Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh

Alyawarr Region Development Project

FOURTH AND FINAL THREE-MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

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Introduction

This 4th and final report of the Alyawarr Region Development Project for the period August 2004 to August 2005 concludes my 12 months period as "Alyawarr Region Development Manager". In this report I will attempt to sum up the previous 12 months of the project, its milestones and difficulties, evaluate it from my perspective, and outline a path for the future regional development that Alyawarr people who have been involved in the project are comfortable with in pursuing.

I will call the period up to now the "Preliminary Phase" of the Alyawarr Region Development Project in order to differentiate this phase from the next phase which is called 'Step 1', as described below in this report.

I will outline the situation in the Alyawarr region as it presented itself at the start of the 'preliminary phase' and identify the issues Alyawarr were, and still are, confronted with. I will then outline the outcomes of discussions and consultations in the region to arrive at a discussion of the cross-roads Alyawarr find themselves at today in relation to regional development.

This report will then delineate the requirements to progress this project through the next phase, 'Step 1', and into the future.

Over the past 12 months I have been primarily responsible to the Alyawarr people. My task was to facilitate and assist them with devising strategies to clarify and achieve their aspiration. Of course, even among Alyawarr there are many different opinions and personal aspirations. My task was to work towards a general consensus, not only among the Alyawarr, but also taking into account the 'external' interests driving this project.

This report presents my perspective of the past year. My perspective, however, is deeply influenced by many Alyawarr voices which have influenced my thinking and understanding of Alyawarr culture over the past 8 years, and so I hope that my perspective does justice to the Alyawarr people.

Regional Background

The region from an Alyawarr Perspective

The Alyawarr language region encompasses an area along the Sandover Hwy to the northeast of Alice Springs between Angarrapa Aboriginal Land Trust (Utopia) in the west and Alpurrurulam (Lake Nash) and the QLD border in the east, Canteen Creek and Epenarra in the north and potentially as far south as Irrelir (# 5) community on the Plenty Hwy.

This potential extend of the Alyawarr region is defined by the Alyawarr on the basis of two principles: the identification of traditionally Alyawarr territories, or 'countries', and their associated landholding groups, and other communities with predominantly Alyawarr speaking populations which are located on traditionally non-Alyawarr countries (such as Alpurrurulam/ Lake Nash, Canteen Creek and Epenarra).

The Alyawarr 'heartland', which encompasses an area traditionally identified as Alyawarr, stretches approximately from the eastern Angarrapa ALT in the west into Argadargada Station in the east, and from the Anurrete ALT in the north to the Dulcie Ranges in the south. Within this area are contained 15 Alyawarr 'countries', i.e. particular territories, each of which is associated with a particular patri-lineal descent group, or 'family'.

In addition there are a number of 'countries' which a) are identified today as Alyawarr, although it is acknowledged that they were not traditionally associated with the Alyawarr territory[1], or b) which are identified as 'mix-up countries', i.e. which have more than one language affiliation[2]. Senior Alyawarr men include these countries in the Alyawarr Region on the basis of a) close ceremonial and 'Dreaming' relationships, b) close family relationships through past and current inter-marriage, and c) predominant language spoken by family members is Alyawarr.

The area east of Argadargada homestead to the Queensland border (the Lake Nash area) is an area where Alyawarr possess traditional rights through a process of 'succession' to previous landholding groups. This area traditionally was occupied by the Pwelany (Bulanya, Bularnu, Yeroinga) language group and encompasses the following Pwelany countries: Ilperrelhanem, Mita, Malarrarr and Arkert-arkert. In the 1920s and 1930s, when Alyawarr refugees from the west sought refuge and work at Lake Nash Station the last patri-lineal members of the Pwelany countries died, handing over responsibility for the area to the now resident senior Alyawarr people[3]. For the purpose of the project this region is glossed as 'Lake Nash area' as most people with responsibility for the Pwelany countries are resident there.

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[1] Such as the traditional Wakaya countries Alangkw and Atetyamper, where the Alyawarr language has replaced the traditional Wakaya language. Wakaya is not spoken anymore.
[2] Such as Imangker, which is said to be 'half Alyawarr, half Keytetye', and Irrelir, which is 'half Alyawarr and half Arrernte'.
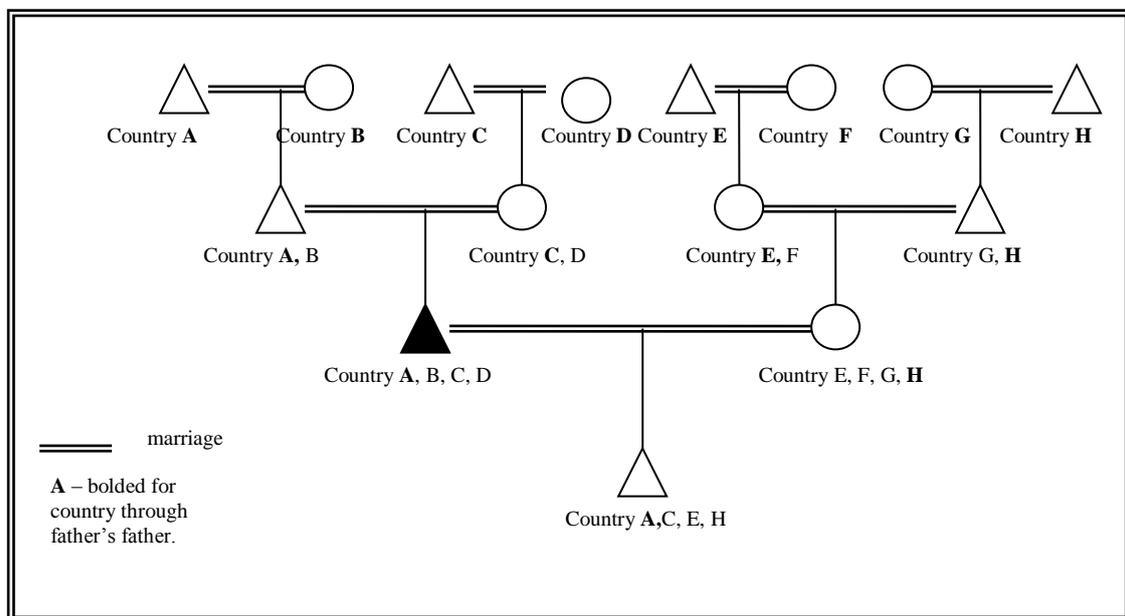[3] For more information see: Lyon, P and M. Parson, 1989, We Are Staying: The Alyawarre Struggle for Land at Lake Nash; Alice Springs: IAD Press.

Apart from a common language it is the strong relationships between individuals of different families with instil in Alyawarr the sense of a region. The Alyawarr region, for them, is the area where most of their relations live.

The basic principle of Alyawarr belonging is the 'patri-lineal descent group', that is, the group of people who 'inherit' rights and responsibilities to a particular country through their father and father's father. These people are called 'apmerek-artwey' in Alyawarr, glossed as 'bosses' or 'owners'.

In addition, Alyawarr also inherit a different set of rights and responsibilities through their mother's father, their father's mother and their mother's mother. Belonging to a country through 'mother's side' places people in a kwertengerl (kurdungurlu, glossed as 'manager' or 'worker') relationship to that country and to its patri-lineal members. In this sense any Alyawarr individual can possess a concrete relationship with up to four separate 'countries' through his or her four grandparents, and he or she will appear on up to four different genealogies.

To exemplify potential relationships within the Alyawarr region I refer to the simplified genealogy diagram below.

Country A · Country B · Country C · Country D · Country E · Country F · Country G · Country H

Country A, B · Country C, D · Country E, F · Country G, H

Country A, B, C, D · Country E, F, G, H

marriage

A – bolded for country through father's father.

Country A,C, E, H

As can be seen on this highly simplified family tree, an individual can potentially be linked, directly or indirectly, to 8 country groups on the basis of descent and marriage alone (although it needs to be noted here that connection through marriage alone does not necessarily confer any specific rights to that country). If it then is considered that there are 15 'core' Alyawarr patri-lineal 'families', and each individual can be connected in one way or another to potentially half of these groups, it can be seen how Alyawarr perception of the region is based on concrete family relationships in the sense of 'we are one mob'.

