

BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



MEDIA RELEASE

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Council disputes attack on aged care program

Barkly Regional Council (BRC) President Barb Shaw has dismissed recent comments about council not delivering aged care meals in the Utopia region.

Rosalie Kunoth Monks, an Aboriginal activist and the Northern Territory's 2105 Australian of the Year, has claimed that elderly people in Arlparra and the outstations that make up the Utopia region have not been receiving regular daily meals as expected through the Council's aged care program.

Ms Kunoth Monks alleged that "the whole community including children and the elderly go without food, often on a daily basis".

She added that one elderly man with end-stage Parkinson's disease had received a package containing items with no nutritional value, while two neighbouring elderly women received nothing.

President Shaw said Ms Kunoth-Monks must be mixing her agencies up as Council delivers 30 care packages to 28 aged and two disabled clients in Arlparra and surrounding outstations.

These packages, which are delivered by the Council's Aged Care Coordinator in Arlparra under a variety of programs and grants funded by the Federal Government, include hot meals for breakfast and lunch as well as weekly hampers.

President Shaw said Ms Kunoth-Monk's claims that the elderly were paying Centrelink for the food service were incorrect.

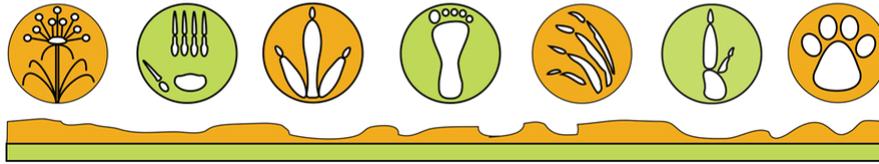
"Some families have a member receiving a carer's allowance from Centrelink to care for an elderly relative, but this is totally unrelated to the Council's food support program. Council has a responsibility for 30 clients and the packages are delivered regularly," said Ms Shaw.

"As a former council president, Ms Kunoth-Monks is well aware of how the system works."

President Shaw agreed that it is totally unacceptable that people should be starving in a rich and well developed country like Australia. "It is disgusting and it is wrong that Indigenous people living in Australia experience deep poverty such as this."

However, she added that all the agencies involved in this region need to plan and come together to look at resolutions on the ground.

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“We could all make motherhood statements about aboriginal disadvantage, but until we all look at putting solutions on the ground to make things happen then motherhood statements don’t make a difference.

“It’s no use taking a big stick to one agency, in this case Barkly Regional Council which is the poorest of the three tiers of government and is very much dependant on Territory and Commonwealth governments for funds to provide services to the bush.

“Rather, it would be in the best interest of the community members who are recipients of these packages to jointly challenge both Territory and Commonwealth governments and hold them to account for their responsibility to the regional areas.

“Taking that approach would be far more beneficial to the region and these disadvantaged people out in the bush rather than an immediate attack through the media on local council.”

President Shaw said BRC is prepared to work with those agencies and the community itself to challenge both the NT and Federal governments about their level of responsibility for services in the bush.

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