



Cooperative Research Centre for
Aboriginal Health

Media Release

Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund Backs Darwin Kids

April 12 2007

Top-End Aboriginal kids will continue to participate in a series of cultural camps aimed at strengthening their identity and self-esteem following a decision by the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund to support Darwin's Balanu Foundation.

Balanu Foundation managing director Dave Cole said Rio Tinto's funding will be used to hold a full program of camps for the duration of the 2007dry season, following three successful camps held last year.

"We had the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund's executive officer, Joy Love, visit us earlier this year on behalf of the Fund's board, and clearly she liked what she saw and we are very happy that the program will continue for now with the Fund's backing", said Dave Cole.

He thanked the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health which had helped evaluate the effectiveness of previous camps.

"The evaluation found the camps had beneficial impacts on both the kids attending and their families," he said. "The collective experience of colonisation and dispossession has had traumatic effects on many Aboriginal families and we are seeing that being played out in the violence and anti-social behaviour in some of our communities.

"Loss of culture and identity has had a profound impact on our people and some of our kids are floundering as a result," he said.

Dave said that Balanu uses its healing and empowerment camps to instil cultural identity into Aboriginal youth. "Planting seeds of understanding, giving life tools to work with and guiding these young fellas to overcome the suffering they face is the purpose of our camp," he said.

The program is based around urban youth from the Darwin area, but with the continued support of the Northern Territory Government's Department of Planning and Infrastructure, which has allowed the use of Government land to hold the camps, Dave said the camp will may soon extend to kids from remote areas and possibly interstate.

CRCAH CEO, Mick Gooda, said organisations like Balanu represented a real Aboriginal solution to the problems of substance abuse, violence and suicide afflicting Aboriginal kids across the country. "It's not an exaggeration to say the future of our people depends on the likes of Dave and programs designed and developed by Aboriginal people themselves," he said. "If we can't help our kids then we are in serious strife."

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