Each of the patri-lineal descent groups, through its senior members, has fully autonomous decision-making authority over its 'internal' affairs. It is with this in mind that I have, in the past, described the regionalisation process as a task akin to setting up the European Union or the United Nations, as the process needs to be based on the collective consent of autonomous 'countries'.

The Region from an Administrative Perspective

Alyawarr people generally consider their region to be bounded by traditional law and culture, language and family ties. This is currently not reflected in the governmental administration of the region. Different sections of the Alyawarr region, because of their location, are administered by different regional offices of various government departments, more specifically, by corresponding regional offices based either in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek.

Within the Alyawarr region are located three 'administrative centres', incorporated community councils: Aherrenge Association Inc, Alpurrurulam Community Government Council and Owartilla (Canteen Creek) Aboriginal Association.

Aherrenge Association:
- associated communities are Ampilatwatja, Irrwelty, Welere, Atnwengerrp (and nominally Areyn which has no permanent residents due to lack of houses);
- deals with funding agencies (DLG, ICC, and others) through Alice Springs based offices;
- Services:
  - Community Store
  - School (DEET – School Group East)
  - Independent Health Centre
  - Independent Arts Centre ('Artists of Ampilatwatja')

Alpurrurulam Community Government Council:
- associated communities are Irrmarn and Apwiperr (on Ooratippra);
- deals with Tennant Creek based agencies (DLG, ICC Southern Barkley Aboriginal Corporation);
- Services:
  - Community Store
  - School (DEET – Barkley School Group)
  - NT Health Clinic
  - CDEP through Southern Barkley Aboriginal Corporation (SBAC)

Owartilla Aboriginal Corporation:
- associated outstations: Kalapitapit, Hatches Creek
- deals with Tennant Creek bases agencies (ICC, Southern Barkley Aboriginal Corporation) and Alekarenge (Ali Curung) Council (administering housing funds from DLGHS);
- Services:
  - Store

- School (DEET – Barkley School Group)
- NT Health Clinic
- CDEP through SBAC

Epenarra Community currently does not have an incorporated administrative body. All services for this community are externally controlled and administered through Tennant Creek regional offices and organisations (ICC, SBAC, Julalakari AC)
- Services:
  - Station Store at Epenarra homestead
  - School (DEET – Barkley School Group)
  - NT Health Clinic
  - CDEP through SBAC

The remaining Alyawarr communities are serviced and administered by other Community Councils:

Urapunja Council (Utopia):
- associated Alyawarr communities: Antarrengeny, Ngkwarlarlanem, Arnkawenyerr, Atheley and Arawerr;
- deals with funding agencies (DLG?, ICC, and others) through Alice Springs based offices;
- Services:
  - Community Store at Alparra
  - School (DEET – School Group East) – Antarrengeny 'Homeland Learning Centre' attached to Ampilatwatja School, all others to Utopia School;
  - Independent Health Clinic at Amengernterneah ('Clinic')
  - Arts Centre ('Utopia Artists')

Alekarenge (Ali Curung) Community Government Council:
- associated Alyawarr outstations: Imangker (Murray Downs), Imperenth (1 & 2)
- deals with Tennant Creek bases agencies
- Services:
  - Community Store
  - School (DEET – Barkley School Group)
  - NT Health Clinic
  - Police Station

It is against this background that Alyawarr people initially formulated their wish to look at regional governance. In their words, they have been "battling by themselves" for too long without any effect perceivable to them. Similar issues may have been raised in separate communities, which were then relayed to different agency offices only to disappear in the bureaucratic process without results. It is for this reason that Alyawarr are striving for a united, stronger voice to make their concerns and wishes known to the various service delivery agencies.

Alyawarr Region Development Project - Preliminary or Development Phase[4]

History of the Project

It is somewhat difficult to identify exactly when Alyawarr entered the Preliminary Phase of this regional development project. Was it when the current Alyawarr Region Development Officer commenced his position? Or when Alyawarr called for a meeting with key government agencies in March 2004 to discuss support for their regional development plans? Or when a previous Administrator of Aherrenge Association first discussed the NT Government's 'Stronger Regions' Policy with Alyawarr? Or was it when two Alyawarr representatives, accompanied by the then Administrator for Aherrenge Association, went on a study trip to Canada in 2003 to research indigenous governance and First Nations Tribal Councils (Attachment 1)?

Alyawarr have always been concerned about their region and their connections to their countries. Throughout 'white' settlement of their lands Alyawarr stayed on their country wherever they could and sought to come to arrangements with the newcomers. Later, they fought for their land through the Land Claims and Native Title processes. In the early 1990s several key Alyawarr communities separated from Urapunja Council at Utopia to set up their own administration at Ampilatwatja, Aherrenge Association Inc.

For the purpose of this report it is not necessary to identify the exact starting point for the Alyawarr aspirations for changing the Alyawarr region to the better. The difficulty to identify such a point, however, is characteristic for a grass-roots movement which 'grows' below the surface until it culminates in to a particular project. I am outlining this here because I believe that the strengths of the current project are precisely to be found in its 'roots'. And it is this strength that needs to be nurtured and its development assisted.

In August 2003 two representative Alyawarr and the then CEO of Aherrenge Association John Willis went on a largely self-funded study trip to Canada (with additional financial support from the Australian Local Government and Social Services Association) where they spoke and exchanged ideas with representatives from various "First Nations Tribal Councils" (Attachment 1).

In March 2004 Alyawarr called a meeting with representatives from the NT Government, the Central Land Council and ATSIS to discuss their options to progress their regional development aspirations.

Sometime after this meeting John Willis, Banjo Morton and Alec Peterson organised a regional tour where they spoke with key Alyawarr elders at key communities and found in principle support to further discuss the development of an Alyawarr Region.

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[4] I am calling the past 12 months of the project development the 'Preliminary', or 'Development Phase', in order to differentiate it from three future phases proposed by Alyawarr people which are called 'Step 1' to Step 2' (the '3 – Step Plan', see below).

Subsequently, in June 2004, the then Department for Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs (DCDSCA) provided Alyawarr, via the Aherrenge Association, with funding for a region based facilitator. Key senior Alyawarr people then approached me, asking me to be their 'helper'. My background in the Alyawarr region is based on seven years of work experience in the Alyawarr region as a CLC Anthropologist. I started working on the project on 19th of August 2004 on a 12 month contract through Aherrenge Association.

The Alyawarr Region Development Project is a grass-roots Alyawarr initiative, partially in response to the NT Government's 'Stronger Regions' policy, to improve local/ regional decision making by the Alyawarr people and service delivery in the Alyawarr region. To this end Alyawarr, with funding received from the then DCDSCA, have employed their own facilitator to ensure that control over processes and outcomes remains with Alyawarr people. While the facilitator was primarily responsible to the Alyawarr people, a 'Project Management Group' with representatives from the Department for Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs (CDSCA), the Central Land Council (CLC), and the regional Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC), was providing feedback, additional direction and inter-agency coordination.

Project Aims

I need to differentiate, here, between the project aims as they were presented at the start of my involvement, from the way they have developed towards the end. Initially, the aims were phrased in terms of assisting Alyawarr people to formulate and explore their aspirations and possibilities in coming together as a region to create a stronger voice, to facilitate their increased participation in agencies' decision-making processes concerning Alyawarr people, and to facilitate increased regional cooperation. As stated in my initial job description:

> "General Project Goal:
> To improve the coordination and delivery of government services in the Alyawarr Region by involving Alyawarr Traditional Owners in decision making processes concerning that service delivery and associated funding.
> To establish a regional Alyawarr decision making process based on traditional Alyawarr decision making processes.
>
> Job Description:
> The ARDM shall, in accordance with the wishes of Alyawarr Elders, be responsible for progressing the following project objectives:
> • the definition of the Alyawarr Governance Region;
> • Investigation of options for the establishment of an Alyawarr Regional Governance Structure with decision making processes based on traditional Alyawarr decision making processes;
> • the development of an Alyawarr Regional Strategic Plan based on the wishes, aspirations and goals of the Alyawarr people;
> • the establishment of outcomes indicators by which future development and service delivery improvement can be measured;
> • the coordination and implementation of regional development projects in consultation with Alyawarr traditional owners across the region;
> • Ensuring a future funding stream for this project and for implementation of the Alyawarr Regional Strategic Plan."

