



**EDITION #1 "KEEPING OUR MOB SAFE"**  
**NEWSLETTER OF THE REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**FEBRUARY 2009**

*Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Committee. RICAC is a subcommittee of the Australian Emergency Management Committee. This newsletter is provided twice a year to update remote communities and the emergency services sector on what is happening at RICAC.*

## **NATIONAL STRATEGY PROGRESSES**

On the 30 July 2007 the National Strategy "Keeping our Mob Safe" was released by the Federal Attorney-General.

Since then, RICAC has developed a 5 year Business Plan to implement the National Strategy. In summary the Business Plan for year one establishes responsibilities for each state:



- Strengthen jurisdictional commitment;
- Map out national and State based relationships,
- Set up state working groups,
- Undertake a gap analysis of Indigenous communities in need;
- Development of a Communication Plan;
- Development of an engagement and education plan for communities

## **MCATSIA MEETING**

The Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) met in Perth late last year, to discuss the national Indigenous reforms led by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Ministers discussed important challenges across the Indigenous Affairs portfolio, including demographic data on Indigenous issues, Indigenous governance, arrangements for a national Indigenous representative body and enhancing emergency management in remote Indigenous communities.

David Place, Chair of RICAC presented the *Keeping Our Mob Safe* Strategy emphasising remote communities are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, and that the Strategy will improve community safety by focussing on preparedness and prevention. MCATSIA endorsed the National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous communities.

## **KIWIRRKURRA FLOOD DOCUMENTARY PROJECT**



In March 2001, the isolated community of Kiwirrkurra, located 1200 km to the east of Port Headland and 750 km west of Alice Springs, was inundated with floodwaters. The floodwaters caused essential services to fail, putting people's health and safety at risk. All 170 residents were evacuated, first to the neighbouring community of Kintore, then on to the Alice Springs Norforce Army base. Later the community were transferred to Morapoi in the Goldfields of Western Australia, before returning to their lands and community eighteen months later. The resultant cultural and community disruption was profound, and there are important lessons for emergency managers and coordinating agencies in working with Indigenous communities to be learned from their experiences. Emergency Management Australia, in conjunction with the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, WA is producing a documentary and supporting visual and audio materials to capture and disseminate the lessons learned from the evacuation of the community. For further details please contact Ms Cath Brinkley on 02 6256 4695 or [cath.brinkley@ema.gov.au](mailto:cath.brinkley@ema.gov.au).





## **FIRE TRAILER**

Over the last 15 years there have been many attempts to find an appropriate fire fighting vehicle for both preventing encroaching grass fires from entering remote desert communities as well as protecting their buildings. A sturdy fire trailer developed by the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS) with funding from the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre will help make these communities safer by meeting these communities' particular needs. NTFRS Assistant Director Southern Region, Paul Herrick, has designed the fire fighting unit specifically for use in remote locations and for being towed by any 4WD. Features include:

- Specifically designed for remote use
- Fights structure fires with static water supply such as a hydrant, and grass fires with tank water
- Modular platform
- Dual wheels mean that if a tyre is damaged the trailer can still be towed
- Tank impervious to hard water conditions associated with bores
- Robust 600 litre polypropylene tank, manufactured in Darwin
- Can be towed by a standard four wheel drive vehicle
- Driven by a reliable diesel pump
- Diesel pump attached to a dual axle
- Frame can be removed and placed on a different chassis if necessary

## **SMART SPARX**

Did you know that 55% of all people in the Northern Territory that are hospitalised through burns injuries are Aboriginal? This is despite Aboriginal people making up 27% of the total NT population. At a recent RICAC meeting in Alice Springs, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS) presented its remote Communities Fire and Education and Awareness program. Alan Stephens and Glenda Ramage outlined the fire safety program that is being taught in remote communities.



The program is designed to reflect the fire safety and awareness needs of Aboriginal children in remote communities, with particular emphasis on campfire safety and fire lighting in bush areas. The entire package brings culturally appropriate fire awareness and fire safety training to young school aged children in wider indigenous community throughout the NT.

The program is linked to a "Smart Sparx" Club with fire-fighters Max and John, and there is an audio CD, flash cards, book and other resources. For further information contact Glenda Ramage at the NTFRS on 08 89464128.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The State Mitigation Advisory Group (SMAG) has established an 'across government' committee to implement the RICAC National Strategy. The Committee brings together relevant State and Federal Government agencies including Emergency Services, SA Police, Aboriginal Housing, Families and Communities and Education, as well as other stakeholders. Bringing these relevant agencies together in a single forum provides a targeted and cohesive approach to implementing the National Strategy. The South Australian implementation team will be working within the infrastructure framework of the Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division (AARD) of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). The Committee held its first meeting last month and met again in early October at a workshop to identify specific programs, initiatives and issues using their collective knowledge and learnings to develop a plan for the way forward.

Risk profiles have also been developed for 16 Remote and Indigenous Communities in South Australia. These profiles identify the specific issues faced by Aboriginal communities in SA and will assist the Committee in developing appropriate strategies in emergency management service delivery.

### ***For more information about RICAC***

For further information about RICAC and the work of the Committee please contact:

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