

Mt Theo - Yuendumu  
Substance Misuse  
Aboriginal Corporation  
Annual Report 2006 / 2007



The artwork and style of this year's annual report is inspired by the public artwork around the community.



## Contents

page 4	Committee
page 6	Managers Report
page 10	Mt Theo Outstation
page 14	Yuendumu Youth Program
page 18	Jaru Pirjirdi (Strong Voices) Youth Development Project
page 22	Willowra Youth Program
page 24	Education and Outreach
page 26	Capital Works Project
page 28	Partners
page 30	Statistics



# Committee

The Mt Theo Program is managed by a committee of elected Indigenous people from within Yuendumu community. Committee members represent a wide range of Yuendumu community organisations and family groups.

For 2006 - 2007 the Mt Theo Management Committee was made up of the following:

Barbara Wilson  
Belle Dickson  
Cecil Johnson (TO)  
Clifford Brown  
Connie Walit  
Coral Gallagher  
Dadu Gorey  
Dennis Williams (TO)  
Donovan Rice  
Enid Gallagher  
Gracie Johnson  
Jean Brown (TO)  
Jeannie Egan  
Johnny Williams (TO)  
Larissa Granites (Jaru Pirjirdi)  
Louis Watson (Jaru Pirjirdi)  
Maggie Ross  
Margarine Miller

Maxine Spencer  
Michael Wayne (Jaru Pirjirdi)  
Nellie Wayne  
Neville Poulson  
Otto Sims  
Peggy Brown (Founder)  
Perry Langdon (TO)  
Riley Oldfield  
Ritasha Watson (Jaru Pirjirdi)  
Robinson Walit  
Rosie Fleming  
Ruby Collins  
Ruby Williams  
Shaun Wilson (Jaru Pirjirdi)  
Steven Marshall  
Thomas Rice  
Violet Marshall  
Warren Williams (TO)

## The Executive

Warren Williams – Chairperson  
Enid Gallagher - Chairperson  
Robbie Walit – Treasurer  
Maxine Spencer & Jean Brown – Executive Members





# Manager's Report

The Mt Theo Program has enjoyed a year of strong growth, building on long held visions of the Committee for better services to the wider Warlpiri community, and developing appropriate projects. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the Order of Australia honours conferred on the founders of our Program – Peggy Nampitjimpa Brown, Johnny Japangardi Miller and Andrew 'Yakajirri' Stojanovski, in recognition of their long service to young Warlpiri people to address petrol sniffing.

Today, the Program focuses on the causes, effects and prevention of all substance misuse. The zero tolerance approach that has embedded itself in Yuendumu community culture is spreading to neighbouring Warlpiri communities, and allows an immediate response to any young person engaging in harmful or anti-social behaviour, providing a solid model of early intervention.

Yuendumu residents are very proud to be able to say there was NO petrol sniffing in Yuendumu this year!

Mt Theo Outstation cared for 14 young Warlpiri people who were sniffing petrol in Ti-Tree, Lajamanu, Ali Curung and Alice Springs, many of whom sniffed only once. Perhaps due largely to the successful rollout of OPAL fuel in remote communities, 50% of this year's clients were from Alice Springs and the Program continues to face the challenge of caring for young Warlpiri people who are not closely monitored by family and the smaller community.

There has been a significant increase over the last 12 months of young men referred to the Outstation by the Court or Police as an alternative to incarceration. During this year 14 young men have been referred by the Court and 9 juveniles engaging in anti-social behaviour in Warlpiri communities were advised to go Mt Theo as an alternative to being charged.

The Willowra Youth Program has grown as a strong community initiative providing a wide range of innovative and challenging activities to divert young people from self-harming activities. This year no young Willowra people went to Mt Theo for petrol sniffing activity.

Through the Jaru Pirjirdi (Strong Voices) Youth Development Project, the Mt Theo Program worked in partnership with young people in addressing issues underlying petrol sniffing behaviour and the misuse of other substances. Young people in the Jaru Pirjirdi Project are strongly emerging as mentors and youth leaders, working on community development projects that help create positive futures for both individuals and the broader community. A natural outcome of strong personal development within the Project has been 26 young people employed in a range of community organisations.

Members of the Jaru Pirjirdi team continue to run the Yuendumu Youth Program activities. During this year 74 young Warlpiri men and women worked as casual youth workers running youth activities. Night School remains one of the most popular Jaru Pirjirdi initiatives, providing opportunities for young people to engage in youth development, educational and vocational activities, as a chosen alternative to substance misuse.

