

The Premier
Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk
C/- P.O. Box 15185
City East, Qld. 4002

Via email: premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

CC:

Hon Bill Byrne, Minister for Police
Hon Curtis Pitt, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
Member for Cook, Billy Gordon

29 December, 2015

Dear Hon Premier,

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation to you and to our Member for Cook Billy Gordon for supporting our request for more on-the-ground police squads in Aurukun during this time of dreadful unrest.

While all is quiet as I write now at 9:30am, 29 December, we have had a traumatic night. A horde of men, ranging in age from children as young as 10 years and up, armed with spears, knives, machetes and axes, raised hell through the night. All night we could hear the screaming, the chasing, banging and smashing of property, first at a distance and coming closer to my street and then my house. The police didn't attend last night however they did come to speak with me briefly this morning and I gave them a list of perpetrators. The older men encouraged a 16 year old to smash my power box. We are left without power. It's my understanding that before today, no arrests had been made. Today however, members of our family were arrested, and none of the other people who have been brandishing weapons have been stopped. Our families are now left with out men in their homes. I have 10 family members living with me in my house, including very little ones. We will remain bunkered down until we can be assured that we are safe to venture out. I fear for my life and that of my family.

We need to know that we are safe to go to the shop, to our community services and to our school next term without fear of recrimination. Premier I work at the school and need to know that this is safe for all children and those who work there.

Premier, the existing structural leadership, the Council, is doing nothing to discourage the senseless fighting. The Council must set an example or its powers removed. We simply cannot accept Wik people destroying properties. We really need your help.

Today we need to speak of peace. Our community leadership must now call for a stop to this violence. My people – Yunkaporta, Wolmby, Poochamunka, Koowarta, are a small voice compared with the Woolla, Kerindun, Landis and Pamtoonda families. Culturally we are all connected, however my families are only a small mob of reform leaders, up against very large families persisting with this violence. This is not the Wik way Premier. We cannot have our children exposed to this behaviour.

There are two immediate solutions that I would urge you to consider:

1. A meeting of cultural leaders to make a plan for peace, which is then supported by the local Police and Council.

2. An investigation into the death of Joshua Koowarta. While one arrest has been made with regard to this murder, it is a strong belief amongst the community that there are others who should be held accountable for this crime that has left a beautiful family without their father who was a cultural and loving man.

3. For our Law and Order to take this situation seriously and not be influenced by structural leaders. The police must arrest all perpetrators with weapons.

The Wik nation is a strong and polite peoples. We do not condone this behaviour that has been allowed to reign. Before the wet season the structural leadership and police were turning a blind eye to alcohol in our community. We believe that the previous government enabled the free flow of alcohol into our town. While the community is sober at present due to roads being cut off, long term need a dry community of peace.

We also need proper jobs, for our people to be in work, and setting a good example for their young ones. This wave of property damage must be quickly remedied. Our people must be strongly encouraged to take pride in their homes. Our leadership needs to encourage everyone to sign up to MPower and Pride of Place and to start looking after ourselves, and each other.

We cannot have our children growing up in violence. My grandson Jarrod, on the Youth Orbit Program, is in South Australia working in a meat factory. On the phone to me he speaks of a bright future with plans to buy a house and a boat. His world is growing bigger which brings tears of relief and joy to my eyes Premier.

I urge you to consider meeting with a group of Wik ladies to share our hopes, dreams, and solutions:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

We are all urging our men and women to lie low and not to fight back but rather to pursue peaceful talks. All community Elders must do the same. Elders must be empowered to drive community led solutions.

We live in fear at the moment of the sun going down. We are sitting helpless waiting for nightfall, which brings the fighting.

Again Premier I urge you to help us by calling a meeting of cultural Elders. I do not have access to email and have asked my friend [REDACTED] in Cairns to help me to reach out to you by sending this letter. I am worrying for the mothers and the little ones.

With "Enyan" (peace),

[REDACTED]
Wik Elder
[REDACTED]

To:
The Hon Anastacia Palazczuk MP
Premier of Queensland
PO Box 15185
City East Qld 4002

Via: Email and post

CC
The Hon Curtis Pitt MP
Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport
The Hon William Byrne MP
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services

28 January, 2016

Dear Premier,

We are writing to convey our gratitude to you and your government for the attention you have provided to our community during a time of dreadful unrest, and to call upon you to support a family-based approach towards long-term peace.

As you know it is fairly standard practice for governments and their bureaucrats to react too hastily and impose knee-jerk solutions upon communities. With great respect Premier we urge that you find the space to listen to our family-based approach to this 'people' problem our community faces in Aurukun.

The primary responsibility for the social wellbeing and behaviour of our community members lies with our families to ensure the appropriate conduct of our people. It is important that our children see a family led response to these disturbing scenes of intimidation on our streets in recent months.

Many family leader representatives have been talking about our responsibilities and the power within us to re-establish peace and authority within our families that make up our clans and our community. We believe in fact that it is only family leadership that will correct community behaviour in the longer term.

We recognise the very effective work of our Community Meditation Team however the current structure does not enable early intervention. The project is reactive, only able to act when a problem has already arisen. We believe that connecting our family based approach with a proactive mediation approach we can prevent undue escalation of issues.

