

# National Shame Job

Inner city Aboriginal community earmarked for development for the elite, while residents fight for basic human rights



16 Dinah Beach Rd, Darwin, NT, 0800

## One Mile Dam residents need your support

One Mile Dam is an aboriginal community situated half a kilometre from Darwin's CDB with a population of 150 people.

There are 50 permanent residents living in six dwellings, all made from tin (3 one-room dwellings and 3 three-room dwellings). Up to 20 people live in the wire mesh shelter (originally build as a community Hall) and under another tin roof with no walls. A number of family groups also camp in tents and under tarps in and around the One Mile Dam lease area.

One Mile Dam is the only place in central Darwin where Aboriginal people can stay, within their cultural comfort zone and within the law. One Mile Dam provides a sanctuary for indigenous homeless people, giving an alternative to living on the streets, providing shelter and basic facilities and functions in a way that Aboriginal people feel welcome and accepted.

This camping population is much bigger in the dry season when the weather good. There are only two toilet and shower block facilities. A total of seven toilets are shared between all residents (when they are working).

Police, and Community Patrol rely on One Mile Dam as an alternative to sobering up shelters or the police lock-up. The Government has yet to recognise One Mile Dam for providing this important service.

### Background

In the early days indigenous people were not entitled to housing and lived in the undeveloped areas in the coffee bush around the town of Darwin. It was the old people of the now permanent residents who lobbied the government of the time for their place and for a future for their families. The special purpose lease was granted in 1979 to Aboriginal Development Foundation (ADF) for an aboriginal living area at One Mile Dam. This fulfilled the overwhelming need for a permanent place where indigenous people could stay.

The lease area was then of no use to the government or developers being situated at the out end of drainage systems for Stuart Park and Darwin, next to mangroves in the low land before the drains entered the sea.

### Government plans

A large area of land above the One Mile Dam Community, known as the tank farm, has been the site of fuel storage from early Darwin days. The relocation of the large fuel tanks and development of the tank farm area for medium to high density inner city living is now a reality for the government and prospective developers. The tanks will be relocated to the new Darwin Port within a few years.

In 1997 the (then CLP) government of the Northern



David, Mindy and Kayla Timber

Image by Therese Ritchie

Territory announced that the One Mile Dam community did not fit in to future development plans for this area and that the people would have to move. General community support for One Mile Dam to stay made the story go quiet. When in Opposition, Clare Martin and John Ah Kit were strong supporters of the One Mile Dam community.

However, it now appears that the Labor Government has been in quiet negotiation with the ADF (as the formal leaseholder of the land). The ADF and the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment have not involved residents of the One Mile Dam community in discussions about future developments.

The residents continue to hear stories from government and community agencies that they will be moved. This lack of consultation is entire undemocratic.

### **The situation now**

The current proposed development of the One Mile Dam lease is to reduce the lease area by about half by rezoning this area to open parkland. Two of the better dwellings at One Mile Dam are situated in this area.

These plans for our area are for the benefit of developers. Once again this proposal was made without consultation with the community. A decision by government on this rezoning is due to be made soon.

One Mile Dam residents are determined to stay and have publically stated many times "we will not be moved". They have put a submission in to the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment opposing the proposed rezoning and have asked the government for written assurance that the lease will not be changed in any way and will be retained as an aboriginal living area.

No such assurance has been forthcoming.

The residents have plans to develop housing and infrastructure in line with general community standards.

Kumbutjil Association has informed the government of its desire to hold the lease (currently held by Aboriginal Development Foundation) so that in future residents can be assured that the community's interests are represented and that their history and future will not be negotiated by a third party.

## **One Mile Dam Community speaks out**

**“ Ethnic Cleansing - This is it. People might say it's development and you can't stand in the way of development - that's bullshit. You can't just go kicking blackfella's round all over the place. We've been dispossessed already, we're still being dispossessed now - being told to move out from here.”**

***David Timber, Community Leader, One Mile Dam***

### **History**

In 1979 a lease was granted for an aboriginal living area known as One Mile Dam Community or Railway Dam. In the 1970's our old people fought hard and long for their right to a place in Darwin. Kumbutjil Association was a name that was used at the time representing the old people that fought for and lived on the fringes of town in the One Mile Dam area.

Residents at One Mile Dam have long family histories of living in this area. 'Kumbutjil' means at the foot of the Black Wattle Tree from 'Mantha Angul' language. Mantha Angul peoples were originally from Anson Bay, Cape Ford and Cape Scott regions in the Northern Territory.

### **Community Issues - The Problems Now**

Our community is in a state of profound neglect. Residents live in tin dwellings that are unbearably hot in the build up and many residents sleep outside because of this. There are no fans. There are gaps between the floors and ceilings where rats and all forms of wildlife and insects enter and live in the dwellings. This creates ongoing dangerous power problems with



*Residents have asked the Lands Minister for written assurance that their future is secure at One Mile Dam.*

chewed cables and ants nesting in the power points. This month one resident was hospitalised from electric shock. Electric shocks in all dwellings is an on-going problem. The dwellings have no cooking facilities. There are no inside toilet and shower facilities. Residents share two ablution blocks. Residents from two dwellings having to walk over a hundred meters to use them. Overcrowding of the existing dwellings is always a problem. Some residents are

living in tents. These living conditions physically effect the health and well being of all residents at One Mile Dam. Residents expect housing developed to the standard that is the right of every other citizen in Australia.

Our experience with the ADF is one of paternalism. For 25 years the ADF has been funded to service and maintain our community and still holds the lease. Over the years, residents have tried to participate in the ADF to provide a voice but gave up when we realised our voice was not being heard. We have had no say in the running of our community, even the most basic of service provision. Our only maintenance over the last couple

of years has been in cases of emergencies such as electric shocks, burst water pipes or sewage problems.

