



Australian Government
Indigenous Business Australia

July 23, 2007

MEDIA RELEASE

The Fitzroy Crossing Joint Ventures and their positive impact on the Fitzroy Crossing Community

In light of a recent article appearing in the West Australian regarding the Fitzroy Crossing Inn, IBA's chairman Mr Joseph Elu has agreed to undertake an independent review of IBA's involvement in the investment. The General Manager of IBA said "IBA will appoint a prominent Australian to join the Chairman in a visit to this community to assess ways the business and community can further reduce the use of alcohol by local residents".

IBA has been in a joint venture partnership with Leedal Pty Ltd in the Fitzroy Crossing Motor Inn and Fitzroy River Lodge since 2001. In approaching IBA to become a partner, one of Leedal's motivations was "*to enable local Indigenous interests to control the sale of take-away alcohol, as the unlimited availability of take-away alcohol was having an adverse impact on the community...*"

Since entering into this investment, Leedal and IBA have established a formal accord involving the police, the Liquor Licensing Commission, State Government agencies, local shire and community members and associations to improve Fitzroy Crossing as a local community and destination for travellers. Parties to this accord actively review the operation of the inn and adjust selling practices in response to emerging community issues and concerns. In this way social, economic and health costs associated with excessive alcohol consumption in Fitzroy Crossing and nearby surrounds are managed by the community itself.

IBA and Leedal established the Fitzroy Crossing joint ventures and the accord through the collaboration of people who wanted to make a difference and to improve Fitzroy Crossing as a local community and destination and not to continue with the blame and inability to move forward from the past.

Over the last six years the joint venture's impact on the local community has been a profoundly positive one.

- The business has enabled the community to self fund many projects and opportunities for the youth of the community without reliance on government handouts such as:
 - Purchase of art supplies and equipment for school children.
 - Purchase of play ground equipment for the local primary school.
 - Photographic displays and audio visual tapes for educational and promotional purposes.
 - Support of local sport teams.
- Leedal has enabled the retention of the very important postal service in town. This service is not a significantly profitable exercise but an essential one. Its retention has enabled Fitzroy to maintain a business and a banking facility which would otherwise have left the town.

- There is growth in tourist related businesses. Over the last 12 months a tour program has been formalized from what was previously conducted on a very informal and ad-hoc basis. New vehicles have been purchased, tour operators located – which include a number of Indigenous tour guides – once again creating employment opportunities. There are now seven tours which operate out of Fitzroy River Lodge as well as a fully operational tourist desk which markets these tours and sells accommodation and tours in other centers to clientele before they leave Fitzroy.
- Over the last 4 - 5 years over \$200,000 has been put into this community and youth based projects directly from a deposit & refund program on aluminum cans known as the Can Project.
- Employment programs are operating through both joint ventures with employees completing traineeships in hospitality and remaining in long term employment.
- It has allowed the Indigenous people to take control of the drinking issues in town and bring another level of insight into solving a problem whilst retaining the commerciality of the operations and the consequent profit distributions.
- Town infrastructure improvements such as roadside lighting and sealing of footpaths have occurred as well as development and maintenance of a grassed park area with irrigation. This was done in collaboration with the police, the shire and the aboriginal communities.
- Most importantly however the joint ventures have given the community pride of achievement and self sustainability to an ever increasing degree going forward.

Future initiatives include a Youth Training Trust where students from year 5 are supported with a combination of financial support and assistance to improve their chances for academic success and to become future leaders of the community. A series of twenty beautiful postcards featuring art done by local Indigenous youths has been produced and is available to view and buy at the Crossing Inn and other locations throughout the town and Kimberley. The proceeds of these sales will go to the Youth Trust, which in turn will benefit the young people of the Fitzroy Valley.

Leedal management met today in Fitzroy with the various members of the accord committee to discuss the allegations raised in the article. It was resolved to meet with the council of elders and present a way forward to address the concerns raised by the small number of community members. The proposed independent assessment by IBA will complement the work this committee is undertaking.

Fitzroy Crossing is rich in history and fabulous scenery and is becoming a mecca for Kimberley travellers through economic development initiatives such as this.

End

Media Contact:

Ron Morony
(02) 6121 2600

or

Peter O'Neill
0427 666 140