The Committee remains the driving force of all we do, and this year published the Mt Theo Strategic Plan 2006 – 2011, available on our website.

The Mt Theo website went live in August 2006 thanks to Liam Campbell & Brett Badger who spent long hours with Jaru Pirjirdi members and elders ensuring the website reflected the Program today. The website [www.mttheo.org](http://www.mttheo.org) remains an ongoing record of the projects and activities undertaken by Jaru Pirjirdi as well as providing an historical and academic overview of our work.



Another highlight of the year, and in recognition of the many years our community workers have volunteered their services, 5 CDEP places were transferred into salaried positions for the Program. Our team now includes Riley Oldfield (Cultural Liaison), Jeannie Egan (Jaru Pirjirdi Project Officer), Michael Wayne (Youth Worker), Louie Watson (Mt Theo Support Worker) and Elizabeth Katakarinja (Administration Officer). This marked the early achievement of a major objective of our Strategic Plan: to work towards more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal salaried positions.

The Outstation Manager, Johnny Japangardi Miller, Senior Traditional Owner for Mt Theo, and recent recipient of the OAM, retired this year and remains on our Committee to advise and support the Program. Rex Forrest continues as Senior Outstation Worker after many long years of service. After a number of relief Outstation Support and Diversion Coordinators, Ruth Bignell (current Community and Youth Worker) will take up the position full-time in July 2007. She will be well supported by up to 7 Jaru Pirjirdi workers. Brett Badger was appointed Assistant Manager and continues to coordinate the Youth Program and Jaru Pirjirdi Project, supported by Senior Youth Worker, Talitha Low. The youth team now includes a record 74 Jaru Pirjirdi casual workers.

This year the efforts and success of the Mt Theo Program have been recognised by governments (both Federal and Territory), community organizations, other indigenous communities and national media as being without comparison, not only in the field of addressing petrol sniffing and other substance abuse, but also in providing a solid community development youth leadership project. In the recent *Little Children are Sacred Report* on child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, Mt Theo's Jaru Pirjirdi Project was again cited as a model in prevention and education to address matters such as this.

I am delighted to report that this year the Jaru Pirjirdi Project was 'officially' recognised as a model of excellence in aftercare and youth leadership and development and at last attracted significant recurrent funding.

The long awaited dormitory-style accommodation for Outstation clients is now complete. The building design sympathetically reflects the relaxed, culture-centred Outstation lifestyle, while providing essential services that we have lacked for many years. In addition we now have a fresh new duplex for staff housing in Yuendumu.

At the very heart of the Mt Theo Program is the desire to be able to support young people to recognise the strength within and resist substance misuse and other anti-social behaviour. The Program is constantly challenged to maintain a strong diversionary, preventative, aftercare and youth leadership program and still have the flexibility to respond to community crises. Maintaining the momentum is only possible because of the strong relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and volunteers, the exchange of stories, the shared losses and joys, our supporters who believe in us, and the willingness of all involved to work "above and beyond" for a shared vision.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the consummate Mt Theo team, those dedicated non-Aboriginal workers who now call Yuendumu home, and the men and women of the Committee who are always ready to talk story and show them the way.

Susie Low, Manager, August 2007



The Mt Theo Program operates five main arms of service:

- Mt Theo Outstation
- Yuendumu Youth Program
- Jaru Pirjirdi Youth Development Program
- Willowra Youth Program
- Outreach and Education





# Mt Theo Outstation

Mt Theo Outstation continues to provide strong cultural treatment and rehabilitation for young Warlpiri engaging in substance abuse or who are perceived to be at risk of self-harm as a result of substance misuse. Over the past year the Diversionary Program has also been consolidated and the majority of our clients have been sent to Mt Theo as an alternative to incarceration or being formally charged by police.

Over the past year Mt Theo Program has cared for a total of 46 young people who had been misusing substances, or engaging in anti-social behaviour. There have been no relapses or new incidents of sniffing in Yuendumu since December 2005.

Mt Theo Program cared for 14 young people suffering from the effects of petrol sniffing from Lajamanu, Ali Curung and Ti-Tree, 4 of whom returned to Mt Theo for further rehabilitation.

Apart from core cultural activities, clients work on activities such as waste management, construction of windbreaks and shelters, and bore maintenance to ensure ongoing maintenance of the Outstation. The Program also conducts a range of other activities to challenge and motivate the clients as they recover. Several times a week Jaru Pirrjirdi mentors come from Yuendumu to work with the young clients. Workshops on film-making, music, dance, and painting were held this year, while entertainment was also provided by football, basketball, and occasional film and disco nights. Church members travelled regularly from Yuendumu to hold services at the Outstation.

