

Workshop Report

Walgett

Remote Service Delivery

Partnership



Wednesday 26 August 2009

Workshop Report

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Summary

This Report details the key outcomes and discussion items at the Walgett Community Workshop regarding the Remote Service Delivery (RSD) Partnership held on Wednesday 26 August 2009 at Euragai Goondi, Duff Street Walgett.

More than 120 people attended the Workshop, approximately half being members of the wider community and half being employees of services (government and non-government).

Participants identified a range of priority needs spanning key areas for 'closing the gap' for Aboriginal people, particularly in areas of health, housing, education, training, employment and business/enterprise development. While some of the solutions identified required funding many more indicated possibilities from better working together and aligning policy with the intended targets and outcomes.

There was a Walgett Community Working Party meeting held early the same day where many issues relevant to the RSD were raised, as was the case at an informal meeting between the RSD Team and the Men's Group.

The members of the RSD Team frequently commented how impressed they were with the way the Walgett community has engaged with this opportunity and the many ways that the community has taken leadership to address social, cultural and economic needs.

The content of this Report is presented in approximately the same order that discussions occurred and photographs of the whiteboard notes for the day are included in the Appendix.

Agreed Actions and Next Steps are summarised at the end of the Report.

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About the RSD Partnership

The Community Workshop was Chaired by Uncle George Fernando.

Following the Welcome to Country by Mrs Kennedy an overview of the Remote Service Delivery Program was given with presentations by:

- Brian Gleeson, Coordinator General, Remote Service Delivery Partnership, Australian Government
- Jody Broun, Chief Executive, Aboriginal Affairs Department of Human Resources
- Tom Warren, Manager Regional Operations Centre (Dubbo), Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.



The key messages were:

- Listening to the community is central to the success of the RSD Partnership, to inform the service focus and priorities. The belief is that community driven solutions make the most difference and local leadership is really important;
- The RSD Partnership is a priority initiative, signed off by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Premier Nathan Rees. The focus is to make improvements and changes to “close the gap” and benefit Aboriginal people, working across jurisdictions and agencies, working through red tape to get things done. There will be reporting and accountability put in place to demonstrate change and progress;
- The RSD Partnership is expected to “push boundaries” and provide opportunity for new ways of doing business that build on existing initiatives and improve the quality of decision making;

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- The need to identify solutions and ways forward to the issues and problems by identifying the strengths, assets and stories that we can build upon that can make a significant difference;
- Employment and economic development are especially key, including strengthening the financial sustainability of local organisations (such as the Men's Group);
- The Walgett Community Working Party is a key local governance structure for the RSD Partnership work;
- While there is a modest budget for this work (on average \$1m per community per year for six years), the RSD is not about money for Walgett. Rather the RSD is about working smarter with the services and resources the government already has, changing the way we work and working in partnership with the community and across agencies; and,
- Communication will be very important throughout this work and the community will be kept involved and informed. Suggestions are welcome about how best to achieve these goals.

Many members of the RSD Team had earlier attended the Walgett Community Working Party Meeting and met with a range of community Elders and members. This included brief visits to the Men's Group and the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service.

Several positive remarks were made in the Community Meeting by the RSD Team about how impressive the achievements and efforts of the Walgett community were, without meaning to be ignorant of the the very real challenges facing the community, and how the energy and goodwill demonstrated by many community members could form a strong foundation for the RSD work.

This Workshop is the first step in engaging the community and is intended to provide a very preliminary overview of the RSD Partnership and to identify community priorities.

Following comprehensive mapping of existing services and consultation with the community and other stakeholders, a Walgett RSD Implementation Plan will be completed. The target date to complete this is December 2009.

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Community Questions about the RSD

Several questions were asked to clarify the RSD and the responses are detailed below:

- The RSD is not the Northern Territory Intervention (Emergency Response). At the same time though there are options for the community to voluntarily opt-in to welfare management if desired (such as was done in Bathurst Island).
- The Baseline Mapping of services being undertaken in preparation of the Walgett Local RSD Implementation Plan will include Walgett Shire Council. The Baseline Mapping will be available to the community.
- A Coordinator General website is being created to communicate and share information.
- The RSD Partnership works to address service delivery issues to “close the gap” for Aboriginal people. An aspect of this is highlighting and addressing poor performance. Also, there will be a 'name and fame' strategy to highlight areas of good performance (for example, along the lines of the high profile coverage of the positive impact that swimming pools have had on the health of children in some remote Aboriginal communities, eg. Yirkala).
- Other points raised have been incorporated into the *Priorities, Issues and Opportunities* section below to avoid repetition in this Report.

