

The WDNWPT Story

Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation

The origins of WDNWPT may be found in a partnership of interested persons and bodies with Sir William Deane and the late Charles Perkins as co-patrons. This in turn led to a high profile auction at the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney, on 11 November 2000, of Aboriginal artworks, in collaboration with Sotheby's Australia. The auction itself was inspired by indigenous dissatisfaction with mainstream health services, the intention being to raise money to enable Yanangu people affected by kidney disease to return home on dialysis, rather than have to move permanently to Alice Springs in Northern Territory for treatment. The just over \$1 million raised was used to fund the development and subsequent activities of WDNWPT, which is in effect an organisation representing those Yanangu families on dialysis.

Prior to the activities of WDNWPT those Yanangu suffering from kidney disease had no choice but to move hundreds of kilometres away from their community for treatment at the Regional Dialysis Unit (RDU) in Alice Springs. There are 28 machines there – it is the largest single dialysis complex in the Southern Hemisphere. This required families, carers and patients to live permanently in Alice Springs and the patients to end their days there. In contrast to the situation nationally, no one in Central Australia had ever received community-based care for kidney failure.

The significance of the resulting dislocation for Yanangu is it works against holding onto their very sense of identity and well being. Living ‘... in other peoples country, not speaking the language, separated from those who give them a reason to live would break the toughest spirit’.

The focus of WDNWPT has been ‘... to develop and deliver a system of more appropriate support services and treatment options for Yanangu on dialysis, and to establish processes enabling it to operate as an effective, honest community advocate’.

Two Lifeline programs were introduced. The first, *Yanangu Advocacy Malpa* (YAM) ‘... provides social support and early interventions for members’.

The second *Return to Country* ‘... offers regular brief planned visits home for those on dialysis, breaking prolonged absences from remote communities to maintain family and community life’.

By April 2004 a *Going Home* program had also been introduced and begun to deliver dialysis training and treatment to members. It provides three-week treatment rotations firstly in the ‘Dialysis House’ (called the ‘Purple House’) in the suburbs of Alice Springs as distinct from the large RDU elsewhere in the city. This is followed by a similar period spent in the ‘Dialysis Room’, based some 500 kms west, within the local aboriginal community-controlled clinic at Kintore (Walungurru). There is one machine at each of the two locations. The program offers free return travel home six times each year for all WDNWPT members.

In September 2004 the first WDNWPT member was successfully dialysed in Kintore. Over ‘... the first nine months a total of eighteen members received 144 dialyses safely, with 99.3 percent attendance - significantly better than for other indigenous patients in the RDU at Alice Springs. A preferred model for dialysis, it strongly supports the necessary rebuilding of family cohesion’.

Currently WDNWPT provides the only training and services for community based dialysis in Central Australia.



WESTERN DESERT HEALTH PROJECT

Working together for the wellbeing and health of the people of the Western Desert

Rotary Club of Woden Inc.

News Bulletin No. 1

October 2009

Our Rotary Club has initiated this occasional news bulletin so as to keep our many supporters informed on progress with our Western Desert Health Project.

As many of you know, the Rotary Club of Woden, in Canberra, decided in 2007 to undertake a five year project in Central Australia in conjunction with the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku (WDNWPT) Aboriginal Corporation. In appreciation of our wish to work with it, the corporation very generously presented our club with two paintings by local indigenous artists.

This body was created in 2001 to find solutions to the problem of acute social dislocation arising from kidney disease in Yanangu communities in the disadvantaged remote region of the Western Desert. Yanangu people endure the highest rates of kidney failure in Australia.

To refresh your memories on the achievements of this remarkable organisation we have included on the rear of this bulletin a

description of its founding and what it is doing for Aboriginal people.

At the request of WDNWPT we agreed that our first initiative would be to tackle the refurbishment of an existing building at Kintore in Northern Territory. This has now become known as the ‘Purple House 2’. The refurbishment will enable the provision and commissioning of additional urgently needed dialysis equipment in the Western Desert.

We are doing this in accordance with plans and documents generously provided by a group of consultants from Newcastle, NSW. A copy of the perspective drawing is



herewith.

If you are aware of any other Rotary Clubs, individuals or organisations that may be interested in helping us with this project could you kindly refer them to me. My contact information is below.

David Fox
Project Co-ordinator

Additional information on this project is at: <<http://www.rotarnet.com.au/woden>>

Copies of this and later bulletins will also be available there.

Rotary Club of Woden Inc
PO Box 637
Woden, ACT 2606 Australia

Bulletin Editor:
John Gray

Project Coordinator: David Fox
(02) 6231 4501 or 0416 205 827
E-mail: foxxes1@bigpond.net.au

Progress Report - David Fox (Project Co-ordinator)

As you will see from our previous reports at: <http://www.rotanet.com.au/woden> and this bulletin we are making reasonable progress with our project. The Electricity Supply company at Kintore has connected the building to the power grid and hence we now have 3 phase power. Internal electrical works will be progressing shortly as will the air conditioning.