While the above goals and tasks are still valid for the longer term of the project, it probably was optimistic to think that all the objectives could be dealt with within the past 12 month period. Much of my time was used to liaise between Alyawarr people to inform them across the region of the project, between councils and their CEOs, between Alyawarr and government departments, and, last but not least, between government departments and their regional offices. Through this liaison and information process over the past 12 months I have achieved, I think, a good momentum on the Alyawarr side for the project to move forward.

A major emphasis of the past 12 months has been on developing options for a regionally representative body. Here Alyawarr were encouraged to develop their own model. However, when it became clear about half-way through the current phase that the government model of a Regional Authority was likely to be the only option which would receive funding in the future, efforts were focussed on developing a process by which Alyawarr could meaningfully engage with this government policy, at a pace and with intermediate outcomes controlled by Alyawarr themselves (see '3 – Step Plan' below).

In line with its Stronger Regions policy, which is now also reflected in the "Overarching Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia", the NT Government assisted the project with a view of developing an Alyawarr Regional Authority. In that, government policy and Alyawarr thinking are roughly on the same track. While Alyawarr want a regional body to "have a stronger voice when talking with government", the NTG would like to see a substantial reduction in community government councils across the NT by amalgamation to increase regional economies of scale, and thus improving service delivery to communities (see also Attachment 2a).

The Commonwealth Government also is interested in the development of larger, regional governance structures which may be seen as replacements for the now defunct ATSIC representative structure.

In short, the project goals changed from developing an Alyawarr representative structure to the development of a process by which Alyawarr could take control of, and engage with, an externally designed model (the Regional Authority).

In hindsight, what the Development Phase of the project did was to increase a general awareness of, and involvement with the issues associated with regionalisation. It increased awareness among government departments and regional offices of the Alyawarr region which, hopefully, will lead to a better coordinated effort in service delivery to the region on their side.

Further, this phase developed an Alyawarr strategy to engage with external policy directions regarding regionalisation and Regional Authorities.

Methodology

The project methodology was based on a series of regional meetings and community and council workshops/ participatory planning sessions through which Alyawarr were assisted to identify issues to be developed and improved on a regional basis, and to develop appropriate governance structures and processes to take control of those issues. At each workshop a video/ DVD was produced to document proceedings and outcomes. The DVDs were then distributed to key people in communities within the Alyawarr region in order to inform non-participants, so that subsequent workshops were able to build on the preceding ones. The DVDs were also distributed to members of the PMG. This strategy was initiated by Alyawarr in order to communicate, share information and encourage discussion in language across the region.

In order to be workable and meaningful for the Alyawarr people concerned and to establish a broad support basis it was essential that the development phase of the project was based on a sound and extensive consultation process with as many Alyawarr people as possible. In the past 12 months Alyawarr people have invested in excess of an estimated 2700 man-hours into the project.

Through this consultation process Alyawarr people were able to deepen their understanding of funding and service delivery processes and have increased their capacity to formulate strategies in relation to issues affecting them on a regional basis. In particular, Alyawarr were facilitated to develop a regional development process to engage with external policy directives (the Regional Authority concept) and to align them with their own aspirations of regional development, as well as a Regional Strategic Plan outlining regional issues Alyawarr wish to improve.

Key Outcomes of the Project Development Phase

Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh

(see also Attachment 2b and 6)

Alyawarr people present at an Alyawarr Regional Development meeting at Ampilatwatja from the 3rd of May to the 6th of May 2005, have formed a Steering Committee to direct and progress the regional development of the Alyawarr Language Region. They called this steering committee "ALYAWARR INGKERR-WENH", which roughly translates to 'all Alyawarr together'.

The make-up of ALYAWARR INGKERR-WENH reflects the following guiding principles:
    a) Alyawarr *Artwa ampwa* and *Arelh ampwa* (male and female Elders) are the final authority for any decisions;
    b) Respect for Alyawarr law, customs and traditions;
    c) the need to deal with issues relating to governance, service delivery and authorities of existing Community Councils and community interests;
    d) the need to maintain an 'open door' policy for communities and Landholding Groups not currently 'formally' represented on the Steering Committee;

e) meetings of Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh shall be open to all Alyawarr to attend and participate in;

The selection of the Steering Committee members is based on the following principles:

1 up to two (2) *Artwa ampwa* or *Arelh ampwa* of the following Alyawarr *Apme*r Groups (Landholding or 'Country' Groups) may be nominated by each of the *Apmer* groups, and shall be regarded as automatic members of Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh:
   a) Aherreng
   b) Aketepwenty
   c) Irrwelty/ Weler
   d) Atnwengerrp
   e) Areyn
   f) Tyaw
   g) Atheley
   h) Anapwenty
   i) Alangkw
   j) Ngwarlarlanem
   k) Arnkawenyerr
   l) Angkweperrtyey
   m) Irrkwal
   n) Irrmarn
   o) Atetyamper
   p) Akweranty/ Anwerret
   q) Akarneng
   r) Arrtya
   s) Ntewerrek
   t) Irrelir
   u) Atnweal
   v) Alarrilp

   The nomination/ selection of this group of members shall be in accordance with Alyawarr laws and traditions and shall have regard to gender representation.

2 In addition, up to two (2) members may be nominated by each of the following Communities in accordance with processes as determined by each community:
   a) Amperlatwaty (Ampilatwatja)
   b) Alpurrulam (Lake Nash)
   c) Antarrengeny
   d) Irrwelty (Irrultja)
   e) Atnwengerrp
   f) Weler
   g) Atheley
   h) Arawerr
   i) Ngwarlarlanem
   j) Arnkawenyerr
   k) Awarthel (Owartila – Canteen Creek)
   l) Wetwenngwerr (Wutungurra - Epenarra)
   m) Kalapitapit

n) Alepeywenh (Hatches Creek)
o) Imangker
p) Imparenth 1 & 2
q) Apwiperr
r) Irrmarn
s) Irrelir ("#5")

The above representative rules for Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh reflects the ideal principles by which Alyawarr people would make regional decisions on the broadest basis. The principles of representation reflect a fusing of 'standard' representation based on residential communities with representation based on Alyawarr laws and tradition. It reflects the historical fact that communities do not necessarily align themselves with traditional Alyawarr land tenure. Not every Landholding Group has their own community and, in some cases, landholding groups are not adequately represented by any administrative structure within the Alyawarr region (such as the Angkweperrtyey landholding group), whereas in other cases community councils are dominated by resident members of one landholding group which is not 'holding' the land on which the community is located (for example Canteen Creek). The above representative rules in this sense are as non-exclusive as possible, guaranteeing each landholding group and each community and outstation a voice should they choose to use it.

The number of representatives on this steering committee may seem daunting with up to 40 representatives. Yet, in reality, the numbers required for regional decision making may be much smaller. As mentioned above, Alyawarr 'countries' and associated authority structures are seen as autonomous from each other on the level of decision making, yet they are interconnected through kin relationships and Dreaming tracks.

Through those interconnections some representatives for one 'country' will inevitably also represent the interests of other 'countries' and/ or communities. For example, the senior elder for one 'country' may also be the senior spokesperson for the associated community, and may also represent the interests of a number of other 'countries' on the basis of his/ her responsibilities as a senior 'kwertengerl' (kurdungurlu; 'manager' or 'care taker'). However, while this one person may be required for decisions, he/ she will not be comfortable making decisions in the absence of other appropriately connected people, or 'witnesses', as decisions generally are based on the consent by a larger group.

