

Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku: A Strategy for Well Being

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Overview

The UPK Strategy has always been to secure the physical environment within which people can make healthy life choices. This requires inputs from all levels of government to, for example, agree on responsibilities for the provision of essential services and infrastructure or ensure the provision of essential services such as power, sewage, water and roads alongside new housing construction. Unfortunately governments' capacity for forward planning and coordination has often been far from optimal resulting in families being unable to carry out the Healthy Living Practices (enshrined in the National Partnership Agreements) essential to promoting their health and well being. State governments and the Australian government continue to debate funding and program outcome responsibility in areas such as waste management, maintenance of roads and the upgrading of water and wastewater systems. This leads in turn to serious service delivery and infrastructure deficits and gaps that impact negatively on public and population health.

Environmental Health Workers

Funded primarily by SA Housing during the 2010/2011 financial year the scope of the program has remained broad, flexible and responsive to local demands. Two teams of Environmental Health Workers (EHW) operate across the APY Lands and over the past twelve months have carried out the following works program:

Non-trade repairs [housing]	298
Yards slashed [fire management]	157
Rubbish removed	108
Dog health	63
House / gutters cleaned	16
Door furniture repairs	77
Sanitary drainage repairs	47
Temperature control	64

This is not an all inclusive list as there were many other jobs undertaken e.g. firewood collection, cemetery work, providing assistance to the SA Health Environmental Health Officers and housing contractors, and installing bin stands. The program has proven to be popular with many requests from local people seeking employment.

The Environmental Health Workers had the opportunity to undertake pest control training under the ACAAP program with the Australian Defence Force. Three Pukatja men graduated from an army environmental health course with the possibility of employment once funds become available from SA Health.

This year saw the resignation of Peter De Rose who worked for eight years as the Anangu Public Health Officer. I would like to thank Peter for his long-term commitment and the diligence and expertise he brought to the role. The Board made a special presentation to Peter in acknowledgement of his long and important contribution to the organisation as a whole and to the UPK Program in particular.



Dog Health

FaHCSIA continues to fund this program. Dr Robert Irving together with the EHWs provide the necessary services. Over the last 12 months they have put out 2,952 parasitic control baits, delivered 508 fertility control injections and removed 380 dogs from the overall dog population.

Since 2003 over 12,341 parasitic control baits have been fed to the dogs, 1,873 fertility control injections applied and over 2,250 dogs put down. The program continues to attract a high level of direction, interest and compliance from community members. Dr Robert Irving has been servicing the APY Lands on a continual basis since 1996. This outstanding program has been reliant on the continuity of his expertise and commitment. Fortunately, Robert continues to find his involvement personally rewarding and challenging.



Food Security

It is concerning that after ten years of successful work, governments remain reluctant to fund the Mai Wiru Regional Stores Aboriginal Corporation. This is especially so given that Mai Wiru is an excellent example of community driven policy and program development and implementation. With very high levels of Anangu engagement and direction, Mai Wiru remains critical to ensuring food security on the APY Lands.

The Health Council continues to participate in the governance arrangements of the Mai Wiru Incorporation, provide expert advice and advocacy where requested, and participate in fora that aim to develop state and federal food security policies and strategies.

Climate Impacts

Over the last 12 months the APY Lands has experienced major rain events resulting in local flooding affecting the clinic and aged care facility at Pukatja and staff housing at Pipalyatjara. Mike Last was contracted to assess what is required to mitigate flooding at these sites. He worked with the EHWs and produced flood mitigation plans that are being implemented with support from the EHWs.

Another outcome of the high rainfall has been an extreme build-up of fuel loads in the form of buffel grass, posing a significant fire threat. The EHWs have reduced fuel loads through a slashing program.



Communications

Good public health outcomes rely heavily on good management. This is underpinned by all Anangu having access to relevant information necessary for decisions to be made in a participatory and inclusive fashion. The reintroduction of the HF Radio system on the APY Lands will promote participation and inclusion in decision-making. Mike Last conducted a feasibility study and the Health Council was successful in attracting funds from both FaHSCIA and DPC/AARD on behalf of APY Land Council. Installation will take place in the coming financial year.