We are in desperate need of a plumber to upgrade water reticulation in the building. We are unable to move the project forward until we obtain some plumbing services. Hopefully a Rotary Club in Australia will come to our rescue. I look forward to hearing from one.

On the financial side I am happy to report that The Rotary Foundation (TRF) has approved a "TRF Matching Grant" of US\$25,000, comprising US\$10,000 from the Foundation Grants Committee, US\$7,000 from Rotary District 3650 (Korea), US\$3,000 from our own District 9710 and US\$5,000 from our own club. This is an outstanding result and shows the power of the Matching Grant process – we are grateful for the Korean contribution. We believe this is the first Matching Grant ever given to a project within Australia. We can now purchase much needed equipment for the building. Our club has also allocated to the project all funds raised from the recent Rotary Spring Bike Ride, and our library cataloguing and car parking projects.

The Project will need another \$200,000 to ensure completion but, with some more generous donations and working parties, WDNWPT should be able to open the new Dialysis Centre in Kintore in 2010. Please contact me if you can help.

Project Supporters

We are grateful for the assistance generously given to us by our many supporters including:

- * **CONTRIBUTION** - Australian Government Grant
- * **CONTRIBUTION** - Rotary Foundation Matching Grant
- * **CONTRIBUTION** - Woden Daybreak Rotary, ACT
- * **CONTRIBUTION** - Canberra City Rotary, ACT
- * **CONTRIBUTION** - Past Woden Rotary President Jon Cassell, ACT
- * **DRAWINGS & SPECIFICATIONS** - Suters Architects in association with Northrops Structural Engineers, Marline mechanical, services engineering, EDS Engineering Drafting Services, Frosts preparation of hardware schedules, Charles Martin Perspective drawings, all of Newcastle, NSW
- * **ELECTRICAL WIRING ON SITE** - Cliff Hicks & Geoff Hunt, ACT
- * **FRAMES & WHEEL CHAIRS** - Hall Rotary, ACT
- * **GENERAL SUPPORT** - Governor, Rotary District 9500
- * **GENERAL SUPPORT** - Kintore Town Council, NT
- * **MATERIALS DISCOUNT** -Big "O", Alice Springs, NT
- * **PAVING MOULDS** -Wagga Wagga Rotary Clubs, NSW

Working Parties

These working parties have visited Alice Springs &/or Kintore to work on the project assisted by the people of Kintore.

1. **NOVEMBER 2007** – Rotarian from WODEN ROTARY: David Fox
2. **NOVEMBER 2008** – Rotarians & friends from WODEN ROTARY: Shukry Sahhar (Leader) Helen Sahhar, John & Julia Widdup, Neale Emanuel & Lucinda Lang.
3. **JUNE 2009** – Rotarians & friends from WODEN ROTARY: Shukry Sahhar (Leader), Helen Sahhar, Ros Osbourne, Lukas & Natalie Strohmayer, Bernadette Cappello, Neale Emanuel, Margaret Ellis, Cliff Hicks & Geoff Hunt.
4. **AUGUST 2009** – Rotarians & friends from WODEN ROTARY: John Widdup (Leader), Julia Widdup, Annemarie & Rod Driver, from SOUTH WAGGA WAGGA ROTARY: Eugene Maloney, Greg Bannon, Tony Christie, Mick Luckie, and from WAGGA WAGGA KOORINGAL ROTARY: Pop Power.

The 4th Working Party - John Widdup (Leader)

Working party members flew to Alice Springs, NT and were met by Sarah Brown (Manager, WDNWPT). After stocking up with equipment, materials and food they all attended the Rotary Club of Stuart evening meeting where they advised the Stuart Club members of the project details and got their agreement to assist with the project. The following day they proceeded via the largely unsealed road to Kintore, a distance of some 530 kms.



In Kintore the working party members were very productive over the week. They erected the steel shade structure at the front of the building, repaired broken internal concrete block walls, tiled the new toilet rooms, painted all the trim (to windows and doors inside and outside), erected the water tank, studded out and sheeted the lowered portion of the windows that were installed where external doors were removed, blocked up the internal doorways that were no longer required, removed calcium buildup (from the water) in the kitchen, bathroom and toilet rooms, assembled the fence panels for the accommodation courtyard fence and some other

minor works.

Some of the local men worked with the working party and gained some construction skills. But unfortunately the men were not available for the full week and so the proposed training and skills transfer was not as planned.

While in Kintore, working party members interacted with the local population and visited the clinic, schools, art centre and other community centres and got to see how life is lived in the remote community.

On return to Alice Springs working party members visited the WDNWPT dialysis centre and talked to staff and patients. It was



sobering to see firsthand why people from the remote areas find going for dialysis in Alice Springs as a one way trip with no way to leave the place where they cannot see their country of their origin.

The staff explained that the first successful qualified dialysis patient (trained by WDNWPT) had received a certificate from the NT Health Department to allow him (and his wife) to set up in a remote community and do his own dialysis.