## Diversionary Program

Mt Theo is committed to keeping young people away from detention centres by using Mt Theo Outstation as an alternative to incarceration while involving them with the community and bringing them closer to their families. This year we worked on consolidating our partnerships with the Courts, Aboriginal Legal Aid, and Community Corrections, which has allowed us better access to “at risk” young people at a critical time in their confrontation with the legal processes.

In 2006 – 2007, 71% of Outstation clients were admitted as part of the Diversionary Program.

Building on our success with petrol sniffing, we are gaining a strong reputation with the courts as a “pre” and “post” court Diversionary Program. The courts recognise that the time spent at Mt Theo is punishment and deterrent as well as a supportive environment for the young person to move away from their anti-social behaviours. This year we have supported 24 clients diverted from the justice system at the Mt Theo Outstation for residencies of one month or more. The Commonwealth Attorney General's Department now provide funding to cover the costs of caring for Court-referred clients at the Outstation, and includes travel costs to and from Court. This has enabled Mt Theo to improve our services to these clients substantially.

Moreover, in the Warlpiri zone, 19 young people engaging in anti-social and self-harming behaviour were taken to Mt Theo as an alternative to being charged. The Court and police now have access to a community response to anti-social activities and there is now a real community based solution for young people appearing before the courts.

The strength in our Diversionary Program this year has given a real stability to our broader youth





programs running in the community. Within Yuendumu now many of our ex-Diversionary clients are expressing a strong feeling of being part of the Mt Theo family and working hard on community programs, feeling proud that they are giving back to the community.

The Department of Health and Ageing, through the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and NT Department of Health and Community Services fund the Mt Theo Outstation and related management activities. The Attorney General's Department funds care of Corrections clients.

## Cultural strengthening

A core principle of the Mt Theo Outstation is to provide respite for young people engaging in substance misuse, allowing them time away from the offending substances to rest, eat well, and regain their health and mental facilities.

At the same time, Mt Theo provides a safe place for young people to re-engage in the richness of their culture. All carers at Mt Theo are elders or former clients who devote their time to helping other young people recover. Mt Theo is acknowledged as a traditional healing place, and clients spend their days travelling through country, hunting, collecting firewood, cooking over the fire, and listening to the stories of the elders. Yuendumu community elders visit regularly to share their knowledge of traditional crafts such as spear and boomerang making, traditional fire-lighting, bean-tree jewellery, and land management. The visiting Mental Health Worker is also a Traditional Owner for that country.

## Case Management

Mt Theo Program case manages all clients at Mt Theo, during their time at the Outstation and on their return to the community. Case files are maintained by Mt Theo staff and updated through regular contact through Outstation visits, participation in youth activities, and Jaru Pirjirdi mentors. However, it is often difficult to follow-up clients who return to Alice Springs or other communities. Mt Theo maintains some contact through town based agencies on the progress of these former clients. Where possible, Mt Theo staff negotiates with families and agencies to encourage these young people to stay in Yuendumu for several months after exiting Mt Theo. This allows appropriate aftercare through the Youth Program and Jaru Pirjirdi Project and our experience has shown that this intensive aftercare assists in strengthening clients to re-engage with their families in a stronger, more positive way.

## New accommodation

Another highlight of the year was the completion of dormitory style accommodation at Mt Theo. The building was designed by Brendan Meney, Alice Springs Architect, managed by Richard Layton and Associates and built by ProBuild, Alice Springs.

We have been delighted with the process, from planning to completion and are extremely grateful for the efforts put in by those involved to ensure Mt Theo Program's needs were met. Given the remote location and weather constraints (floods in December!) the final result is a tribute to the designer, manager and builders.

Bushlight (Centre for Appropriate Technology) designed a unique solar system that meets all our power requirements, and their trainers continue to visit Mt Theo to ensure all workers are well acquainted with the system.

The Mt Theo Program Committee, the Outstation carers and clients are now happily settled in, and the building will be officially opened late in 2007.





# Yuendumu Youth Program

Yuendumu Youth Program continued to provide young people in Yuendumu with diverse and vibrant alternatives to petrol sniffing and other substance misuse over the last year. The Program offers a seven night a week youth activities program in addition to school holiday and after school hours activities.

The Youth Program targets 4-16 year olds within Yuendumu in order to provide them with positive, interesting and exciting community activities and to alleviate potential boredom. Ideally young people would never have to be removed to the Mt Theo Outstation but would 'graduate' naturally from participants in the Youth Program to active workers in the Jaru Pirjirdi Project.

