

LONGGRASS

special issue

Issue 4, July 2004

Forced eviction at Yarrowonga

July 3rd, 2004

Interview with Yarrowonga mob at 15 Mile

When did you get kicked out of Yarrowonga Camp?

DM Last two weeks ago.

GB They been give us paper warning on Monday, Tuesday.

DM Police bought that paper and three young girls - they was in the separate car. Must be crown land ladies (govt reps). They came round and seen J and husband first. We were at the top camp. They said just start move, well if not, they give us that paper \$2000 fine.

EM That's the time they put up the signs at the other end, at turn off - "CROWN LAND - NO TRESPASSING"

NEPHEW I just come back from Maningrida to see my missus and I seen Mum (at Yarrowonga) and stayed with her. I was there too when they told us just to get our things and pack up and camp somewhere at 15 Mile.

**CROWN LAND
NO TRESPASSING
OFFENDERS WILL
BE PROSECUTED**

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

**INSIDE: Letter to
Larrakia & Marla
Elders**

Above: The newly erected Trespass offensive.

Left: The Balaiya family at Top Camp.



Below: Top Camp - Cleaned out! "And I lost my tent, everything. They should leave it for us. I took my family back to Maningrida. Come back everything gone! No manners you know. They should let us know."



DM But we told them we didn't want to come to 15 Mile or we didn't want to go to Knuckeyes Lagoon - too many fight going on all the time and we bit scared. Next day we moved out.

Did they give you some time to move out?

DM Only one night to pack things - we just moved next day.

Nephew We all got piece of paper.

Every single person. They said if we going to catch you again you going to get

It's really hard here - you can't even sleep! People banging the walls, and they looking for grog all night. Not really safe, really bad.

DM We all burn that paper trespass notice while they were watching. When we went back to get our stuff, there was nothing there. Everything was all clean. A couple of tarps was gone missing, tent, mattress and bunk gone. We brought our stuff on minibus first. Everybody was

HM We hear Berrimah mob, prison mob clean up that camp. (Yarrowonga)

DM JC went to Maningrida, came back she seen everything gone. Police man should have let night patrol mob know to bring all our stuff here. Because night patrol mob the one who found us in the bush. And night patrol people they know our story. We already told them but they don't believe us.

JC And I lost my tent, everything. They should leave it for us. I took my family back to Maningrida. Come back everything gone! No manners you know. They should let us know. Mitchell Creek mob, all from Jabiru, Tennant Creek, Rope, Daly River - all mix. They stay there as they clean the camp. And they right. The police lady and night patrol look after them. What about us? We stayed long time (at Yarrowonga). After that meeting [with police & Larrakia Nation] a couple of weeks ago, nobody came to see us.

DM We don't annoy people. We just drinking and dancing and carrying on - family argument, family fight. That's it. And we don't go annoying people from town or anybody.

GB From Fish Camp we been moved

I told that policewoman, I said "look, we like to stay in bush, longgrass, cause we born in bush. It's alright you balanda, you born in house. But us mob, we born in bush and that's our country and that's our bush camp."

fine \$2000. That's what notice says on that paper the coppers gave us.

DM They went to everybody in the camp asked their name, sign and write down names. If we catch you again, \$2000 or end up in jail. That's what they threatened us.

Nephew Anyway, we packed up and moved out. Where we gonna find \$2000 from? Go rob the bank? Yarrowonga is a good place to stay rather than here at 15 Mile. It's a place to stay with family and quiet - just sitting down. We having corroboree and all that. Sit round fire, listen, talk story.

DM But here at 15 Mile we all mixed up family, all different tribes. That's why the fighting is going on here.

NEPHEW We want to be somewhere else so our smoke can be there, grog can be there for us - no worries and tucker safe.

DM It's not safe here, nothing. That's why I ask my nephew drive me round all night-looking for camp.

there - 10 or 20 people and they frighten us, then everybody disappeared.

