c. **Resources**
 - i. **Existing:** Circle Sentencing program, Dept of Juvenile Justice Program, Dharriwaa Elders Group, police licensing officers, the Liquor Accord, Walgett Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (CWP)
 - ii. **Required:** counselling and other services, property incorporating work training, local enterprises which can offer mentored work experience training, support required to engage elders in the supervision of young offenders
- d. **Recommendations:** A range of measures will be introduced in Walgett to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol and gambling including “dry days”, the reduction of poker machines by 50%, smart cards which limit cash spent on gambling, stop club badge draws, limit housie and bingo. The impact of these measures will be assessed by the community after a reasonable period and the decisions reviewed accordingly.

9. Staffing issues

- a. **Need:** Ongoing staff development, incentives to attract, support and retain skills in Walgett. This includes the production of cultural awareness resources and a welcoming committee and activities to support new workers in town. Need a support program to develop leadership for people involved in child activities. This will include development of processes and policies so that pedophiles & other sexual offenders can't be working in youth activities. Need

appropriate locally delivered training and accreditation for existing workers so skills are recognized.

- b. **Answer:** A position shall be created to support the recruiting, development and retention of staff supervised by an advisory “welcoming committee”. This committee shall oversee the production of locally produced cultural awareness resources from funds pooled by service – providers. The program will be resourced to assist with welcoming events like BBQs, picnics, trips to significant sites and town activities like a local amateur theatre group
- c. **Resources**
 - i. **Existing:** Dharriwaa Elders Group cultural promotion resources and a group of elders to supervise the use of cultural material, the Walgett Shire Council, The River Towns Project, The Walgett Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party (CWP), Walgett Police, Walgett DoCS, funds to service providers to provide cultural awareness training for their staff
 - ii. **Required:** one funded position, existing funds pooled for the local production of cultural awareness resources and design of local cultural awareness training program, small funds to assist welcoming activities, access to bus
- d. **Recommendations:** A position will be created to work with local organizations, to commission the local production of cultural awareness resources and to deliver cultural awareness training in Walgett. Production costs will be borne by funds pooled by service providers. This position will be supervised by an advisory committee which will perform welcoming activities voluntarily using funds provided to cover costs.

10. Better use of resources for community development

- a. **Need:** The effectiveness of programs in Walgett need to be measured and evaluated. Duplications and redundancies in services need to be eliminated. Effective services need recognition, development and support. Local service providers need training in cost-benefit analysis and program assessment.
- b. **Answer:** A team of external community development experts “The Community Development Review Team” with investigative powers work together with local service providers to review the effectiveness of services and make recommendations to the CWP for improvements so that community building efforts are supported and limited resources aren’t wasted. We have the Project Management for the Housing and Infrastructure program – now we need Community Development Review Team if this town is serious about managing community development. The team needs to be made of experts with no links to local organizations. This team also provides training to local service providers in skills to assess the value of their programs.
- c. **Resources**
 - i. **Existing:** River Towns Project, Walgett Community Working Party
 - ii. **Required:** a team of community building experts to review services and report to the CWP and their expenses.

- d. **Recommendation:** A team of community-building experts will visit Walgett to investigate and measure the effectiveness of local services and train local service providers to measure their own effectiveness. This team will provide a report to the CWP and oversee the implementation of changes and improvements through the CWP