

Katherine Times

YOUR TOWN & COUNTRY WEEKLY

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Binjari people want control

By TEGAN FORDER

RESIDENTS from Binjari want more control over what happens in their community to help stem the tide of violence and alcohol-fuelled crime.

The community of around 300 has experienced high levels of violence in the past several months, including three deaths.

Several residents told the *Katherine Times* they would like to see some of the power the community had under the old Binjari Council returned to the Binjari Community Aboriginal Corporation.

The Binjari Council had strong community support and had established a health centre, patrol, a store and a bus service.

When the administration failed four years ago, members lost employment opportunities, assets were sold and services were stopped except for the Binjari Health Service.

The introduction of alcohol restrictions in Katherine and the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) have added to alcohol-related problems and a lack of control by community members.

Community elder Jessie Brown said when the council was active they had a Binjari-run community patrol and a three-warning system which meant people causing trouble would be told to stop otherwise they would be banned from the community for a lengthy period.

"That was really good, it works alright," she said. She said these measures helped the community keep control of what was happening and also assisted with monitoring who was coming into Binjari.

"The council was really good...they had everything going here and then the money ran out and then when it stopped council went down the drain and everything stopped," she said.

"I want it the way it was...the first time when there was no drink. It used to be a safe and healthy place. It was a place where lots of people stayed here to get away from the alcohol."

The Katherine Interagency Tasking and Coordination Group (ITCG) identified Binjari as a community in crisis and developed a Problem Solving Plan (PSP) in October which was implemented in December.

Police are the leading agency in the ITCG which also includes representatives from Kalano, Katherine Town Council, the Northern Territory Department of Families and Children (NTFC), Mission Australia, the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) and Departments of Health, Education and Justice.

The PSP was developed in response to the increase in violent crime, child abuse and anti-social behaviour in the community.

Katherine Police Commander Jeanette Kerr said the ITCG was working on several main areas: law and order; child protection; coordination and leadership; alcohol management; transport and road safety; youth, health and wellbeing and community amenity.

Progress from the PSP is ongoing but some outcomes include Neighbourhood Watch conducting a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit of the community.

Continued page two.



Cody doing his thing in the Mt Isa Xstrata Rotary Rodeo Bull Ride last year where he won the coveted Isa Rodeo buckle, just after securing the open bull ride win at the Cloncurry Merry Muster. Photo: Mike Kenyon.

Tapp turns heads with his rides

LOCAL man Cody Tapp's outstanding rodeo riding triumphs have given him a serious shot at winning a title in this year's NT Sports Awards.

Cody, 26, was nominated by girlfriend Adele Mudge in the Qantas NT Sportsperon of the Year and the Local Performance of the Year categories for

open bull riding/rodeo.




He is currently overseas following the American Professional Bull Riding (APBR) circuit and won't make the presentation night in Darwin next Friday, but Adele said his father may attend.

She said Cody's pretty happy with

the recognition, being a previous runner-up in awards acknowledging his talent.

Cody made history last year with back-to-back open bull ride wins at the Cloncurry Merry Muster and Xstrata Mt Isa Rotary Rodeo.

Continued page 31.

<p>ALYN FORD LMVD291 KATHERINE</p> <p>SMART BUYS</p> <p>PHONE 8972 2128</p> <p><small>All Prices are drive away and include Govt. stamp duty & 6 months rego</small></p>	<p>Falcon XR6 \$34,990 Driveaway* Price includes prestige colours</p> <p>AAA 5 stars</p> <p>Fuel econ. 19.5L/100km Includes Bluetooth® and full iPod integration** 5 speed automatic Dynamic Stability Control ABS</p> 	<p>Piasta LX 5 Door \$19,990 Driveaway* Price includes prestige colours</p> <p>Fuel efficient 1.8L engine, 8.1L/100km with manual transmission Driver and front passenger airbags MP3/iPod connectivity** Bluetooth® with Voice Control*</p> 	<p>Focus LX Auto \$23,990 Driveaway* Price includes prestige colours</p> <p>ANCAP 5 stars</p> <p>4 speed automatic with Sequential Sports Shift EcoBoost® 1.6L engine, 6.2L/100km Dual front and side curtain airbags Dynamic Stability Control iPod/iPhone connectivity</p> 
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WHO'S MOST LIKELY

to have the smartest buys around?

FORD, OF COURSE

Art exhibition all in the family



Simmone Croft and daughter Lauren Croft with some of the artistic creations they will be exhibiting this Friday and Saturday.

THREE local ladies are hoping for a good turnout to their Renaissance Exhibition this Friday and Saturday, showcasing paintings, jewellery and photography.

Simmone Croft, daughter Lauren Croft and Simmone's sister Kim Scott are coming together for the first time to exhibit their talents and send a thank you to the community.

But they said it's also a social gathering. "It will be as much of a chin-wag as an exhibition," Lauren said.

Simmone and Kim both live in NSW, and are happy to spend some time back in the home town where their talents were born.