When we went back, everything was all gone. They should have packed things to go back and pick up all our stuff there. But I missed it, all gone.

GB Should be they bring em all the stuff here- canvas and everything.

Do you think there will be another Maningrida Camp come up somewhere?

DM Gun-nyagara (nothing), it's too hard. Every place only Government owning - owner of the land. They told us only 15 Mile or Knuckeyes Lagoon - that's the only place to stay. But we too scared to stay here.

I can go Scott's Creek, near Corroboree Park. But it's long way, it's too far for me. Cause I got to go back for Xray on Monday and if I run out tablets, I've got nowhere (no transport) to get there. Too many people here in this one house (at 15 Mile). About a hundred people maybe and more boys coming. And balandas not allowed round this community. That's the rule here.

DM And some young boys carrying knife around all night. They cheeky you know. They give us humbug for motor car, all that. We can't have peace sleep.

out. And that Kululuk mob, they been helping us. They been bring that timber, mattress - bed for us.

DM Lee Point was first, we got kicked out from there and they shift us out to Kululuk. One week Kululuk, to Fish Camp. Then kicked out. Then we had a house for the old people, but too many hassles going on. That's why we left that house at Millner. I knew that would happen. I didn't want to get that house. So that's what happened. Yarrowonga is the last camp now. But we still looking for camp. We can't stay here.

JC We'd like to go back to same place. For years we stay there. We rather stay in longgrass, you know!

DM I told that policewoman, I said "look, we like to stay in bush, longgrass, cause we born in bush. It's alright you balanda, you born in house. But us mob, we born in bush and that's our country and that's our bush camp." But they said, ah, you still have to move from here or otherwise \$2000 fine.

HM We used to clean im up that camp, all the time.

DM Hear that music going now? All night, you can't even sleep. Some of us we sick people, we might get heart attack.

Longgrass Association

C/- Darwin GPO, NT, 0801

Webs <http://longgrass.tripod.com>

"Can you make time to come and sit down with us and talk more about these things."

We have to go bush to get away so we can sit, talk family. We don't want to mix with other people. I don't want to stay here, too many people, too many!

GB We got support from Chairman, Bill Goodman. He said "Don't you humbug them Maningrida people. He said "If something happen, you come and let me know. If there was another house empty, would you mob be interested to stay here?"

DM Ngikah. (no). I want to stay in bush. *What do you think the Government should do for you so you don't have to keep on moving from camp to camp?*

DM We'd like to just get another place for us or we can find another place. We doing nothing wrong. We are peaceful - to only family stay. And we got the right to stay! We can't even sleep. Well I never stayed here but I found this place for my brothers. That's the first house there they was building House 4, House 5, House 6.

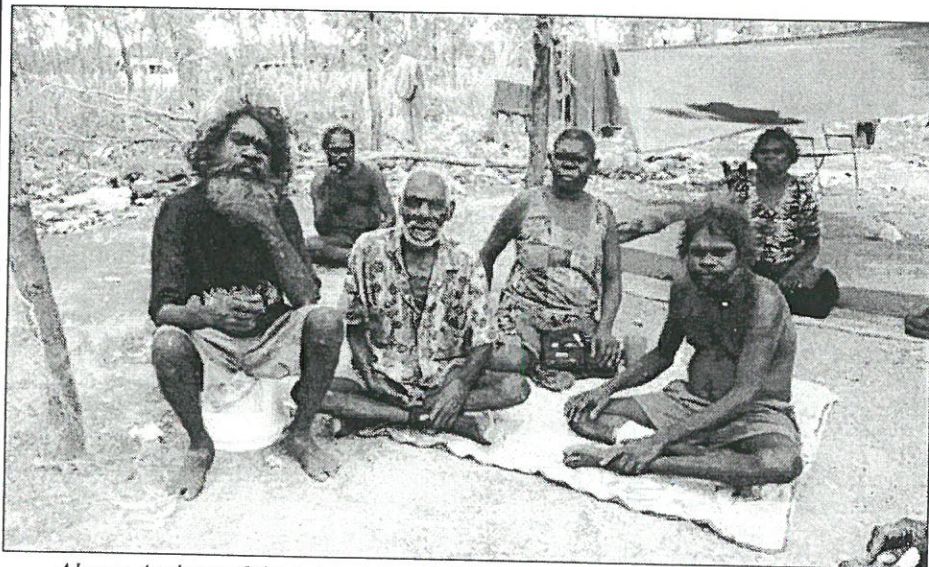
We was camping there in the bush. A long time ago, I was young girl then. And 17 Mile another camp then.