Jaru Pirjirdi workers run all Mt Theo Youth Program activities. These activities occur outside school hours, every day from 3-10.30 on school days and all day from 9am to 11pm on weekends. Activities include a wide range of options through sport, recreation, art, music, culture and excursions. Jaru Pirjirdi workers act as the 'on-the-ground' youth worker running 5-6 activities every day and two workers may be paid for each activity. Allowing for concurrent activities this means that there are 126 hours of Youth Program activities provided by 74 casual Jaru Pirjirdi workers for the youth of Yuendumu every week.

Young people returning from Mt Theo who are considered to be particularly at risk are engaged to work alongside Mt Theo staff and Jaru Pirjirdi workers in running the youth activities. This aftercare also provides a natural forum for mentorship by senior Jaru members. During this year 51 of the 57 young people perceived to be at risk were receiving daily mentoring.

Regular activities this year have included mural painting, swimming, basketball, softball, concerts, discos, IT skills development, football, indoor soccer, bike building and BMX racing, pool table and video games, film nights, Night School and cultural excursions. Special holiday activities included workshops in multi-media, graffiti art, rap and hip-hop dance and music, print making and contemporary dance.

A group of 10 young male and female dancers choreographed, rehearsed and performed two items at the CrocFest in Alice Springs last August. They screen printed their own costumes and backdrops and were enthusiastically received by the audience. Back in the community they were showered with praise and all of Yuendumu felt proud.

A new partnership was formed this year with InCite Arts, an Alice Springs based organisation that is enthusiastic about assisting us to continue our dance and music projects. They were able to provide artists and funding for:

- A week long workshop on Hip Hop music, and production of a local CD
- 2 week workshop on Hip Hop recording and editing, and production of CD & video
- 3 day Hip Hop Dance workshop in Alice Springs

This partnership will continue during 2007-2008.

Commonwealth Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs provide core funding for the Youth Program through the Outside School Hours and Vacation Care initiative.





## Yuendumu Swimming Pool

Just prior to the end of this financial year, a long awaited contract was exchanged between Mt Theo Program and Architect Studio (Darwin) for the construction of the Yuendumu Swimming Pool. This followed another frustrating year for Yuendumu residents and the Swimming Pool Committee in trying to manoeuvre the intricacies of a partnership with government departments to deliver this pool.

In late 2006, after two years long and lively debate with government stakeholders, it was agreed that Mt Theo Program and the Yuendumu Pool Steering Committee would take over the responsibility of the design, construction and maintenance of the pool. Mt Theo engaged Brendan Meney, Architect (who also designed our Mt Theo building) to talk with Yuendumu residents and develop a concept design for the pool they wanted for their own community. In March 2007, Mt Theo advertised for tenders to project manage and construct the pool. Tenders closed at the end of April and contracts were exchange in June.

The Pools in Remote Areas (PIRA) Scheme called for an equal financial partnership between the Commonwealth and Territory governments and Yuendumu community to construct the pool. In May 2007, the project had progressed to a point that Yuendumu community residents lined up to sign a Shared Responsibility Agreement that would allow the allocation of the government financial contribution to the pool. Requiring only two community signatures, Government representatives were amazed to see 43 community members lining up to make enthusiastic speeches and to sign the Agreement.

Integral to all stages in the project will be utilizing the skills of local workers in both construction and landscaping. In the meantime we are training up key community Elders and Jaru Pirjirdi members in swimming, life-saving and pool management skills in preparation for the pool opening.

Christine Godden, a long-time community supporter, has been extremely successful in raising the majority of the funds for the pool construction and continues to search for funding to assist in ancillary pool costs and ongoing operational expenses.

While Mt Theo Program was more than prepared, in the absence of a viable Local Council, to take on this enormous project for the benefit of the community, we are acutely aware this is not core business. During the first year of operation we will seek opportunities to hand over management to the Council, as is the case in all other communities.

The design phase is nearly complete and construction of the pool and buildings will begin in August, and they promise we will be swimming this summer!

Representatives of Yuendumu community, NT Government and ICC (Indigenous Coordination Centre for the Commonwealth Government), Newmont Mines, Yuendumu Council, Central Land Council and Mt Theo Program remain on the Steering Committee to further the Project.