Simmone will be displaying 12 oil paintings, Lauren will be showing her handmade jewellery and Kim will be exhibiting photographic pieces and

brooches crafted from recycled materials.

Water has been a big inspiration in Simmone's recent work; a subject she said has stuck in her mind after surviving two floods in Katherine.

She said Kim has also drawn on her time here, with her expo work featuring childhood memories.

"I suppose it's a bit of an expression... (and) it's nice to do something in your home town," Simmone said.

She added she's watched Katherine's art sector grow since the '60s, and is amazed with local talent.

The exhibition opens 6pm this Friday and is again open from 10am till 3pm the next day in the June Tapp Room, Katherine Training Centre, Second Street.

> POLICE BRIEFS

There were six unlawful entries around Katherine this last week.

Two of these related to businesses in the CBD and one of them, a licensed premises, saw four men aged in their early 20s being arrested near the high level bridge soon after the break-in. They will appear in the Katherine court on April 6.

A 29-YEAR-OLD man was arrested on Monday following a serious aggravated assault.

The arrest followed the attendance at Katherine Hospital of a woman suffering severe burns to a large portion of her upper body.

It is believed the man and woman became involved in a domestic argument about one week ago, when it is alleged that the man poured a kettle of boiling water over the woman.

Unfortunately the matter was not reported at the time and she had not sought medical treatment for her injuries until late Sunday night. She has now been medivaced to Darwin Hospital for further treatment.

The male has been charged with assault causing serious harm and refused bail to appear at the Katherine Court.

Police attended Binjari Community on the March 12 and arrested a 24-year-old man for allegedly breaching the conditions of a Domestic Violence Order (DVO).

He then allegedly broke free of the officers and escaped custody when being arrested for breaching the conditions of a DVO order.

The man ran to a nearby vehicle and drove out of the community. He was later arrested and charged with a number of traffic offences as well as the domestic violence matters.

Community looks forward to improved life in Binjari

From page one.

Another result is the NT Police Peace at Home Unit made up of police members and the NTCF who have been engaging with women and children at Binjari for the past four months.

As a result, they have been delivering an eight-week workshop aimed at empowering women in the community.

Police and NTCF are also working in partnership with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) on issues such as domestic violence, mandatory reporting and child protection.

Commander Kerr said leadership and governance progress were long-term goals for the Binjari Community Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadaman Aboriginal Corporation but in the short term ITCG was working on law and order and community amenity.

She said Katherine Town Council had gone above and beyond working to remove stray dogs and maintaining infrastructure such as roads, kerbing and public areas.

Commander Kerr said police patrols have increased fourfold with a minimum of two patrols per shift daily during peak periods, and Kalano Community Patrol have also increased their services to Binjari.

She said police know Binjari is a priority and they do respond to all calls for service. Commander Kerr said they do engage with the community and do explain to people if they are unable to respond immediately to a call-out.

Since the recent death in the community on February 26, the mobile police station has been stationed in the community during the day but Commander Kerr said their resources were stretched to the limit and the mobile police station could not be out there indefinitely.

Having police stationed at Binjari would not necessarily solve all the problems, Commander Kerr said, saying extra resources would be more effectively used across the whole region.

"Police have recently identified two officers to focus solely on high visibility patrolling at Binjari community, with a focus on developing strong and trusting relationships with the local community members and the community has responded quite positively to this program," she said.

"In the past, an issue in terms of delivering a police service at Binjari has been the reluctance of community members to provide information about offending (particularly drug and alcohol offending) when it was occurring. More recently community attitudes seem to be changing, and police have been able to work with community members and act on information related to drug and alcohol offences."

Police intelligence analysts have undertaken extensive work in identifying potential offenders and have targeted people over warrants, drugs, domestic violence orders, child abuse and sex offenders.

Marijuana use, especially among Binjari youth, is a problem in the community and on November 25, police executed a drug search warrant on a long-term Binjari resident, which resulted in the arrest of a 61-year-old woman for possession and supply of cannabis and the summons of a 21-year-old man for possession of cannabis.

On February 27, police conducted a search of a residence which resulted in the summons of a 49-year-old man for possession of liquor in a prescribed area.

Since October, police have responded to 38 domestic disturbances, four aggravated assaults, three attempted suicides and six breaches of Domestic Violence Orders. In addition there have been significant child abuse investigations.

Commander Kerr said she does not see the latest death as an indication the situation is worsening.

"We have homicides across the whole community...three in five months that is scary...but these measures have been put in place and they are working. It's a long road..." she said.

Binjari elder Geoffrey Chappie Robinson said it had been a sad time for the community and since the last death, elders had been telling troublemakers to stay away and it had been quieter.

Jessie Brown said many people are scared. "It's been really terrible, really horrible. We don't know what to do," she said. "We're really really scared because of payback."

She said children were being exposed to domestic violence, drinking, drugs and assaults and were learning by watching what was happening to their parents.

"It makes me feel really sad inside. It's sad, you can hear people say they want to move out of here. Where do they go?"

