

Qld Productivity Commission Submission

Introduction

The history of Cherbourg is one of Aboriginal people being forcibly removed and brought from all over Queensland and Northern New South Wales to a newly formed government reserve. Under the Aborigines Protection Act of 1897 the settlement then called Barambah, was gazetted and established in 1904. In 1932, the name Barambah was then changed to Cherbourg due to a nearby property called "Barambah Station" which caused confusion in mail delivery. There are approximately 50 or more different tribes that reside in Cherbourg.

Located 375km north-west of Brisbane, Cherbourg covers 3,130 hectares DOGIT land and is within Wakka Wakka tribal boundaries and bordering onto Gubbi Gubbi (Kabi Kabi) territory to the east. The population is approximately 2000, however, as a result of the relocation of indigenous people under past government policies, residents of Cherbourg have connections to many other tribal groups throughout Queensland.

Since the mid to late 1960's, Cherbourg has always had an elected Aboriginal Council. But it was until the late 1980's, where changes took place and Cherbourg had developed from being a welfare institution to a community. With the initiation of the Deed of Grant in since the mid to late 1960's, Cherbourg has always had an elected Aboriginal Council. But it was until the late 1980's, where changes took place and Cherbourg had developed from being a welfare institution to a community. With the initiation of the Deed of Grant In Trust (DOGIT), legislation was passed in 1982 and 1984 and Cherbourg started managing its own affairs.

In 2004, Cherbourg performed its first 100 years Centenary Celebration, which turned out to be a huge success & a very well-organised event.

Cherbourg has its share of problems like youth delinquency; alcohol and drug abuse; domestic violence; and over-representation of Indigenous people within the justice system. Cherbourg can also be said to be well resourced compared to other remote communities. However, whether services especially programs delivered are evaluated and delivered in accordance to cultural needs and requirements and whether they are regularly assessed, evaluated and improved according to needs has yet to be seen.

What is missing and needs to be addressed in Cherbourg

1.Lack of Effective Consultation

Government be it Federal or State, relies on government agencies, Non- government agencies, and relevant community stakeholders to provide relevant and accurate feedback in relation to community needs, service delivery and issues faced by each remote Aboriginal communities through their nominated representatives.

This is a vital part to in Aboriginal communities on issues that affect them and an important process that **must occur**, particularly within government.

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However, if you were to ask the elders and respected community members of the Cherbourg community if they are included in the consultation process used to seek information, advice or permission or approval for a proposed action, the answer will most likely be **“NO”**.

Perhaps the representative/s nominated to undertake the process of consultation need to be either scrutinised and selected properly or trained in the process of consultation.

Effective consultation should occur early and throughout the decision making process, which requires openness about how, why and when, they are being consulted and how much influence they will have over the decision making process. Any consultations held with an Aboriginal community should be held with representative group of members including key family groups.

Take the recent State Government initiative in relation to Domestic Family Violence in their Not Now, Not Ever Report”:

Recommendation 9 states that ‘The Queensland Government, in collaboration with local communities, develops a, culturally appropriate integrated response to domestic and family violence in discrete Indigenous Communities’.

Recommendation 76 state that the Queensland Government is in the process of establishing a model for inter-agency response to high risk cases which works within, or complements integrated responses and which is progressively established throughout the state.

The Cherbourg Elders are not impressed that they were not consulted with or included in the initial selection of the High Risk Team for Cherbourg and they were not conferred with at the initial stages of consultation.

They question why not even one community elder with a good knowledge of the community and its issues were not included in the Government’s High Risk Team. They were told that the HRT team is comprised of QPS; Health; Probation and Parole’ Youth Justice; Dept. of Communities and Child safety; DATSIP; DJAG and CTC which is an NGO nominated to assess the High risk DV perpetrators, and DATSIP.

- **Isn’t the community elders’ specialist knowledge, not good enough to be part of the HRT?**
- Why is it that consultations organised transpire in separate clusters with NGOs providing DFV services grouped together, Elders in a different group, and Government organisations again in separate group?
- Shouldn’t the team leader of the DFV Women’s Shelter; The through care officers supporting High risk DV perpetrators in the community and transitioning from prison and elders of thebe included in the consultation and negotiation process the inception of the process.
- By the time feedback goes through 3 levels to the decision makers, the information will be translated like ‘Chinese Whispers’.