# Jaru Pirjirdi (Strong Voices) Youth Development Project

## Jaru Pirjirdi Project Model

### Level 1: 'Training Jaru'

- Element 1. Youth Program
- Element 2. Night School

### Level 2: 'Jaru Members'

- Element 3. Projects
- Element 4. Bush Trips

### Level 3: 'Senior Jaru'

- Element 5. Youth Committee
- Element 6. Mentoring
- Element 7. Career & Life Pathway

In the recent *Little Children are Sacred* Report on child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, Mt Theo's Jaru Pirjirdi Project was cited as a model of excellence in prevention and education to address these concerns.

Moreover, for the first time since it's inception 3 years ago, the Jaru Pirjirdi Project is finally recognised as a model of excellence in aftercare and youth leadership and development and has attracted significant recurrent funding. We remain grateful to the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation and the Foundation for Young Australians for having enough faith to support this Project to this point.

Young people in a remote community context remain at high risk of entering cycles of substance misuse, unemployment, crime, self-harm and violence. The Jaru Pirjirdi Project aims to create more meaningful, systemic and long term solutions to problematic youth issues in Yuendumu. The Project was founded to listen to the strong voices of young people in Yuendumu and to assist them to envisage and build more positive futures for themselves and their community.

The Jaru Pirjirdi Project is an integrated after-care and community development Project for young people aged 17-30 in Yuendumu. Whilst the Youth Program is primarily geared to provide an 'entertainment' for youth aged 5-15, Jaru Pirjirdi attempts to provide a structure through which young adults can engage in meaningful and productive community activity. There are currently 74 young people who are members of the Jaru Pirjirdi Project. The project is proving significant in establishing meaningful and positive pathways for young adults in Yuendumu.

The Jaru Pirjirdi progressive structure is firmly based in a community development process that seeks to empower local people into positions of employment and strategic power within the community. Intimately correlated with this outcome is the development of strong, confident, responsible and capable young adults who have high self-esteem, deep cultural knowledge and strong problem solving, mentoring and conflict resolution skills.



## Youth Program Workers

Jaru Pirjirdi workers run all Mt Theo Youth Program activities. Young people know that if there is no worker willing to work, the activity is not run. They take this responsibility seriously, and to date, no activities have been cancelled due to lack of workers. There are generally 5-6 Youth Program activities every day and two workers may be paid for each activity. Allowing for concurrent activities this means that there are 126 hours of Youth Program activities provided by 74 casual Jaru Pirjirdi workers for the youth of Yuendumu every week.

## Night School

Night school has flourished this year, yet still managed to attract an average of 16 young adults accessing education and training three nights a week. Night school activities variously involved mathematics, English, reading, writing, art, music, land management and computers. Night School also included workshops on issues such as sexual and relationship health, substance misuse forums and dealing with 'government forms'.

The partnership arrangement between Mt Theo Program, Yuendumu School and Youth Challenge Australia was dissolved when there were disagreements between the other partners. This meant that Mt Theo did not have access to the excellent school classrooms equipped with computers, resources and books, and no tutors to assist Youth Workers in the educational training. Without these crucial partnerships Mt Theo tried to conduct a limited Night School in the Jaru Pirjirdi room, but was not able to achieve the outcomes we anticipated. We are now working hard to find alternative partnerships to ensure the 'gap' in services is reinstated.

Despite these setbacks 11 young people re-enrolled in Secondary Education, 8 decided to continue their education at Werriwa Boarding School in Victoria, and 4 enrolled in Batchelor College training courses.



## Projects

Jaru Pirjirdi members developed, managed and participated in over 41 projects this year. The projects respond to Jaru interests and concerns, as well as requests from agencies outside Yuendumu. These projects also allow Jaru members to begin training or identifying potential career pathways through activity across a broad range of areas. Some examples of Jaru projects are:

### Representation and Advocacy

- AERF Showcase Conference in September 2006. Jaru Pirjirdi member presented his story to 500 delegates in Sydney.
- National Suicide Prevention Conference, March 2007. Jaru Pirjirdi presentation of the Project to delegates and in forums.
- Attorney General's Projects of Excellence Research. October 2007 Presentation by 4 Jaru members for inclusion in publication on models of excellence.

### Media

- Production of Jaru Pirjirdi short film showcasing how the Project works August 2007.
- Sound Engineering and Music Recording Training. 2 week workshop. July 2007.
- Workshops in Radio Training and Film Editing. March.2007.

### Sport and recreation

- Organising and running indoor soccer, basketball and softball competitions.
- Providing BBQ's, security and competition management for Yuendumu Sports Weekend.
- Development of a 'Girls Space' for young women to relax, dance, hang out, paint, watch movies without the boys' humbug.

### Health

- Mooditj Sexual Health Workshop at Hamilton Downs.
- Assistance to the NT Child Abuse Enquiry.
- Participation in community meetings to address domestic violence.