Binjari Health Service Manager Peter Gazey said there is no central coordinator of services so there are gaps in what is being provided.

"There is no coordination in the community. The coordination of services being delivered doesn't happen," he said.

"The Corporation is not funded to deliver the services and requests from them and their concerns haven't been followed through by people delivering the services."

He said the things that used to be in place are no longer there such as a Binjari-run night patrol.

25-year-old Matthew Birdum used to work for Kalano Community Patrol and he said it would be good for Binjari to have their own.

He said First Aid training was important and the patrol would take people to the hospital and the Sobering Up Shelter and not bring them into the community intoxicated.

Another young Binjari resident Leonie Raymond said the grog in the community needed to stop and a patrol working out of the community would help.

"There is more violence, too much alcohol," Leonie, who has lived here all her life, said. "Kids are wandering around on the streets. No one tells them to go to sleep. I don't know what will happen."

Mr Gazey said in 1996 the community became a dry community and there were rules in place. He said the situation is now a lot worse and there is no control on who came into the community.

The recent incidents in the community have generally involved people from outside the community who have been visiting or using Binjari as a place to stay close to town.

"There needs to be a community coordinator so that structure can be put back in and support given back to the Corporation as a governing body..." Mr Gazey said.

He said the attitude to prohibition of alcohol needed to change and an emphasis on why drinking is a reaction to circumstances.

"There needs to be more effort in dealing with the problems leading to alcohol."

Another Binjari elder May Barron said there needed to be more co-operation and she believes the Government Business Manager, put in place under the intervention, is important for the community.

"There does need to be more co-operation - we all need to work together, no family affairs. Everyone chips in, everyone says if you're family is running amuck, you call the cops," she said.

She said the community having more power would also help the situation.

Commander Kerr said another part of the PSP was working with the local taxi operators to stop grog running and to reduce the number of intoxicated people being taken back to the community.

"There are those keen to work with the police and other agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour and others who just don't care," she said.

She said they were hoping to reach an agreement with the taxi operators and the Binjari community to ban alcohol and drugs in taxis and not bring intoxicated people back to the community. "We're still having difficulty getting all parties on board," she said.

The drinking camps along the road are also causing significant road safety issues, Commander Kerr said.

The ITCG was looking at having the area made an alcohol restricted area. She said they recognised this

may relocate the problem but they had to do something to minimise the immediate risks.

The ITCG was in the process of getting new pedestrian signage around the entrance to the community and also looking at reducing the speed limit.

A focus on providing young people with support and activities has also been part of the ITCG's PSP.

Mission Australia and YMCA, with the assistance of police, deliver programs and Commander Kerr said the two carried out a school holiday program at Christmas and will again do so over the four-week break.

She said the schools were really engaged with them and the Binjari Health Service was also invaluable.

"They're really important to the wellbeing of the community, and that's down to the dedication of the staff there," she said.

Mr Gazey said another positive was the short term funding they have secured for a Sport and Recreation officer which will be advertised for soon.

The Binjari Health Service is community-controlled via an memorandum of understanding between Wurli Wurlijang Health Service, Binjari Health Service and the Binjari Community Aboriginal Corporation.

The Katherine Times approached the Federal Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for a comment on the services being provided at Binjari under the NTER.

They did not respond to specific questions but responded with a statement: "Meetings occur on a regular basis between Government agencies and other stakeholder groups in Katherine in relation to the co-ordinate provision of services to Indigenous people in the Katherine area, which includes Binjari."

"The Australian Government is committed to making a difference to the lives of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory, including those living at Binjari."

The Katherine Times also contacted the Northern Territory Government for comment regarding the situation at Binjari and also whether extra police resources would be allocated.

A spokesperson for the Chief Minister Paul Henderson provided the following statement: "The NT Government has funded an extra 49 police officers for the Katherine region since 2003. We have also established an alcohol management plan for Katherine which places restrictions on the amount and types of alcohol sold in the region."

HAVE WE MISSED SOMETHING?
If you would like to add information to this story call 8972 1111 or email: editor.kathines@ruralpress.com

Man caught across the WA border

KATHERINE detectives travelled to Kununurra last week to seek the extradition of a man they believed was responsible for a threat against a 13-year-old girl.

Kununurra Police arrested the 21-year-old man in relation to the offence which took place on March 4.

The offender allegedly unlawfully entered an Acacia Drive home in Katherine after forcing open a front window.

A 13-year-old girl allegedly discovered the offender in the house and screamed, before the man allegedly threatened her with a knife and fled the scene.

The offender is also alleged to have stolen a white Toyota Landcruiser Troop Carrier from a nearby property before fleeing the area.

The man is expected to be extradited back to Katherine to face charges of unlawful entry of an occupied dwelling at nighttime whilst armed, aggravated assault and deprivation of liberty.

GUESS WHO?

THIS man has been tinkering with engines in Katherine for 30 years now, but perhaps he is better known for his impressive veggie patch and popular 'chilli brews'. Can you guess? Turn to page five to find out.