Not all Alyawarr country groups and communities have 'nominated' representatives 'formally', and more work will need to be done in this regard. The aim is to develop some continuity of people who attend Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh meetings. So far there certainly has been a 'core' of people who regularly attended, but also a number of people who fluctuated from meeting to meeting. I believe that at this point it is appropriate to regard Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh as a 'loose' forum for Alyawarr to express a regional voice until continuity of attendance has been achieved. In order to facilitate the establishment of continuity of members it may well be appropriate to formalise Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh by incorporating it as a non-financial Association. Not only will it be easier for Government to accept and deal with Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh as a legally recognised forum, but, maybe more importantly, it would also provide Alyawarr with a more formalised structure and associated sense of responsibility. The drafting of a simple constitution for an Association would also

'sow the seed', so to speak, for future development of this forum into a Regional Council.

For the time being it is necessary to contact key contact people in all communities to inform them of Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh meetings, irrespective of whether they are 'formal members' or not. A list of key 'contacts' who have to be informed of any Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh meetings is attached (Attachment 3).

DRAFT Alyawarr Region Strategic Plan
(Attachment 4)

No major developments have occurred on the Draft Strategic Plan since the last, 3rd quarterly report.
I only need to note two aspects which are not yet reflected in the strategic plan:

1. The plan was workshopped at regional meetings and largely reflects issues of concern to Alyawarr across the region. The plan does not reflect particular local concerns, administrative or otherwise, which may be put forward by community CEOs and advisors. Community specific issues would still need to be incorporated into the regional plan.

2. The draft strategic plan does not adequately reflect the concerns raised by communities more recently about the quality of CDEP delivery to their communities. While I am not able to comment about the details of those concerns it has become increasingly clear that Alyawarr communities would strongly favour increased control over CDEP delivery in the form of an Alyawarr Region CDEP program.

Summary of strengths and key achievements the conclusion of the Development Phase of the project (as identified by the Project Management Group at a meeting on 5 August 2005):

Strengths:
- The project was community initiated, driven and controlled;
- NTG had regular (monthly) input in to the project (through the Project Management Group), but was not driving the pace or direction;
- Alyawarr selected and employed a project officer with established relationships in, and knowledge of the region;
- An Alyawarr regional steering committee called *'Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh'* was established;
- The process was in accordance with Alyawarr law and cultural principles;
- Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh incorporates a clear decision making process and representative structure based on Alyawarr law and culture;
- Awareness of the Alyawarr region at the administrative and political level has been achieved and consolidated;

- Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh, as a regional forum, provides Alyawarr with a stronger regional voice;
- An investment far in excess of 2700 unpaid man-hours by Alyawarr people into the project to date;
- Alyawarr Councils' support for the project: by placing Regional Development on Council meeting agendas as a standing agenda item, and as in-kind meeting support in the form of fuel and vehicles, and foregone revenue from accommodation provided to the project officer;

Key Achievements:
- A growing level of Alyawarr participation in regional development meetings and decision making from all Alyawarr communities;
- The transition from individual community meetings to an increasing number of regional meetings;
- The formulation of a concrete regional development process, the '3 - Step Plan';
- The formulation and (pending) ratification of the 'Alyawarr Framework Agreement', formalising Alyawarr Community Councils' agreement with the '3 – Step Plan';
- The development of a draft Alyawarr Region Development Strategy indicating key areas where Alyawarr people see the need for regional improvement;

Identified Issues

Government Policy Context

The NTGs longstanding[5] 'Stronger Regions' policy aims at reducing the overall number of Community Councils in the NT through assisted amalgamation of councils into larger councils and 'Regional Authorities'. This approach has been further confirmed in the 'Overarching Agreement' between the NTG and the Australian Government. This agreement specifies that funding to remote communities through Regional Authorities incorporated under the NT Local Government Act is the preferred option. Consequently, the Overarching Agreement was seen as limiting the options available to Alyawarr, such as the option of incorporating a regional service delivery body under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act. This option, Alyawarr were advised by DCDSCA and ICC representatives[6], was unlikely to receive any direct funding from either government. The regional governance options were thus limited to a body incorporated under the NT LGA.

For Alyawarr this meant a change of focus from developing possible options for their regional representative body, to devising a process acceptable to them to engage with this governmental directive.

The "Overarching Agreement"

The "Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affaires between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia 2005 – 2010" was signed in April 2005, more than halfway through the current 'Development Phase' of the project. This agreement has some implications on how Alyawarr can perceive of their region and its governance development, but also how government engages with Alyawarr to develop the region.

The basic aim of the agreement, as set out in the preamble, is to coordinate Commonwealth and NT governments efforts to "achieve better outcomes" and to "address entrenched levels of disadvantage" for indigenous people in the NT through an 'all of government' approach.

Several sections of the agreement need to be dealt with here as they impact on, or support, the Alyawarr effort to develop their region.
1) Among others, the agreement lists as a priority area the "strengthening of governance and developing community capacity …" (s.11). The agreement then specifies in schedule 2.3 that this is to occur in the context of Local Government and Regional Authorities, thus prescribing the preferred governance model.

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[5] Fundamentally this policy was initially formulated by the previous CLP Government in the late 1990s.
[6] At a meeting at Ampilatwatja on 5 to 8 April 2005.

2) In s.15 the agreement specifies a "focus on regional and local need – where appropriate different approaches for different regions", as well as "a willingness by the Governments to be flexible and innovative in their approaches". These principles would lend themselves to the conclusion that Governments should seriously consider supporting and adopting the Alyawarr approach to regional development, rather than 'forcing' particular development processes and timeframes for the sake of short-term outcomes.

3) S. 18: "The Governments will work **with** Indigenous people to determine arrangements for Indigenous consultations and representation at the regional or local level". While this section appears to imply some level of control over the representative arrangements by Alyawarr, section 19 specifies that, 'in remote areas' representation **will** be built on local government and possible Regional Authorities. As mentioned above, these sections, as well as the endorsement of the NT 'Stronger Regions' policy, limit the viable governance options available to Alyawarr.

4) The agreement mentions in schedule 2.3 that "it is expected that significant progress will be made in establishing an additional six Regional Authorities by June 2006". The Alyawarr Region apparently is implied to be one of the six regions mentioned, although it is not clear when Alyawarr would have agreed to this timeframe. There is a significant danger that the need to fulfil the performance indicators under schedule 2.3 of this agreement ("the number of Regional Authorities established") within specified tight timeframes will increase the pressure on Alyawarr to become a Regional Authority 'in a hurry', irrespective of their preferred process and timeframe (see "3 – Step Plan" Framework Agreement, below).

Government Agency Coordination

As has been shown above, the region Alyawarr consider to 'belong together' is in fact divided in terms of service delivery agency boundaries. Both Alice Springs and Barkley regional offices of various departments carry out responsibilities within their respective 'region' within the Alyawarr region.

It has not always been easy to establish meaningful cooperation and coordination, and exchange of information between these regional offices, be they Local Government or ICC. This initial difficulty was a result of the early history of the project, in that Aherrenge Association, being serviced out of Alice Springs, requested assistance from that office 'on behalf of all Alyawarr people'. As a result the 'external' management of the project was very much Alice Springs centred despite the majority of Alyawarr communities being administered through the Barkley regional offices.

As the ARDM I saw my job to focus on facilitating an Alyawarr voice with regards to regionalisation and, to a large extend, left the government coordination to the Alice Springs offices of CDSCA and ICC. I wrote a briefing paper on the Alyawarr project which, I believe, was tabled at Regional Coordination meetings in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. The 'Regional Coord Meetings' are (were?) supposed to be a forum

for information exchange and coordination across departmental boundaries. As I understand ICC representatives are part of these meetings.

In addition I repeatedly emphasised to representatives from CDSCA and ICC that their Tennant Creek counterparts need to be kept in the loop by them given that the Alyawarr region intersects both administrative regions. Suffice to say, here, that the lack of inter-office information sharing and coordination has at times been an issue which needs to be resolved and improved in the future.

Also, it needs to be mentioned here, that the NTG department(s) dealing with this project have undergone three (?) re-structures in the past 12 months since August 04, always followed by some level of uncertainty, if only on my part, about departmental project carriage. Especially the latest restructure is of importance as Regional Development is now housed within the new Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development rather than together with Local Government.