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- Who was consulted and who are the people that decided that the HR Team will only be made of Government representatives, many of them don't even come from the community or reside in the community?
- Who made the decision that CTC is the best organisation to assess High Risk Offenders in relation to Case Management?
- Why do they need a HRT to case manage and assess hence duplicating existing similar programs already implemented and available in the community with Correctional Centres; Probation and Parole; Though-Care Prison Officers supporting offenders coming out of prison back into the community, all at some time or other being case managed.
- Why are there no Cherbourg community elders/ representatives included in the High Risk Team.
- Domestic Violence does not occur between the period of 9am and 5pm and yet everyone in the high risk team work office hours apart from QPS
- When there is a DFV incident in Cherbourg, Police are the 1st response team and often they enlist the help of community elders to help diffuse the situation as they know their community best.
- The Cherbourg Community would much rather have more policing and night patrol during the critical evening and late night hours to deal with the problems that occur in their community rather than government which is a more viable PREVENTATIVE MEASURE than another REACTIVE intervention by the HRT which once again promotes duplication of already existing similar programs.

When [REDACTED] was asked by the elders of the Barambah Justice Group as to why they were not included or consulted or asked for advice prior to the establishment of the HR Team, they were told that he does not make the decision and it is the powers that be, that tell him what to do and if there is an issue, they can speak to his boss.

By this answer, I can see how successfully the elders and community members of remote /rural communities opinions are taken seriously and listened to.

This is the most ridiculous thing the Justice Group have heard especially when the buzz words are Collaboration, Community consultation and negotiations with elders and respected persons of Cherbourg.

Conclusion

What the Elders are saying is firstly why is the HRT team only made of QPS, Department of Communities, QCS; Youth Justice, Health, Housing, DJAG, CTC (NGO) in their team. Would common sense dictate to include the most knowledgeable people from Cherbourg as part of the team? They are the ones that live in the community and are able to provide knowledge on what works and what can work in their community. This has been brought up with the Integrated Response Team but till now, nothing has been done to include at least one elder to the team.

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It is rather presumptuous of those selected and who are currently involved in putting together the HRT to think that they know better than the community elders and people living in Cherbourg especially when none of these people reside in Cherbourg for a start.

Domestic Violence does not occur between 9am and 5pm only and in a crisis situation, it is often the elders and respected members of the community who are called upon to assist QPS to deal with the crisis. Our elders are good enough to help in crisis but not good enough to be included in the HRT.

By the outcome of the discussion by elders with Integrated Response Coordinator, one can see how seriously government's desired consultation processes are taken. Consultation in the past has been tokenistic and negotiations need to occur for equal relationships to develop.

Programs Delivered and Accountability

In relation to government providing funding for service delivery, it would be interesting to know how program deliveries are evaluated for accountability, integrity and validity. It is no use asking the services to assess their own programs as the results will not be reviewed impartially.

Why can't community elders sit through DFV and Substance Abuse Programs facilitated to gauge how effective and relevant the program is for their target group and also be in the position to provide constructive advice on how it can or may be improved as necessary.

Most funding delivered in Cherbourg are reactive measures. There are so many duplications of DFV therapy and programs; Drug and Alcohol programs etc. What are the qualifications of those providing counselling? What are the criteria to be regarded as a professional counsellor? We are aware of so many services especially NGOs providing services where staff are not really qualified to deliver counselling especially to people with high needs.

There are organisations with so much funding given to them but there are no proper systems put in place in relation to success or failure as no one has any stats and offenders despite of doing the programs are still going through the revolving doors of the court system.

The council, Mayor, Elders and Directors of the Justice Group have all told whoever will listen to please consider extra policing or police support officers from the community who know their own people to assist policing at night when most of the offending occurs and young people walk the streets petrol sniffing, smoking pot or vandalising properties.

We have been requesting for this to occur and even a petition from community members was submitted. No one listens and everyone cries poor. When there was community policing in Cherbourg, the crime was low as noted by community elders and majority of the community.

Instead more monies are given for more of the same reactive programs which is not even properly evaluated to see if it is meeting needs in relation to recidivism. There are no stats or data in this area of service delivery.

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Once again, why do politicians and governing bodies keep emphasising on community input and empowerment and yet when the community provides suggestions that they think will work and see results, no one listens or does anything.

The people of Cherbourg don't need more therapy in the form of programs that are not properly evaluated. They need healing and the problems need to be addressed. It is about going into the wound and seeing lateral violence that has occurred and not just provide band aid solutions which are unsustainable in the long term.

Moreover, the word "CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE" is used so often but how does one measure cultural appropriateness. Is it the inclusion of cultural contents in program delivery or does culturally appropriate mean having an Indigenous worker co-facilitate the program that is regarded as meeting the cultural appropriateness criteria.

Once again elders have not been consulted on programs that are initiated by services and their opinions and input requested as how best to go about designing a program that is compatible with community needs.