### Leadership and development/representation

- Training in Pool Management in Darwin and Alice Springs.
- Working as Cultural Liaison Officers for new Mt Theo staff and visitors.
- Conducted a community meeting in Lajamanu to tell Mt Theo and Jaru Pirjirdi story to assist that community to deal with substance misuse.
- Construction Training and work on new buildings at Mt Theo and Yuendumu.

## Bush Trips

The eight trips conducted consistently involved 15-20 young people and 3-4 elders. The group journeyed to sites of cultural significance for up to 3 days and recorded the elders' stories of these areas. Upon return the Jaru members edited the film and audio of these bush trips to add to the cultural mapping archive, and website.

With the elders, senior Jaru, Mt Theo staff and young people discuss personal and community issues around the camp fire. These discussions are facilitated by the fact that young people are out of the community and in a safe environment understood to be used for the discussion of such issues.

Day bush trips every week are mentoring trips and involve several Jaru members and young adults facing personal issues. Over the year 45 trips provided a relief from these issues, support from strong peers and appropriate forums in which to discuss these issues. After participation in such trips we have invariably found that the young person 'at risk' will begin to work in the Jaru Pirjirdi Project and adopt a more positive lifestyle.



## Mentoring

Senior Jaru members have naturally taken on mentoring roles for young people of all ages in the community. This may be in the form of regularly checking in on individuals at risk, providing support for them and their families, bringing individuals on bush trips, visiting Mt Theo Outstation to talk with clients, bringing young adults into the Jaru Project and guiding their progress. It has also involved more formal interventions and representations such as removal from at risk situations, liaising with clinic, police and Mt Theo staff and representation in court.

Each young person who returns from Mt Theo Outstation, or is considered to be at risk in Yuendumu is allocated a mentor from amongst the senior Jaru Pirjirdi group. These young people are particularly affected by their contact with strong and positive young Jaru Pirjirdi members who represent potential 'successful' life pathways. Over the past year 51 young people have benefited from mentoring from a core group of 17 senior Jaru Pirjirdi workers.

## Career & Life Pathways

The empowering process of the Jaru Pirjirdi Project has seen many young people emerge as young community leaders who are of immense value to the community and have a strong desire to work within various community organizations. Twenty-one senior Jaru have taken up responsible paid positions and 7 work as regular volunteers in Yuendumu organisations.

All Yuendumu is proud when our young people's strengths are recognised. Sebastian Watson, Jaru Pirjirdi worker in 2005-2006, and Community Police Aide since August 2006 was awarded the Northern Territory Yuendumu Young Citizen of the Year in 2006 in recognition of his outstanding leadership qualities and as a positive role model.

The major funding sources for the Project have been Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation, and The Foundation for Young Australians. It is now supported by the Commonwealth Health's Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the Mental Health Workforce Division.



# Willowra Youth Program

Since the beginning of January 2005, the youth program has been the major agent for community driven development and strategic planning. The plans encompass all the shortfalls in essential service delivery and ownership of the management process. We are becoming better at presenting our vision of the future (practise makes perfect) and developing the skills to see it all through. This year the first Willowra based community organization has become incorporated. Wirliyajarrayi Pinajarrinjaku manu Wirimaninjaku (Learning together and growing the place up together here in this place, Wirliyajarrayi) (WPW) is presently a forum for dialogue for all groups in community and a voice for Willowra. Over the coming years, as the organization gains the capacity to govern, most community projects will be funded and managed through WPW.

The youth program diversifies into every area of community life as so many services are inadequate and young people are learning to be a part of the long term solution. Willowra has no high school, aged care program, art centre, mechanic, etc. etc. The program focuses on supporting youth to create new opportunities for the whole community and for themselves as individuals. Young people in Willowra care for old people, dig graves, cater for functions, start up play groups, help muster cattle, learn to fix cars, facilitate after school and holiday activities, support the school with multi media expertise, clear roads to sacred sites, archive cultural material through film, learn about culture and history with the elders, manage youth program activities: all the while taking opportunities to engage in further education and fun opportunities for self expression like band, and multi media and various other adventures.

## A couple of highlights this year:

- 70 people camp out at Ngamangka, Mt Leichhardt, with elders, youth, CAYLUS, CLC, and PAW media. Young women and men performed separate ceremony that has not been performed in nearly 20 years, and films produced.
- The completion by the young women's school multimedia support crew in partnership with Walcha of a Warlpiri, English, Rdaka Rdaka (Warlpiri hand sign) and Ausland hand signing, learning CDROM, part one.