The Political Arena

At the request of senior Alyawarr people I have, in the past 6 months, approached their representatives in the Legislative Assembly, i.e. Peter Toyne and Elliot McAdam to brief them on the Alyawarr Region Development Project.

In recent months Alyawarr have received a very favourable response from the Member for Stuart in relation to the proposed future process. It is my understanding that relevant project documents have been tabled in Cabinet, and that a 'Bush Cabinet' sitting is planned in the Alyawarr region sometime in November this year. This will present a welcome boost to the Alyawarr project in that Alyawarr decision-makers can talk directly to government decision-makers.

In the meantime, however, I think it is important that an adequate exchange of information and coordination is achieved between the political level of government and the departmental level which deals directly with the project.

All in all, what needs to be seriously considered to assist the Alyawarr region to develop along the path set out by Alyawarr people is a concerted effort to establish an 'All of Government' approach to the region.

Difficulties in the Distribution of Information

While the best efforts have been made to enable as many Alyawarr as possible access to information relating to the Regional Development Project, the distribution of information is not without problems.

Face to face meetings with people are obviously the best way of informing people as there is a chance to question things not fully understood, for the project officer to gauge the understanding of those present and to develop issues, problems and solutions collectively. The problem here is that invariably there are only a limited

number of Alyawarr present at meetings, so that the range of distribution of information is by necessity limited.

The main difficulty for external agency representatives wanting to share information at meetings is the use of appropriate language. Most Alyawarr are generally lost within minutes because they can not follow what is being presented. Often the 'advisors' speak too fast and use standard English words which are incomprehensible to Alyawarr. Too many 'big words' is a frequent assessment. This means that the 'advisor' will actually have to prepare for a meeting and think about how the issues can be explained in as simple terms as possible. This does not mean that complex issues can not be discussed – it just takes longer. Alyawarr need to be given time to think about what has been said and for discussions among themselves. Also, giving an 'interpreter', who might be part of the discussion group, a regular chance to paraphrase what has been said is essential to 'get the message across'.

The difficulties in getting information to the people have implications for the principle of informed decision–making. Many Alyawarr, due to a range of reasons and not least their general educational background, find it difficult to fully understand large complex issues, such as a regional administration restructure. In order to empower them in their decision-making, rather than continuing to make decisions for them from the 'outside', the issues and tasks of the 'big picture' have to broken down into smaller steps which people have a chance of understanding. This, I think, is the main achievement of the '3-Step Plan' (see below).

Even when the materials are relatively accessible for Alyawarr with largely limited literacy, such as through the medium of DVDs, it is impossible to reach every person in the region. Many of the DVDs sent to communities certainly were shared around and reached a larger audience than just the key people. Others, however, might have been watched once and then stored away without further distribution throughout the community.

While the DVDs, as records of meetings, basically 'speak for themselves', a further issue arises when relying on text based information, including diagrams. In order for people to be able to explain things to others they need to have acquired full comprehension themselves first. However, considering that the issues involved in indigenous governance and service delivery are very complex I would not expect any Alyawarr to have developed a 'full' understanding of all the issues at this point. Thus, there would be only very few, if any, Alyawarr who would feel confident and competent to explain 'external' issues to others.

Overall, I think that the production of DVDs, whilst very time consuming for the project officer, have been relatively successful in informing more people than those actually attending meetings about the general issues. And while the audio visual medium was primarily used to document meeting to date, it could and should be further developed to distribute and explain information independently of meetings, preferably through an interpreter in Alyawarr language.

Difficulties in the Organisation of Meetings

Meetings in the Alyawarr region, as in any other remote indigenous region, are inherently difficult to organise. For one, regional meetings, by necessity, need to draw on people from across the region. This means that, wherever the meeting is scheduled, most people will need to overcome considerable distances (e.g. 400km from west to east), often a full day travel, in order to attend. However, non-availability of a reliable vehicle often will prevent people from travelling, and the single 'regional' project car is only of little help.

Further, there are a plethora of other meetings scheduled by other organisations, usually drawing on at least a few Alyawarr from one community or the other who are also involved in regional discussions. At times some of the senior key Alyawarr were forced to choose between three or four meetings in one week. It needs to be recognised that Alyawarr do not only deal with regional development, but also have to deal with other, often more pressing priorities.

More often than not, then, it is difficult to schedule a meeting around other meetings, and as there is no central coordination body, there often are meetings that only become known once they are in conflict with a regional meeting.

Of course, as much decision-making responsibility on a large variety of issues rests with few senior Alyawarr, these Alyawarr at times experience 'meeting burn-out', as they often have to attend meetings on a weekly basis. It is important that Alyawarr are given the possibility of pacing the meetings under their control accordingly.

Issues regarding an Alyawarr Regional Authority

Local Autonomy to Regional Authority

One of the biggest hurdles to deal with in this region (and I suspect in any other largely 'indigenous' region) is the prevalence of local authority over regional authority. Alyawarr are used to deal with their affaires at the local level as these were the structures put in place in the past. It needs to be remembered that these local community councils have only existed for less than two decades, and that just as people are getting some control over their (administrative) lives, after having been at the total mercy of pastoralists and external agencies, they are expected to relinquish that control for the greater good. Of course Alyawarr can see some good reasons for regionalisation, a hopefully stronger voice for a start, but this is balanced by the fear of loosing the little local control they have.

The tendency to adhere to local authority at the administrative level is, from my anthropological perspective, a reflection of traditional, country based authority

structures, where each country, through its senior members, had more or less absolute decision-making power over the affairs concerning that country.

Traditionally, however, there were also occasions when people from a number of countries came together to perform ceremonies, or to collectively 'sort out' particular 'overarching' problems. This has been referred to me at times as 'Alyawarr angka', literally in this case 'Alyawarr talking together'. Not coincidentally 'Alyawarr angka' was the first name given to the process of Alyawarr coming together regionally, and the current name 'Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh' basically has the same meaning.

While it is possible to emphasise the traditional aspects of 'coming together', as indeed senior Alyawarr have done, it needs to be kept in mind that traditional regional gatherings, where individual authorities were constrained by the collective, were only temporary. After the gathering was over, individual, or local authorities were restored.

The problem, then, with a Regional Authority is the portrayed or perceived permanency of relinquishing local power. In this context, whilst developing a regional administrative structure, the processes within local control and local input into the regional whole need to be emphasised in order to establish general acceptance of the Regional Authority model. Which aspects of community life can still be controlled locally, and how, are important questions that need to be answered.

Also, equally important, is the development of local trust in regional administrative processes and service delivery which, at this point, have never been experienced by Alyawarr.

The regional development process proposed in the '3 - Step Plan' alleviates some of the immediate concerns and builds on local decision making power in the first instance.

Legal issues

I am not a lawyer so I do not have a comprehensive understanding of the legal issues involved in this region. As I understand the NT Local Government Act is going to be revised or amended in the near future, so legal advice will need to wait until there is certainty about this legal basis.

I will, then, just mention here the more fundamental questions which were raised.

Currently, all but two Pastoral Leases in the Alyawarr region are under Native Title claim (Native Title Determination Applications), and it is expected that they will result in positive determinations sometime in the future. Once a determination has been made Native Title Holders will be required to establish a Prescribed Body Corporate to administer their Native Title Rights. The PBCs are incorporated under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act. How, then, does a Regional Authority under the Local Government Act, interact with the Native Title Act in general, and with PBCs in particular, especially given that members of one will also be members of the other?

The same issue arises over existing and future Aboriginal Land Trusts in relation to recognition of 'traditional ownership'. And if the Local Government Act purports to be able to accommodate 'traditional' decision-making processes and representation, is it able to differentiate between 'Traditional Owners' and Native Title Holders on the one side, and 'un-connected' residents on the other? For example, Alekarenge (Ali Curung) Council is currently almost exclusively representing the majority Warlpiri residents, yet is located on Alyawarr and Keytety country.

Further, given that the initial aim of Alyawarr is to create a stronger Alyawarr voice to make itself heard, in how far would a NT government, through the NT LGA, be able to limit a Regional Authority's 'freedom of speech' if it chose to lobby against that government on a particular issue not necessarily connected to its Local Government functions?