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Presentations on Existing Strategies

Presentations were made on several key existing local strategies with the purpose of identifying priority directions and opportunities to work together with the RSD Partnership. The key messages given are summarised below.

Walgett Community Working Party, Community Action Plan by George Fernando, Chair

- The Community Working Party has been developed to support working in partnership with government
- There is a need to listen and talk more often than has been the case in the past
- Many houses are run down and past efforts have been 'bandaids' only

Dharriwaa Elders Group

- As no formal request to present had been received prior to the community meeting so it was agreed that the Elders could make a presentation at a later date, including a submission to the RSD Team in writing

Walgett Shire Council by Carole Medcalf

- Council has a range of plans under Local Government requirements and is now working on its first ever 20 year Strategic Plan
- Funding has been received for infrastructure development including playgrounds, skate park, tourism, public toilets and beautifying main streets
- Council's Social Plan applies to all villages across the Shire. It identifies that there are few cultural outlets and there is budget set aside for art and culture-based activities
- Council would like to ensure that the RSD Baseline Mapping builds on and does not duplicate the LGA Mapping underway right now

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Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service by Christine Corby, Chief Executive Officer

- WAMS has 50 employees and delivers a wide range of health and wellbeing programs to Walgett and the wider region
- Funding conditions play a large part in shaping governance and the nature of these programs
- Reporting to different funding bodies (federal and state) is difficult
- WAMS has developed a range of partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding both locally and regionally and is committed to working together
- A key need is for fully trained and qualified medical staff so that WAMS is able to broaden its financial base to include accessing Medicare (such as bulk-billing)
- The loss of air-based services (RFDS contract gone to REX) is having a significant negative impact on a range of services (diabetes educator, midwife, dermatology, drug & alcohol practitioner etc.) and on costs (expensive private charter flights are now required for medical services by air). The hospital is also being affected by this change
- WAMS is trying hard to purchase a building in Dubbo (\$1.2m) to set up accommodation for Walgett community accessing services there
- Overall need is to bring services back to Walgett