Due to government restructure, funding for service and maintenance has now been given to Yilli Rreung Housing. However, as ADF still legally owns the houses, Yilli Rreung can only provide services up to the door, not to the dwellings themselves. The houses are now in such a state of disrepair due to neglect and inappropriate construction (tin sheds) that new housing is needed.

Since 2001 we have been writing letters to NT and federal government about the state of neglect at One Mile Dam community and our dissatisfaction with the performance of the ADF. The ADF does not respond to or represent our needs.

## ***Kumbutjil Association established***

**“We want to do thing for ourselves and to be in control of our own lives. We have started to do just that.” David Timber.**

In early 2004 we formed the Kumbutjil Association as a way to undertake our own projects and programs within the community and address the profound health and safety issues confronting residents.

**Kumbutjil Association was incorporated in August 2004. The key objectives of the association are:**

- **To undertake community development in health, housing, education, recreation, arts, entertainment, employment and cultural renewal.**
- **To generate and support employment opportunities and facilitate small business/enterprise of benefit to One Mile Dam Community.**
- **To encourage the wider community to participate in the development plans for our the future.**
- **To encourage and actively seek employment within projects concerned with the redevelopment of our area.**

**Our community sees housing as a priority.**

**Other key issues for the community are:**

- **The polluted state of the dam and the out of control weed problems.**
- **Regular and reliable rubbish collection**
- **Public Telephone and street lights.**
- **Employment, education and purposeful training for the residents.**
- **Resources and advice in accessing funding for community projects and consulting with government.**

*The following are Kumbutjil Association projects currently being worked on by One Mile Dam residents and volunteers:*

### **Housing and Whole Community Development Project**

This project has resourced independent consultants to work with residents on developing a sustainable well-designed community model to be publicly launched in mid-2005. Residents want this model to be a good working example for other communities.

### **Demountable Office Funding**

Residents have set up a temporary office, which has helped the community communicate with government and work on community projects. A number of organisations have provided computers, fax and furniture. The office is in house 5 but is already having equipment breakdowns due to power, insect, heat problems and lack of space separate from living areas. A demountable office will provide a functional office environment and neutral meeting and information space for residents and visitors. Funding applications to Federal and Territory Governments for a demountable office are under way.

### **Community Development Worker**

To work alongside the Kumbutjil Committee and residents to help secure funding, provide office management, advice, training and mentor residents in



*Residents and family, including Kenbi dancers, at the launch of Kumbutjil Association.*

community projects. Some residents want to develop their computer literacy and office management skills while others are interested in gaining meaningful employment through the community projects.

### Clean Up the Dam Project

To install rubbish traps in storm water drains that run to the dam; monitor pollutants through regular water testing; undertake long term weed control; address drainage problems and stagnant water issues in the area; provide a safe and healthy swimming and fishing environment for residents and visitors; beautify the community and its natural attributes. Meetings between Greening Australia and residents continue. Volunteers are needed to work with residents in planning and funding applications.

### Rubbish Collection

Rubbish collection by ADF ceased in early July and CDEP workers at One Mile Dam have been borrowing the CDEP truck to do their own rubbish run. Residents want a reliable and secure rubbish collection that is the

same main stream service as other Darwin residents.

### Public Telephone and Street Lights

There has been no public telephone or street lights at One Mile Dam since the mid-80s. A public telephone is essential, especially for emergencies.

### Dog Program

Residents would like to run a long term 'healthy dog' and population control program and are currently seeking funding through the federal government.

### Kumbutjil Fund

Residents have established and regularly contribute to this fund in order to be able to undertake small projects and community initiatives themselves.

### [www.onemiledam.org.au](http://www.onemiledam.org.au)

The website for the One Mile Dam Community was set up through volunteer assistance to inform government and provide a national and international voice about community issues, projects and initiatives.

**All of these projects are seeking support or sponsorship from the wider community. Please contact the Kumbutjil Office if you can offer some assistance or would like to visit. (ph/fax: 8981 0587 email: [kumbutjil@bushtech.com.au](mailto:kumbutjil@bushtech.com.au))**

## Where to from here?

This is our opportunity to show the government that we are moving ahead with our aspirations. So far we have achieved a lot by ourselves. All of our projects are self-initiated and some are self-funded. As yet we have received no government funding for these community projects.

**We are inviting the government and the wider community to work with us.**

We the residents at OMD have a vision for our future. We want a community that is consulted, informed and has a strong voice. A role model for other indigenous communities struggling with the old system of having decisions made for and about them, with no consultation.

"Some of the conditions in these houses is deplorable. The neglect has been here for a long long time, they're not fit for anybody to live in. We have always maintained the view that we will pay a reasonable rent for a reasonable standard of housing like everyone else." David Timber



**"This is inappropriate and inadequate housing. It violates our human dignity and our human rights."**  
David Timber

To support the One Mile Dam Community, you can offer direct support to the projects outlined above, and/or fill in and send this slip back to: **Kumbutjil Association, 16 Dinah Beach Rd, Darwin, 0800, NT**

We will forward this support to the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs - Amanda Vanstone, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory - Clare Martin and Northern Territory Minister for Lands and Planning - Dr Chris Burns.

**I support security of tenure for the One Mile Dam Community including (please tick):**

- The Kumbutjil Association's request to hold the lease at One Mile Dam to ensure that the rights and interests of the residents are represented**
- My opposition to the current proposal to cut the lease in half and rezone as Open Park land.**
- Whole community development plans in line with adequate standards of living and culturally appropriate housing**

**Name/organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_