



Kurdiji

‘Shield – to protect and discipline’

Lajamanu Law and Justice Group



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 30th January, 2012

RE: DIVERSION OF PHONES TO DARWIN HURTING REMOTE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The Lajamanu Law and Justice Group (or ‘Kurdiji’) calls on the NT Police to modify the current practice of automatically diverting all after hours phone calls to police to a Darwin-based call centre. This practice means that people in Lajamanu are unable to directly contact their local police members in times of need.

Both the Kurdiji and the Lajamanu Night Patrol have multiple examples where community members and Night Patrol workers have called Lajamanu police station for assistance and have experienced significant delays. The Kurdiji believe that significant delays in police responses present increased risk of escalation of incidents with corresponding risks to public safety.

Many community sites and houses are referred to by their colloquial names rather than a street address, which local police are aware of. Joe Japanangka James, a senior man and former long-serving Police Aide, has experienced great frustration in dealing with telephone operators unfamiliar with Lajamanu people and place names and has spent valuable time explaining and identifying places that local police would recognise at first instance. In addition to the compromised quality of information relayed to local police by telephone operators’ lack of understanding of local names and sensitivities, frustration with this process has led to an under-reporting of crime and a feeling of powerlessness.

Joe Japanangka James is also concerned about not being able to stop grog in the community. Japanangka says:

“We are a dry community and our Night Patrol and elders have been told we are not allowed to confiscate grog off young people bringing grog into the community. We are told that it is against the law if we try to take the grog off these men and take it to the police station because we could be charged with possessing alcohol ourselves, even though we are just trying to stop the grog getting into our community. The police say we need to call them when we find people in cars breaking the grog rules,

but our phone calls get sent to Darwin call centre where they don't understand the names and places and people when we call them.

"We think the current system of sending the phone calls up to a call centre in Darwin is not a good idea and will eventually lead to a death in our community. We think the law should be changed so that the Night Patrol and elders can take grog off people and take it to the police station.

"We are worried that the above issues are taking away people's confidence in police and hurting the relationships we have with formed with our local police. We know it is not the local policemen's fault. We would like to work together with the police to make Lajamanu a safe and grog free community and this current practice stops us doing that."

Kurdiji Members:

Henry Cook Jakamarra
Leslie Robertson Jampijinpa
Jerry Patrick Jangala
Joe James Japanangka
Geoffrey Mathews Jakamarra
Norbert Patrick Jampijinpa
Robert George Japaljarri
Wanta Steven Patrick Jampijinpa
Wangapa Geoffrey Barnes Jungarrayi
Peter Jigili Jangala
Nanginarra (Elizabeth Ross) Nungarrayi
Doris Lewis Nakamarra
Tracey Patrick Napaljarri
Agnes Donnelly Napanangka
Kitty Simon Napanangka
Sharon Anderson Nampijinpa
Judy Walker Napaljarri
Valerie Patterson Napanangka
Lynette Tasman Napangardi
Robin Payton Napaljarri
Patsy Herbert Nangala

Contact: To speak to the Kurdiji contact Joe James via Robert Chapman on 0437 218 644