RD Long as we not walking around the public area, like shop. We told them police last meeting, We not drinking in the shop, we not walking round begging, asking anyone. We just doing shopping and go back camp. We not disturbing anyone in public area.

DM You can't own this land, because this land is going to stay forever. Why they angry and fighting Aboriginal people. Well Larrakia people, they supposed to be on our side because all my Maningrida people been support that camp with them old people from a long time before. And they (balanda) using our dreaming - Nakara, Luma Luma. That all our dreaming stuff. Luma Luma is more important. We have to cover up that thing. They got no permission from us. They got no right. They using our history, our culture. But they still pushing us out of town. They should have asked us first 'you mob move?' Not just go cause of that sign Crown land or \$2000 fine.

We freak out. We didn't know where to go cause we got no car. And that Night Patrol should've come visit us all the time but after that meeting with Larrakia Elders and police they never came round. Must a been they bullshit us.

When I got kicked out of Millner (Territory Housing), I went back home. Then I came back again cause I'm worrying about my grandkids. My grandkids are right here. So I want to be with my grandkids before I die.



Above: Authors of the below letter. L-R Tommy, Gilbert (behind), Johnny, Helen, Evan & Gill - "We are bush camp people".

open-letter

To Larrakia Nation and Marla Elders,

Thankyou for supporting us on Thursday of last week when the police where going to kick us out of our camp - Balaiya Camp in Yarrowonga.

We are the extended family of Johnny Balaiya. We are his brothers, sons and daughters and grandkids. We are people from the Maningrida area and extended family from other areas in the Northern Territory.

People in our family have been living in Darwin many years. We have a long history of living in many different places all around Darwin and Palmerston. We have a long history of being moved from place to place by authorities like police, lands department and developers.

This camp is very important for us. Our Daddy, Johnny Bailaiya was living in this camp since 2001; he was living in this area since the family was kicked out of Lee Point. Ninia (Daddy) has lived in this area and at this camp many times from when he first walked overland, following his family when the Japanese were bombing Milingimbi and Darwin.

Over the years we have all been camping with Ninia, he is our father and keeps us all together. He is our elder and a lawman and many people

come to see him for this reason. Balaiya camp is where family are welcome to come and stay for however long they need to stay in Darwin.

Now Daddy is staying at Juninga because he was getting very sick, especially in the wet season.