Funding and Budget Allocation

Funding for Barambah Justice Group and Issues faced

I am honest enough to say that as far as crime is concerned, there have not been many changes in Indigenous communities for the better in relation to crime. ATSI peoples are still over-represented in prisons, juvenile offending is still high, destruction of community property is frequent and council are so busy fixing the damage, they have no funds to improve other necessary work that needs attention to. The State Government slashing Council budget did not help either.

The Barambah Justice Group has been receiving a moderate budget of \$95,000 to \$103,000 since 2006 with very little increment.

We are the only organisation that doesn't have a vehicle funded in the budget. The money is for 1 x staff wages and day to day operational cost of the Community Justice Group.

What can one coordinator seriously do in his/her quest in addressing the over-representation of Indigenous offenders in prison?

It became impossible to attend court as per service agreement; build community networks; attend all meetings; write pre-sentence and cultural reports for the courts; organise meetings and manage the day to day administrative requirements of the CJG.

As the coordinator of BLJG, I dropped one day and the Board employed an Elder to work 3 days to assist me. This is one example of how we are stretching the budget to improve efficiency.

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The last couple of years, with equipment needing replacement after long term wear and tear, our organisation need to pay for these unexpected expenses and monies budgeted for training etc has been utilised for replacing or fixing office equipment.

We have requested for extra funding just to lease a vehicle which was never in the operational budget. However, we have not been successful with our request.

Yet other NGOs like CTC, Lives Lived Well and Graham House have all been funded for vehicles and we in the Justice Group who need a vehicle to support offenders, Elders in the community etc have not been considered for a vehicle.

What government fail to realise is that in 11 years, cost goes up, price of equipment goes up to fix or replace, insurance goes up. Everything has increased except our funding and we still are not given a one of funding to at lease or purchase another vehicle. Our current vehicle bought in 2006 has a trade in value of \$2000. It is getting old and requires repairs that need to be fixed.

How can the same amount of money given in 2006 with just a small increment be enough in 2017? If someone can let us know how to deal with this issue, it would be realty appreciated.

We can try our best to work on the over representation of Indigenous people in custody in conjunction with other stakeholders. We do not directly provide any programs etc and all successful funding submissions we obtain, we support the high risk kids at the Rodeo School who take all the children that regular so called conventional schools reject.

The Plight of the Shaftesbury Rodeo School and Silver Lining for High Risk Teens.

The students at the Rodeo School are high risk, most vulnerable and most disconnected in the community. They are the ones that are regularly before the courts and in and out of detention due to poor support at home and a dysfunctional upbringing.

Although the school is classified as "Private", they are not like regular private schools where rich parents are paying high fees for their child's education. The students do not pay any fees and they often miss out on programs like the Clontarf Program which can only be delivered to public school kids and the kids from the Rodeo School and Silver Lining miss out. There is nothing fair about the way funding is allocated.

Issues related to government funding for the DFV Project in Cherbourg

The Government has provided all remote communities with \$150,000 recurring funding for 3 years to identify the gap in each remote community and to utilise this money to fill the gap. On face value, it sounds great and like a lot of money. However, if they want a holistic approach to what we would like to do, they have to acknowledge the loop holes in the budget that needs to be rectified.

The Justice Group has identified a Men's Healing Space or Hub for high risk DFV perpetrators coming out of prisons and who are in the community and who are repeat offenders.

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The Hub will provide a venue that they can call their own and utilise to engage with other stakeholders in program delivery, counselling, activities, and where they can go to when they feel a need to get away from environmental stressors.

However, there are many prisoners returning to the community but not allowed to go back to their homes due to court orders. There is no place for them to be accommodated and no funding to implement this need.

Government has allocated:

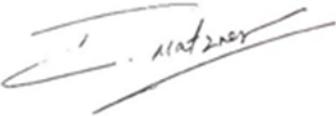
- \$100,000 for staff wages for the Men's Shelter
- \$30,000 for setting up the Hub and operational costs.
- \$20, 000 for brokerage fees as needed by clients being supported be it for programs or specialist intervention or travel needs etc.

From the \$30,000 dollars, we need to cover rent for the property which was quoted as \$14,000 per annum. We need to fit the place so it is functional with office equipment etc, administration costs and leasing a vehicle.

The property needs a security steel fence around and Cherbourg Council is saying they have no money to put a fence. A quote received was for approximately \$28,000 for solid sturdy steel fence that will prevent vandalism by the kids. Where are we going to get the money?

This puts the whole project in jeopardy as without a fence to protect the property, if it is vandalised, it comes out of our insurance which will impact on cost. There really is no room to manoeuvre when how we need to spend the money is told.

It would be greatly appreciated if government can be more equitable and fair in allocating funding to all organisations as current allocation of funding does not appear to be on an even playing field.



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 Indra Matzner
 Coordinator
 Barambah Local Justice Group
 20 May 2016

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