Our clans have demonstrated capacity to deal with conflict through our work on our homelands – 'Thum noohgm'. We established a family-based approach, setting clear rules for behaviour, and consequences for breaches in conduct. We would like to apply this family-based approach, in connection with the Community Mediation Project to our current crisis.

Through the family-based approach we could consider tools, new ideas that may be presented by government, Council or other institutions. We believe that it is critical that Police, Council and other institutions support us by enforcing the principles developed during our process.

Premier it is our job to teach our children how to walk in this world and it is essential that we need develop a family-based structure and process to deal with our problems and future, and that this is recognised and supported by governments.

A group of Wik women have indicated their support for this approach as we collectively agree that we have the responsibility to deal to fix the community problems that we face.

We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with yourself and relevant ministers at your soonest convenience in Aurukun to discuss how you could support this process that we intend to get underway as early as next week. This group would include: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The first step in our process will be to call a gathering of family representatives from Apalech, Winchinam, Sara, Putch and Wanam clans to discuss our responsibilities to our children and identify how clans and families can exercise their authority to extinguish the rogue behaviour within.

Premier, more than \$200,000 in deliberate damage to home power boxes has left many of us without electricity since Christmas. There have been no consequences for this inexcusable conduct.

While we are building our process it is important that the Police are committed to enforcing the rule of law – applying it equally and consistently to all community members displaying socially inappropriate behaviour.

Our families will take strength from your faith and support as we work to build the community rules for future peace and security.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Chair APN, Director on Ngan Aak Kunch
and CYLC Board Member
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Aurukun Mediation Project
[REDACTED]

Subject:

FW: Aurukun Violence

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Aurukun Violence

Dear Police Minister Byrne and Police Commissioner Stewart,

We are Wik Women of Aurukun and urgently request a meeting with you in Brisbane on Friday.

We are a small band of cultural women, leaders and elders focussed on peace solutions and are increasing anxious about the ongoing tensions in Aurukun.

We are urging our families to NOT engage in violence and to turn their back on provocation. We feel the need to share some very concerning conduct that we feel you could reasonably put an end to.

Our immediate concerns are as follows:

- Young men being released from Lotus Glen are being mobbed and attacked when they arrive home on the plane. They are welcomed by a large and aggressive crowd.
- Police officers are inducing our men to engage in "fair fights", and despite our boys declining, they persist in encouraging them out of their home to fight. The officers jokingly shape up to one another making the act seem harmless.
- We want the QPS to enforce a zero tolerance approach to fighting. Wik people are strong but they never in the past fought until alcohol was introduced to our community. Despite our women and elders resisting the introduction of the canteen we now have to deal with its consequences on our community that has also suffered higher than 90% unemployment for 40 years. On behalf of women and children we insist that the QPS enforces a zero tolerance to fighting and 'punching' as does the rest of our state with its one punch law.
- We would urge that the local officers desist in providing lollies to the audience/bystanders that gather at fights.
- We urge that police arrest those brandishing weapons publicly with a charge of public nuisance. At the moment this behaviour is being passed over.

With us on Friday will be [REDACTED] a witness to the "fair fight" provocation by local officers.

We appreciate your busy schedule and this late request. We do not often come to Brisbane and are here to explore a family engagement model as we are serious about improving the lives of our children. Unfortunately our Elders are unable to travel but this request to meet with you comes with their blessing.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Women of the Wik Nation

Aspley Electorate Office

Subject: FW: Big Worries for Aurukun School

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Premier,

I am a Wik women, mother of six children, and I work full time in Aurukun. I have three boys (11,9,5 years old) at the Cape York Academy and two one year old twin girls. I also have a 13 year old daughter at boarding school at Charters Towers doing very well. I am very distressed about what the government is doing with our school.

The violence and dysfunction in our community has nothing to do with what is happening with our children or our school. They are learning very well.

When we moved back to Aurukun from the Mornington Island State School three years ago my eldest son's learning went shooting high. [REDACTED] is in year six and does higher learning extension work. When we moved from Mornington his literacy and numeracy and spelling and reading and writing went shooting up. His confidence grew in himself and his confidence grew in his learning. He is now more independent. As a mother I am very proud about how hard he is working. He will be going to boarding school next year and this situation without proper schooling will most certainly hold him back. Your solution at the moment is not a solution. You are not thinking of our children. They must come first.

He is also very disappointed that he will miss band camp. He plays the saxophone in the Cape York Academy band and has been so excited about band camp in July.

I read a terrible story in the Koori Mail newspaper with the headline "Hell on Earth". I don't think you could understand how hurt I was to read that about my community. The problem in Aurukun has nothing to do with the school and no one thought it was until you came for your meeting with the Mayor. I can't help but think that you have created this terrible worry for us. The school and in the classroom, everything is all good.

I am very proud of my children and my family. I want the best for them. I don't want to move from family but will move from Aurukun if we don't have the school we need for our children.

Thank you for your time. I hope you can hear my concerns and open our school as soon as possible without any changes to the learning.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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