Boundary issues

The definition of an Alyawarr regional boundary for the purposes of a Regional Authority raises several problems.

Should the boundary be based on Alyawarr land tenure, as would almost certainly be requested by Alyawarr, then those boundaries would not align themselves with current tenure boundaries, but 'cut' across several pastoral leases and Aboriginal Land Trusts (which, then, would potentially have to be represented on different Regional Authorities). This boundary approach would ensure cultural homogeneity of the region and ensure a 'true' Alyawarr Region.

The difficulty here is the actual establishment of the boundary. This would be a long-term anthropological task as each 'handover site' would need to be visited and exactly mapped by Alyawarr 'owners' together with their neighbours. Both Alyawarr and their neighbouring groups will then have to agree on a boundary (or boundary region) between the handover sites. The logistical difficulties, time requirements and costs of this task across a large region such as the Alyawarr region should not be underestimated.

On the other hand, using existing tenure boundaries to establish the boundaries of an Alyawarr Regional Authority raises different questions. While the task might seem to only require a map and a pen, there still would need to be an extensive consultation process with Alyawarr and their neighbours. The added difficulty here is that other, non-Alyawarr groups would acquire an interest in the Alyawarr region and would thus require some form of representation. The result would be that landholding groups would potentially have to be involved in 2 or more regional administrations.

Future Local Administration

As mentioned earlier, there are Three Community Councils in the Alyawarr region: Aherrenge Association, Alpurrurulam Community Government Council and Canteen Creek Aboriginal Association. Epenarra Community, although not a formal council, has an informal council and, due to its size, is counted as an independent community for the purposes of regionalisation.

In terms of regionalisation there are a number of issues to be considered.

Firstly – distances:
Ampilatwatja – Alpurrurulam: 350km, about 4 hours driving time;
Ampilatwatja – Canteen Creek: 170km, 3 to 4 hours driving time;
Ampilatwatja – Epenarra: about 200km, 3 to 4 hours driving time;
Canteen Creek/ Epenarra – Alpurrurulam: about 500 to 600km, 7 to 8 hours driving time (Driving times assume a 4WD and safe speeds; would be more for standard Alyawarr cars).

In terms of amalgamation of existing councils the distances between the communities alone would dictate a fair level of independent community management. In addition, communities can be cut of for extended periods of time after rain[7].

Secondly, each of the main communities is incorporated under different legislation and has different funding arrangements. Aherrenge is a NT Association which is also incorporated under the LGA for funding purposes. Alpurrurulam is a Community Government Council incorporated under the LGA, and Canteen Creek is incorporated under the federal Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act. Whereas Aherrenge and Alpurrurulam receive direct funding from the Department of Local Government, Canteen Creek and Epenarra do not (indirectly through Alekarenge (Ali Curung) and Julalakari?).

This poses a question in how far the last two communities can participate on an equal footing with the bigger ones in terms of project and resource sharing without an increased input by funding and service providers.

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[7] A few years ago Alpurrurulam was cut off for three months and had to be re-supplied by helicopter.

Regional Development Options

Ngaanyatjarra Model

The 'Ngaanyatjarra Model' was discussed in the early days of the project as a potentially viable option. The model combines an Aboriginal Association dealing with most of the Community funding issues, such as housing, health and education, with a separate minimalist 'Shire' council with strict local government responsibilities.

Due to advice received that a newly established Aboriginal Association was unlikely to receive funding this model was not discussed in more detail. However, while this model might not currently be pursued I believe that it does have some merits which should not be dismissed outright.

Barkley Regional Authority

Tennant Creek town council is in the process of discussing the establishment of a Barkley or Southern Barkley Regional Authority. While I am not familiar with the details of this proposal, I am aware that especially Alpurrurulam Council is at least interested in remaining involved in discussions. If Alpurrurulam decides to 'join up' with a Barkley Regional Authority, this should not prevent that council's further involvement in the Alyawarr region.

Recently, the idea of Alyawarr region becoming a 'sub-region' of a Barkley Regional Authority was floated by DLG in Tennant Creek. This might be an option to increase the economy of scale factor; however, the task of developing the Alyawarr region as a sub-region would still remain in this case.

Regional Authority Process discussed by DCDSCA representatives

At a meeting in Ampilatwatja in early May 2005 representatives from CDSCA and the 'Regional Authorities Implementation Group' (Andre Burgess and Sharon Clark) presented a model process towards a Regional Authority.

This process basically involves an intensive planning phase based on community consultations, information distribution and preparation of a Business Case before a decision on becoming a Regional Authority. After a positive decision the region would enter a transitional and implementation phase. The basic problem with this model process was that Alyawarr understood some of the complexities of the structural change a Regional Authority would involve, whilst having only a limited understanding of the concrete details. It was felt that a purely theoretical planning process might not foresee all the potential problems before the change, after which it

might be difficult to 'push the brakes' and stay in control. It was also felt that the process suggested would be too fast for Alyawarr to follow.

However, the proposed model process did trigger the discussion and development of an alternative process, the '3 – Step Plan'.

"3-Step Plan": the Alyawarr Framework Agreement

(see Attachments 2c and 5)

Following from the discussions at the Ampilatwatja meeting at the end of May 2005 (see 3rd quarterly report) I spent some time travelling through the Alyawarr region to consult others about the proposed '3-Step Plan' and to provide people with opportunities to comment or change this option. In general, the staggered process suggested in the '3-Step Plan' was supported throughout the region as the only viable and concrete option available at this time.

At an Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh and Joint Alyawarr Councils meeting at Alpurrurulam on 26 and 27 July 2005 Alyawarr discussed making a Framework Agreement between the councils to formalise their support for the '3 – Step' process. The Alyawarr Framework Agreement was signed at Alpurrurulam by Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh representatives. However, people decided that the Councils needed to endorse the agreement separately through their formal council processes. Aherrenge Association signed the agreement at a formal council meeting on 28 July 2005. Alpurrurulam, Canteen Creek and Epenarra are yet to formalise their endorsement. There is some uncertainty among those last councils in relation to possible implications on their funding arrangements after they sign the agreement. These councils urgently need to be advised by their funding agencies.

Once formalised by Alyawarr councils the Framework Agreement would need to be followed up by a Memorandum of Understanding or Partnership Agreement between the Alyawarr Councils and the NTG and ICC.

Through the Framework Agreement, Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh and Alyawarr Community Councils agree to undertake the development of a Regional Authority in three phases:

The first phase (Step 1) consists of active cooperation and resource sharing through Partnership Agreements between the community councils on an increasing number of concrete regional projects. The increasing regional cooperation between community councils, and with government agencies, will increasingly improve the service delivery to the region. During this stage each community council is in control of the changes as they will only sign off on specific project or partnership agreements when they are considered to be of benefit to the community. Simultaneously, a regional governance structure and associated processes will need to be developed through Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh.

The second phase (Step 2) envisages the establishment of *Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh* as a Regional Council, incorporated under the Local Government Act (NT), with service delivery responsibilities to all Alyawarr communities under a Ward system.

In the third phase (Step 3) the Regional Council will develop strategies to incorporate pastoral interests in consultation with the pastoralist, formalise its regional boundaries and be incorporated as a Regional Authority.

The 3 – Step process was designed by Alyawarr to ensure that Alyawarr communities, in the first instance, and then Alyawarr people as a region, remain in control of the pace and the outcomes of the project.

At this point in time the project is ready to proceed from the current 'Development Phase' to the first Step of the project. However, in order to develop this step successfully substantial government and personnel assistance will be required.

The next Step: 'Step 1' Three Year Development Plan 2005 to 2008

My recommendations for the process:

Of course a Regional Authority process and timeline can be forced from 'top down'. However, this would not guarantee success in the long run, nor would it be consistent with current government rhetoric of voluntary amalgamation, flexibility of process and region specific solutions.

My recommendations for the first step of the development process, simultaneously with the development of concrete regional projects, would be the early establishment of a small but truly regional organisation, such as a regional resource (coordination) centre. My feeling is that community councils will be more comfortable sharing their resources with a regional organisation than handing over temporary control over their resources to other councils. It probably would also be more appropriate for funding bodies to supply a regional resource centre with additional equipment needed to progress regional projects rather than one or the other council.