Faction fighting which has plagued Willowra almost to the point of dysfunction has calmed down little by little over the last year. An agreement has been signed by elders from both sides to cease fighting and families are slowly returning home and engaging in community life. Initially this was difficult for youth program activities as people were still not ready to work together. Youth leaders and youth workers identified the danger to programming and led the community in including all young people in every youth program activity and negotiating with all family leaders and elders, should problems arise. It takes the whole community to have a great football team, to safely travel to and compete in community sports and engage in wider community learning opportunities. Now despite tensions and many difficulties we are getting back on track.



Development of infrastructure is still a huge problem. The FACSIA Local Answers Local Solutions grant which gives us \$100 000 over 3 years for renovations to the youth centre has barely been spent. It has been difficult to get contractors to commit to these small projects, however we hope we are on the verge of getting the 2 years work completed by the end of the month. DEET Minor New Works Projects has committed to installing a new basketball court with lights, we hope before the weather gets hot again! Our biggest problem has been the inability to secure any housing for the youth workers, despite vigorous lobbying by all those associated with the program. The lack of housing jeopardises the entire program.

Funding from the Commonwealth Dept of Health and Ageing, NIDS, has enabled us to employ a male youth worker. A collective sigh of relief from everyone, the overworked female youth worker, Alison and especially the young men, who now work with Fotis Metropolis. The community is very happy with his gentle and respectful approach and the young men are getting stronger in their programming every day with his mentoring and support.

This program was funded by NT Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing National Illicit Drug Strategy and NT Dept of Education, Employment & Training.



# Education & Outreach

Mt Theo Program is not always able to respond to the numerous requests for information regarding the Program. Every week the Mt Theo Program is called by people wanting to hear the Mt Theo story of hope. Requests come from politicians, newspapers, radio, government agencies and other communities.

## This year the Mt Theo Program staff, Committee and Jaru Pirjirdi members have told the Mt Theo Story to:

- Medical staff from Yuendumu clinic
- Lajamanu community
- Beswick community
- Yuendumu school staff
- Yuendumu police
- Northern Territory Correctional Services staff
- Students, School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archaeology, Melbourne University
- Mt Evelyn Christian School, Melbourne
- Staff of Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging, OATSIH, MHWD, NT OSR, FACSIA, ICC
- Submission to NT Enquiry into child sexual abuse
- AER Foundation Regional Review Workshop, Alice Springs
- AER Foundation Showcase Conference, Sydney.
- Federal Attorney General's Department for Projects of Excellence Research
- Ministers Vanstone & Abbott, Senator Brown at Parliament House, Canberra re the regional rollout of OPAL fuel.
- National Suicide Prevention Conference, Alice Springs.
- Kimberly Medical Service
- Tiwi Mental Health representatives
- Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy Unit, Alice Springs
- Healing Our Spirits Worldwide international conference on Aboriginal substance misuse, Canada.



## Media

The Program has been featured regularly in the media this year, with a focus on the Mt Theo and Jaru Pirjirdi models, OPAL fuel, government Interventions in remote communities, and more recently, the Order of Australia Medals awarded to Peggy Brown, Johnny Miller and Andrew Stojanovski. Many of these articles are available on our website [www.mtttheo.org](http://www.mtttheo.org).

The Program also features in an Imparja documentary "Strong Voices" soon to be broadcast nationally.

## Expansion of Outreach to other Warlpiri Communities

Mt Theo was approached this year to implement youth and media programs to Nyirpi and Lajamanu, and support current programs in Yuendumu and Willowra, through the Warlpiri Education Triangle Trust (WETT). These are royalty funds for community benefit managed by the Central Land Council under the direction of Kurra, an Aboriginal independent association.

The planning for this new Program is well underway and activities will commence in 2007 - 2008.

## Healing Our Spirits Worldwide Conference, Edmonton, Canada, August 2006

Mt Theo was selected by the Department of Health and Ageing, as a national model and leader in addressing substance misuse in Aboriginal communities, and a program of excellence, to represent Australia at the 2006 Conference in Canada. Enid Gallagher (Mt Theo Chairperson) and Riley Oldfield (Committee member) presented our story to an international audience.

## Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children Are Sacred". Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. 2007 (from page 146)

*"The Jaru Pirjirdi (Strong Voices) Program*

*The Jaru Pirjirdi (Strong Voices) Leadership Program began in 2004. It is a part of the successful Mt Theo Substance Abuse Program that eradicated petrol sniffing in Yuendumu. Yuendumu was the only community that was able to achieve this prior to the introduction of Opal fuel and it credits its success to changing the social norms within the community in relation to substance abuse and redirecting users to more positive values and outcomes. This key element is equally applicable to the problem of child sex abuse.*

*This Yuendumu program provides a formal and strategic framework through which young adults progress and graduate. When the Inquiry visited Yuendumu, 42 young people were involved in the program. The key strength of the program is that it is Warlpiri controlled and owned. It is also evaluated monthly.*

*The Inquiry believes that a program like this is an essential ingredient of an overall strategy to tackle child sexual abuse. It provides a process through which children can learn about child sexual abuse, and it builds confidence so that they can speak out about it. It also provides a training ground that can link up with a Community Justice Group."*



# Capital Works Project

During this year, Mt Theo Program completed our major capital works project. In close partnership with Richard Layton and Associates, Project Manager and Architect, Brendan Meney, we now have new buildings and landscaping that reflects the priorities and needs of Theo Program founders, workers and Traditional owners.

The Project Manager worked closely with Paul Graham from ProBuild to ensure the most pleasant project possible given the remote location of the Outstation, and flooding during the summer months. ProBuild engaged Outstation clients and Yuendumu workers to assist with the building. This became an integrated component of Outstation activities, providing satisfying and physical work. Workers were paid by ProBuild, which allowed many clients to return from the Outstation with money in the bank. We are grateful for the generosity and patience of the builders as they rose to the challenge of working with young people recovering from substance misuse.

Bushlight, of Alice Springs, designed a unique energy-efficient power and water system for Mt Theo Outstation to suit the remote location and varied use of the facility, which was installed during the construction of the dormitory. Bushlight provided initial training in the use of the system and will continue to train new workers and oversee the ongoing maintenance and repairs necessary.

We also acknowledge the support of Jason Cotter and his family, from Victoria who donated two rainwater tanks and filtration units attached to the dormitory.

In Yuendumu, a duplex was constructed in record time by Central Ceilings, Alice Springs, to house 2 Mt Theo workers, considerably alleviating our staff accommodation crisis.





# Mt Theo Partners



**Mt Theo story has continued to operate this past year with the assistance of strong government and community support. Our partners have included:**

Department of Health and Ageing  
Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health  
Drug Strategy Branch  
Mental Health Workforce Division  
Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
Indigenous Land Council  
The Attorney General's Department  
The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination  
NT Department of Health and Community Services  
NT Department of Justice  
NT Office of Sport and Recreation  
NT Office of Crime Prevention

AER Foundation  
Foundation for Young Australians  
[www.shoeboxgallery.com.au](http://www.shoeboxgallery.com.au)  
Newmont Mines  
Central Australian Youth LinkUp Service (CAYLUS)  
InCite Arts  
Private donors

Mt Theo remains inspired by those private individuals in the broader community who acknowledge the value of our Program and donate regularly. These donors allow us respond to community concerns and issues as they arise, regardless of the stringencies and conditions of specific funding.





# Statistics 2006 / 2007

**Petrol sniffing free days in Yuendumu** **365**

## Mt Theo Outstation

young people cared for at Mt Theo	46
from Yuendumu	22
from Willowra	0
from Mt Allen	2
from Ali Curung	2
from Lajamanu	3
from Ti-Tree	1
from Katherine	1
from Alice Springs	11
no. petrol sniffing clients	14
no. diversionary clients	33
alcohol related	50
marijuana related	21
domestic violence related	5
assault/violence related	5
breaking in/stealing related	12
no. of girls cared for at Mt Theo	3
no. of boys cared for at Mt Theo	43
no. of young people who went to Mt Theo more than once	9
no. of FACS referrals	5
no. of Corrections and Police referrals	24
no. of family/community referrals	19

## Yuendumu

average no. of hours of youth program open per week	54
average no. of activities per day	18
average no. of hours of youth activities per week	126
no. of mt theo program clients (case managed)	57
no. of mt theo program clients mentored by senior Jaru Pirjirdi mentors	51
no. of Jaru Pirjirdi mentors	17
no. of 3 day Jaru Pirjirdi cultural bushtrips	8
no. of Jaru Pirjirdi mentoring day trips	45
no. of Jaru Pirjirdi special projects	41
no. of Jaru Pirjirdi members employed as casual youth workers	74







**Mt Theo-Yuendumu Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation**

LPO Yuendumu via Alice Springs NT 0872

**email** [admin@mttheo.org](mailto:admin@mttheo.org)

**tel** 08 8956 4188

**fax** 08 8956 4081

**web** [www.mttheo.org](http://www.mttheo.org)