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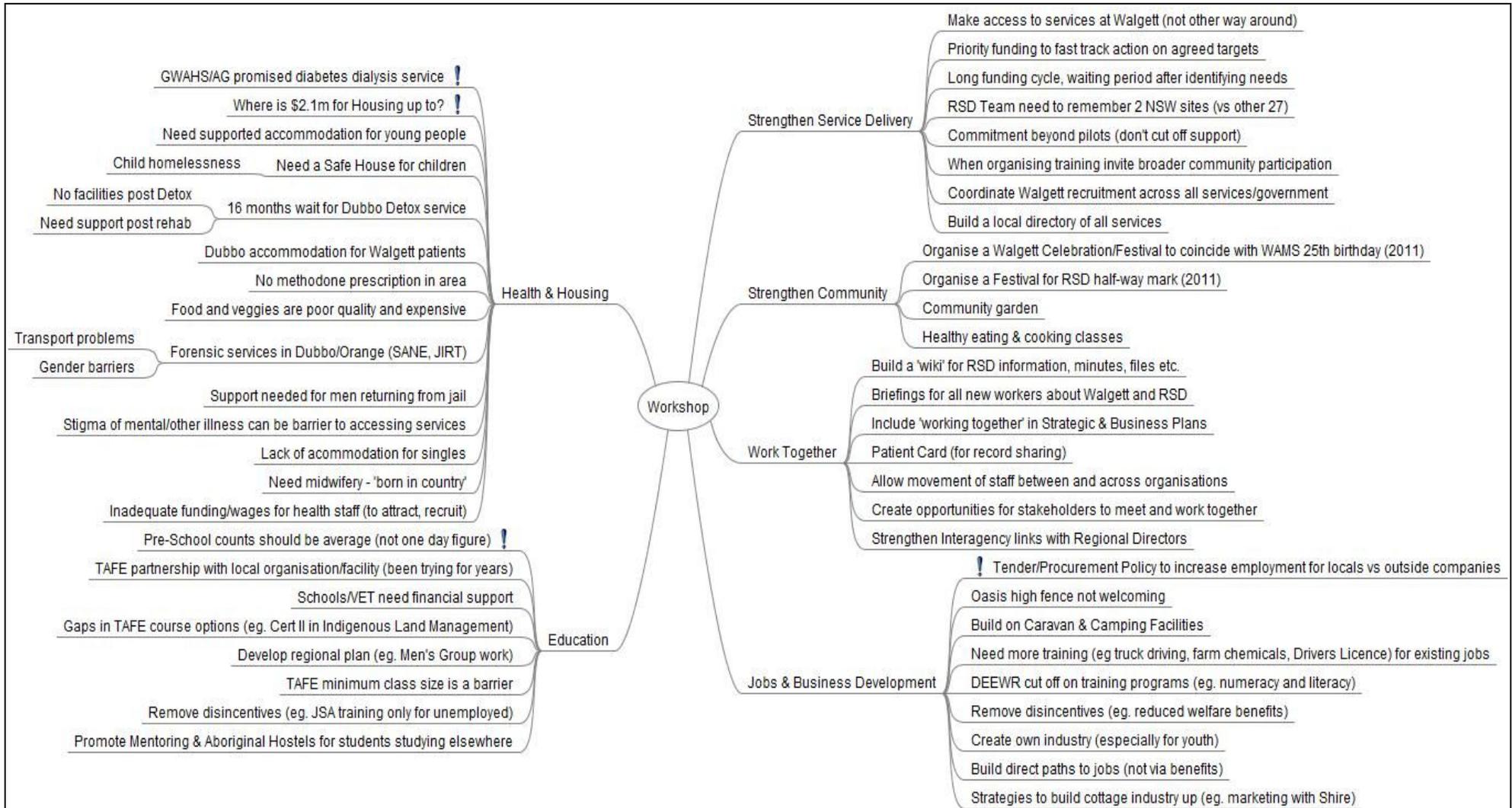


Men's Group by Ted Fields

- The Men's Group has recently leased a building to set up a permanent place and base for men and works to be a voice for Aboriginal men and provide access to services for men in crisis
- Currently has 35-40 members, with non-Indigenous members too
- Uncle Roy Barker at Lightning Ridge is working on a range of promising ideas such as micro-enterprises, training and practical activities to earn money, learn skills (and get out of the house and off the street). The leatherwork and artefacts is one example and is being helped by Uncle Roy at the Ridge though a vehicle is needed to be able to transport men to get there
- Popularity of the Group is shown by the fact that women and kids also want to be involved!
- A challenge with the training is that it is wanted and needed now – not in 3-6 months' time at TAFE – such as in culture heritage and landscape management
- Beyond the important social support given there are real needs for strengthening men's relationships, building leadership, post release programs, linkages with juvenile justice (so that probation interviews can be held somewhere other than the Courthouse!) and being a resource centre (eg. for RTA)

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Priorities, Issues and Opportunities



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Next Steps

The RSD Team are working to have the Walgett Local RSD Implementation Plan completed by December 2009. This includes comprehensive mapping of existing services, consultation with the community and other stakeholders and incorporating a review of existing plans.

The range of priorities, issues and opportunities will form part of the considerations of the RSD Team though there will be further consultation and engagement with the community throughout the six year period of this work.

The specific action items agreed at the Workshop were as follows:

<i>Action Items</i>				
ID	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Status
1	Investigate scope to use a 'Select Tender' to generate local jobs and contractors from the \$2.1m Housing Funding	Tom Warren		
2	Investigate options for a Tender/Procurement Policy to increase employment for locals vs outside companies	FaCHSIA		
3	Follow up GWAHS promised diabetes dialysis service	DAA	Follow up with GWAHS on status of the machine which is funded but yet to be paid for and not delivered to hospital	
4	Pre-School counts to determine the number of required places and amount of funding should be based on average counts rather than a census taken on one day only		Ensure Baseline Mapping includes pre-school counts for average demand throughout 2010 school year	
5	Ensure LGA Service Mapping is integrated into RSD Baseline Mapping			
6	Progress "Working Together" partnership approach to improve quality of decision making within local context through improved communication	ALL		

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Appendix – Whiteboard Notes