This 'Alyawarr Region Resource Centre' should become the first concrete responsibility for Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh, and a means to develop its governance structure on a concrete rather than hypothetical basis.

Over time the resource centre should acquire increasingly more regional responsibilities by taking over responsibilities from the individual councils and other non-Alyawarr bodies, so that as the 'resource centre' grows, the individual councils shrink. Thus, the resource centre could continually take on more regional projects and more responsibilities for the outstations and smaller communities before, at stage 2, taking on the administrative responsibilities for the large communities by

incorporating under LGA as a Regional Council (similar to the current Anmatyerre Council). At the same time it would also make sense for the resource centre to become the Alyawarr Region CDEP coordinating body to allow Alyawarr more control and flexibility[8].

The aim is to 'grow' a regional administration body and to let it 'evolve' to allow for communities to build trust and confidence in regional processes. It would allow Alyawarr to 'iron out' unforseen problems and issues on a smaller scale while the current administrative structure is still functional.

An analogy which offers itself is that of a screen hedge. Its purpose is to provide a screen (in this case the equivalent to administration of a region). If that hedge needs to be replaced one would not just cut it down and plant a new one as the screening effect would be lost. It makes more sense to plant the new hedge with the old one still in place until the new hedge can fulfil its purpose, at which time the old hedge can be removed (Note: this analogy probably would not make sense to most Alyawarr people).

Requirements for the next three years:

The following gaps and risks to the project, identified by the PMG on 5 August 2005, need to be dealt with in this next phase of the project:

GAPS:
- need to get smaller communities more involved;
- issues revolving around community transport to meetings need to be resolved;
- need to facilitate for key Alyawarr people to get more involved in community consultations;
- service providers now need to be informed and involved – urgent need for a stakeholder conference/ forum;
- appropriate communication/ language issues need to be addressed;
- need for a clearer role for the PMG, ie what should it undertake separately from the project manager/ project developer. Also, PMG needs to be expanded to include key stakeholders – towards an 'All of Government' approach;
- Concrete timeframes for milestones need to be established in consultation with Alyawarr stakeholders;
- Pastoral stakeholders need to be informed;

RISKS/ THREATS:
- community fear of service delivery agency retribution – "are we going to miss out if we go down this road?"
- competing regional projects – Alyawarr Region/ Barkley Region;
- lack of ongoing funding commitment;
- government departmental coordination to avoid tension and competition between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek offices;

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[8] This will be a sensitive issue as it will involve a re-structure of the current CDEP delivery structure.

With the above in mind, the aim of 'Step 1' is to:
- improve service delivery throughout the Alyawarr region through increased cooperation of Community Councils and funding bodies;
- develop culturally appropriate regional governance structures and processes through Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh in order to create a single regional council;
- build Alyawarr governance and administrative capacity;
- build trust between the community councils, and with funding bodies to increase commitment by all parties to the Alyawarr regional development process;

It is crucial at this point to maintain the momentum of the project, built over the past 12 months, by implementing some concrete projects from the Alyawarr defined Strategic Plan. Ideally, the first projects would include a longer term priority project (such as a health or education evaluation/ strategic plan) as well as a project which may not be high priority, but which would deliver concrete short term results. In order to achieve this Alyawarr Councils require support to develop and implement concrete partnership agreements as the current workload of Community CEOs and Administrators will not allow them to invest adequate time and effort into regional projects. After all, this was the reason why the NTG was approached for funding assistance in early 2004 in the first place.

The emphasis of 'Step 1' of the regional development plan is on the implementation of concrete projects as identified by Alyawarr, which require, or encourage regional cooperation and coordination between the existing councils, and between these councils and service providing agencies. To this end it is now required to bring all stakeholders together for a **stakeholder forum** to start coordinating and developing particular projects.

The main aim of this phase of the project is to place regional cooperation on a concrete footing and to develop trust between the councils and government agencies, whilst building on ongoing community involvement and support.

In order to develop this phase Alyawarr people and their Councils require:
- Active assistance to Alyawarr councils to develop partnership agreements around regional projects identified and defined by them;
- Active assistance to Alyawarr councils to develop agreed regional projects;
- Liaison with and coordination of stakeholders' efforts to implement projects identified and agreed to by all parties, an All of Government approach;
- Securing required funding for particular projects;

Also, in particular with the second phase in mind:
- Ongoing coordination and liaison with Alyawarr people through Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh and councils and facilitation of the expression of their views, opinions and aspirations regarding regional development and the implementation of individual projects. As specified in the Alyawarr

Framework Agreement meetings between all Alyawarr Councils and Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh need to be facilitated on a 3-monthly basis at a minimum;
- Facilitation for the increasing and ongoing capacity development with regards to governance principles, processes and structures for Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh. The urgent need for ongoing capacity development is reflected in and supported by schedule 2.3 of the Overarching Agreement which raises as an 'Issue' "…resources for community capacity building to assist with good governance and coordinate support for communities working towards the establishment of new Regional Authorities";
- Distribution of information relating to regional development, governance and particular projects across the region;

Staffing requirements of the Alyawarr Region Development Project 2005 to 2008

Immediate requirements for assistance to progress regional development on the path identified by Alyawarr people falls into two categories: a) project development, stakeholder coordination and government liaison, and b) Alyawarr governance development, community support and liaison, and community information.

It needs to be recognised that this step will be extremely labour intensive as it will lay the foundation for the future amalgamation of community councils into a regional governance body. The aim of this step is to develop regional cooperation and coordinated processes before any changes to the actual administrative structure in the region. This step is designed to develop the necessary trust between independent councils (Alyawarr and neighbouring), and with funding bodies (in terms of security of funding), in order to establish full community support for a change of the existing administrative structure.

It further needs to be recognised that the fewer resources are made available for this process, the longer this step will take to develop. There is a risk that if the momentum is not maintained Alyawarr people and their councils will loose faith in the process as a whole.

It is therefore recommend that 'Step 1' of the Alyawarr Region Development initially receives funding for two regional project officers over three years.

The 'Alyawarr Region Development Manager'

An "Alyawarr Region Development Manager" should continue to be responsible to liaise with Alyawarr communities and to coordinate the regional development project in accordance with their direction.

This position would involve:
- the organisation of meetings,

- consultation with Alyawarr stakeholders,
- the distribution of culturally appropriate information,
- the further development of regional governance processes, structures and capacities through Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh, culminating in a Constitution for an Alyawarr Regional Council.

Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh, as the regional representative structure, has to be developed so that the region can at some point in the future move into the second and third stages of the '3 – Step Plan', i.e. the establishment of a single Regional Council, and, later still, the formation of an Alyawarr Regional Authority.

The qualitative focus of this position should be on cultural awareness and the ability to consult with Alyawarr in a culturally appropriate manner. It would be an advantage if this officer would have a strong governance and participatory planning background.

In order to build on the strength of this project, its 'community initiated' approach and history, it is strongly recommend that the ARDM position continues to be funded through an Alyawarr council. From the inception of the project in 2004 Alyawarr have asserted the need to be in control of the pace and outcomes of the project, and Alyawarr ownership of the project has been recognised as a fundamental ingredient for its success and strength by all members of the Project Management Group. Should all the funds for the further development of the project be controlled by external agencies, the project and its processes will cease to be Alyawarr owned and controlled.

For the project to be successful in the long term it is important that Alyawarr have as much control as possible over the pace and the direction of the project. It was only though this sense of ownership that novel approaches to regional development were allowed to emerge. Continued Alyawarr ownership of the project can only be facilitated through a position that is directly responsible to Alyawarr through Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh. In recent months key Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh members have continually emphasised that they wish to have control over who is working with them, and the sense of 'ownership' over the current ARDM as 'our helper' has always been very strong.

An additional argument to provide ongoing funding for this region based position is that, in 2004 there has been a substantial capital investment by government (in the vicinity of $ 50,000) into the region to provide the 'infrastructure' for the region based position. The position, via Aherrenge Association, has access to a vehicle, computer and other office equipment to continue to carry out its functions. Ongoing funding for the position is reduced by the capital component of the previous grant.

