



Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

ALRM OFFICE IN COOBER PEDY TO FOCUS ON CHILD PROTECTION

EMBARGO until 5am, 12 May, 2009

South Australia's Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement will today officially open an office in Coober Pedy that will focus on child protection for Aboriginal people in the far north.

ALRM Chairperson, Mr Frank Lampard OAM, said funding provided as a response to the Mullighan Inquiry into Child Abuse in SA, by the Commonwealth Government, Attorney-General, has directly contributed to ALRM being able to open its doors in Coober Pedy.

"In opening the office, I acknowledge the support from the AGD and in particular Minister Bob Debus, the work of Commissioner Ted Mullighan, ALRM Board Member Faith Thomas, Barrister Andrew Collett and the support team on the Mullighan Inquiry, as well as the State Government, in particular Premier Rann, Attorney General, Michael Atkinson and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Jay Weatherill - whose efforts in establishing the Mullighan Inquiry is to be commended," Mr Frank Lampard said.

"This opening demonstrates what can happen when Commonwealth and State Governments work with NGOs like ALRM to improve the lives of Aboriginal people," Mr Lampard said.

"It is this cooperation that gives ALRM hope for the future in addressing so many of the ills that face Aboriginal people in this country," he said.

On 1 July 2008 ALRM began operating a Child Protection Program with a primary focus on representation for families in relation to Child Protection matters and the processes and policies of the Department of Families and Communities (Families SA) when dealing with Aboriginal people.

Mr Lampard said since taking on the Program, ALRM has become concerned about the number of children who are removed and also the numbers placed with non-Aboriginal placements and who become separated from family and culture for long periods.

“The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle seeks where possible to place Aboriginal children with Aboriginal families and we will be advocating for increased placement with Aboriginal families and also reunification with families,” Mr Lampard said.

ALRM CEO, Mr Neil Gillespie said funding issues forced the closure of ALRM’s office in Coober Pedy several years ago and although the new office will focus mostly on Child Protection, it is hoped that other funding can be found to extend services to include other legal services offered in ALRM offices.

“As of 1 July 2009 a solicitor will be located in the Coober Pedy office – joining a Field Officer who has been working locally for some time,” Mr Gillespie said.

“ALRM will be working at forming partnerships with local councils, SAPOL and other Aboriginal service providers and agencies to improve services to Aboriginal people in this region,” he said.

“The office is expected to provide services to clients who mostly come from the Coober Pedy region, as well as from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands,” Mr Gillespie said.

The office was opened by ALRM Chairperson, Mr Frank Lampard.

For interview

Neil Gillespie CEO ALRM 0417 086 025

FYI: The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc provides legal services and associated activities (legal aid and native title legal services, financial counselling, law reform and advocacy, the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme and community education) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in South Australia. ALRM is an independent incorporated Aboriginal community organization