In calling for this position I need to disqualify myself from applying for it to avoid a potential conflict of interest. In any case it would be in the best interest of the Alyawarr region to recruit and 'train up' an additional person while I am still around to give a helping hand.

The 'Regional Project Development Coordinator'

The second officer, the "Regional Project Development Coordinator", would need to have a strong project development background in order to:
- directly assist in the development of a variety of concrete regional projects, including the drafting and development of regional partnership agreements between community councils and service providers;
- liaise and coordinate with government and non-government service providers;
- oversee project consultants;
- secure required project funding from a number of funding bodies.

This position is urgently required at this point in time in order to actively commence the project development component of 'Step 1' of the Alyawarr Framework Agreement. Alyawarr have invested much time and thought into the regional development process in the past 12 months and have developed a solution which is appropriate for the Alyawarr Region. In order to maintain momentum of the process it is important that Alyawarr start seeing concrete results for their efforts.

The 'Regional Project Development Coordinator' should be one of the six government funded Regional Development Coordinator positions available in order to facilitate better liaison with government agencies and to provide easier access to government resources. However, although this may be a government position, Alyawarr still require input into the proposed job description and selection of an appropriate person.

In calling for two project positions I acknowledge that it would be very difficult to find an adequate pool of people who possess all the required skills. Also, from my own experience over the past year, I don't think the next step would be workable for one person alone considering that I spent approximately one day in every working week driving and did not take all of my leave entitlements.

While the two positions have different responsibilities and priorities, and require different skills, it is crucial that they collaborate closely and function as a complimentary regional team.

In order to provide for some security and certainty of the development process the positions need to be funded initially for a period of three years.

The above recommendations and assessments were supported by Alyawarr at an Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh meeting at Alpurrurulam on 26 July 2005, and by the Project Management Group at a meeting in Alice Springs on 5 August 2005.

One further note on placement of the positions: it has been suggested that a 'Regional Development Coordinator' might be placed in a community in the region. There are two issues with this: firstly, there probably is no available staff housing to accommodate an additional staff member in any of the communities; and secondly, making the person solely community based would seriously restrict the pool of available people with the necessary qualities and skills. It would immediately exclude

most potential applicants with families. In my experience the 50/50 split between town and region has been quite workable, allowing me to be based with my family in Alice Springs whilst spending a considerable amount of time in the region. That way the time in the region is dedicated almost exclusively on consultations and communication, whereas the time in town can be dedicated to the 'office type' requirements of the positions, as well as to government liaison etc. I, for one, could not have done the job based in a community.

Conclusion:

I feel that the last 12 months have barely scratched the surface of what is required to develop the Alyawarr Region. The mammoth task still lies ahead.

The wheels are in motion to 'deploy' a government employed 'Regional Development Coordinator' for the Alyawarr Region, and timely it is. Alyawarr need to see some concrete results of the regionalisation process in terms of actual concrete outcomes for their efforts. They know, however, that this is a long term project with, for at least some of them, a 30 year timeline – "we need to start with the little kids now so they can have a better life when they are middle age" was a sentiment I heard repeatedly, or "its for the kids we are doing this. It's too late for us old ones". But there also was the sense of urgency, to see a start made, otherwise people could see themselves in the same position in 30 years time.

So, to summarise the immediate tasks ahead:

- the 'Regional Development Coordinator' position needs to be filled as soon as possible, keeping in mind that Alyawarr should have some input into the job description and the selection of an appropriate person;
- funding for the second 'Alyawarr Region Development Manager' position needs to be secured as soon as possible to maintain Alyawarr ownership of the project;
- a Stakeholder Conference needs to happen soon to start the implementation process for concrete projects. I would recommend holding that meeting in the region, or at least as close to as possible. No concrete dates are set as yet, and in the absence of a regional liaison position it would be pertinent for someone in the PMG to coordinate this with the Alyawarr Region CEOs.
- The PMG needs to be expanded to include key stakeholders with a view to developing an 'All of Government' approach;

Finally, I am confident that, given adequate help, support and encouragement the Alyawarr people will find their way to a better future.

Thanks

Many people and organisations were involved in this project to date without whose help, generous support (both financial and moral) and encouragement the task would have been much more difficult if not impossible.

So let me thank first and foremost the Alyawarr people who showed so much patience and engagement with the project. In particular I need to thank Albert Bailey Akemarr, Banjo Morton Apetyarr and Gilbert Corbett Apwerl, who started talking about the Alyawarr region and in a sense were its driving force. Their trust in me doing the 'right thing' by them and the Alyawarr people deeply humbles me. There are too many people in all the Alyawarr communities to thank individually here. All of them have put a lot of personal energy, time and patience into the development of this project. Without them we would not be where we are today.

On behalf of the Alyawarr people I sincerely thank the Department of Community Development, Sports and Cultural Affaires, now Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport which has shown its trust in the project by 'handing over' to Alyawarr the control and the necessary funding to develop and progress their ideas. I hope that this approach can be made more permanent. Particular thanks here go to Sharon Clark, Andre Burgess, Bruce Fyfe and, although only lately, Paul Price, for their understanding and support when I was pushing issues and alternative Alyawarr perspectives they probably would have preferred not to hear (because I didn't make their lives any easier).

Particular thanks for their understanding and support also have to go to the CEOs, Advisers and Administrators of the Alyawarr Councils (and Councils to be): John Willis for having the foresight of things to come and for doing the early ground work; Philipa O'Halloran for struggling with a new project at a time she was trying to get her head around local government in the 'bush'; Tom Kairupan who, after initial suspicions finally believed that I was not a government 'agent' and who has given valuable insights and support to the project (all three from Aherrenge Association); Linda Keane and Anne Pederson from Alpurrurulam for their ongoing support (sorry for loosing the cottage key); Dennis and Kathy Gers from Canteen Creek who engaged with the ideas whenever they managed to find the time; and last but not least Craig Cuttance, who, working for the World Vision governance project at Epenarra, went out of his way to become the Epenarra driver and project advisor. I think Alyawarr have a pretty good team together at the moment to go into the next phase. Please, all, stick around for a bit!

I also need to thank the Central Land Council for granting me a year leave without pay to make my involvement in the project possible. And in particular I need to thank Jayne Weepers and Siobhan McDonnell for their generous support to the project and the Alyawarr perspective. I also need to thank the CLC mapping section, Duncan Treloar in particular, who kept updating and printing ever more regional maps. Further, I need to thank the CLC property section for generously 'loaning' me some old second hand 'bush car essentials', thus saving the project a buck or two (just don't tell the Director).

From the ICC I need to thank Ross McDougall and Trish Spark for offering their indirect support to the project. Don't worry - your time of more direct involvement will come.

Special thanks also need to go to Peter Toyne who, despite breaking a chair and nearly his back in the donga at Ampilatwatja, still managed to keep an open ear and to listen to my tirade (yes, it was pre-election!). Thank you in particular for taking the project on and supporting it from your end. I think getting the Darwin Government to sit down with the Alyawarr Government at a 'Bush-Cabinet' sitting is a good step in the right direction.

Further thanks go to all the teachers, nurses, shop managers, office assistants, linguists, boat builders (!), in short all the people who, by giving me their time, helped me get an overview over what is going on in the region. Unfortunately, after less than12 months, most of them have gone in search of greener pastures. We need to devise some good strategies to keep you all a little bit longer (and stop rolling your cars!).

Thank you all

Kel

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Report on study trip to Canada August 2003 by Gilbert Corbett
                (Traditional Owner) Patrick Ross (Counsellor) and John Willis (CEO)
Attachment 2a: ARD info sheet: ideas
Attachment 2b: ARD info sheet: steering committee
Attachment 2c: ARD info sheet: 3 – Step Plan
Attachment 3: Alyawarr Region Contact List
Attachment 4: Draft Alyawarr Region Strategic Plan
Attachment 5: Alyawarr Framework Agreement
Attachment 6: Alyawarr Ingkerr-wenh Steering Committee