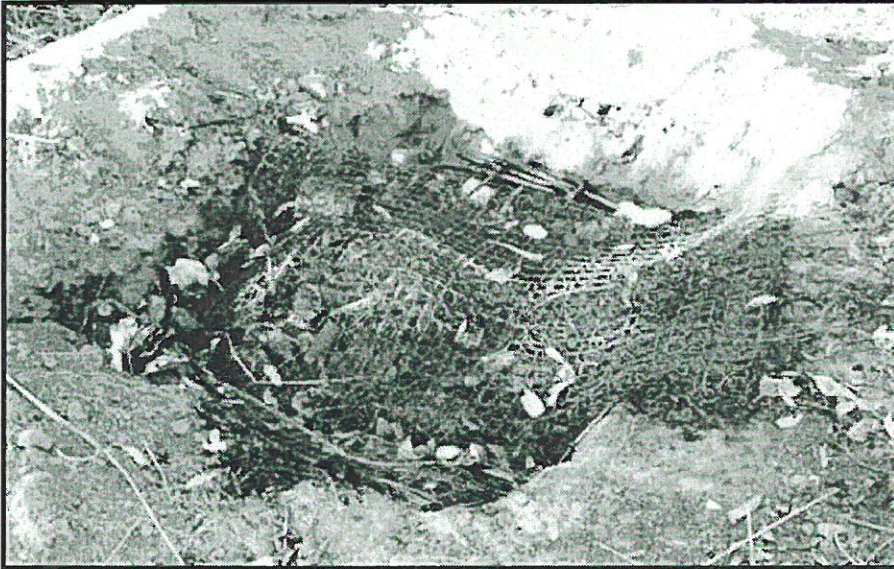
Since he first came to this camp he has been asking the government for a permanent place to stay where the authorities can't keep moving him. He was asking for water and good shelter and a shower and toilet so that he could stay healthy and is with his family to cook for him and look after him.

Every payday he comes to visit us and stays with us for a couple of days, sometimes a week, then goes back to Juninga where he has all the things that will help to keep him healthy.

We are the immediate family of Johnny Balaiya and we live here at Balaiya Camp permanently. We are

Jesus
was BORN IN
the
Longgrass

"At Balaiiya Camp our family know where they can find us when they come from Maningrida or Outstation. Some stay a week, some stay 3 months."



Above: Mattresses and belongings burnt without notice or permission. Who will make retribution for destroying essential, private property? What will people sleep on tonight?

bush camp people. Housing commission doesn't work for us - we have too many family.

At Balaiiya Camp our family know where they can find us when they come from Maningrida or Outstation. Some stay a week, some stay 3 months.

All the people that come here live bush lifestyle they are only living their own lifestyle that they know how to live.

We don't want to go anywhere else. We want to stop being pushed from place to place.

Maningrida people have a long history in Darwin, but we have no place. This is why this camp is a very important place for us. Can Larrakia people give us permission to stay?

What Happened! :-

One couple, when they drink they go cause trouble there at BP Palms. That was 2 - 3 weeks ago. That's why we got blame from the police at Balaiiya Camp. They not belong here. They camp other side BP Palm - they made a little shade there.

Terry was hitting one Balanda, we didn't know and the next day coppers came round here asking us. "You mob causing trouble there?." "No, no we stay one place; we don't go there." He told us if we can't find them (the people that caused the trouble) the policeman will move us out from here. We'll bring two paddy

wagon and take you mob there - 15 Mile. Everyday for the last one and a half weeks they came here morning and told us to move.

Two young boys (policeman) same ones everyday. We don't know their name but we know their face. They both wear shorts, - used to be on the pushbike, from Palmerston. They said go 15 Mile or Knuckeyes Lagoon. Wednesday they was talking to this lot and then they went around over there and they said to us, you can start packing up and leaving by Friday.

The police and community patrol told us we was going to move out by today But Helen and I and Evan decided we want a meeting. We told the Community Patrol to ring all the Elders and they all come here yesterday.

Jocelyn Archer - she's an elder of the Larrakia and some of the elders from other communities. Police came when Community Patrol asked them.

We told them we can't stay at 15 Mile, too much problem, especially young boys, that's why they come and stay here with us. Before 15 Mile was a Maningrida Camp but we moved out from there to Mitchell Creek. When we moved from Mitchell Creek all the way to Pipeline camp and then Tapline camp and they move us up here. Ninia got sick at the Tapline and sister and I we had to put him in the hospital and we

was staying there and they had to move us up here.

Jocelyn (Fejo) I asked her - "Let us stay here?" She said "yeah I know your father, we supported him to stay here. We are his children, we are in the same situation as Ninia." We need this Maningrida camp.

At the meeting we also talked about cars and motorbikes that are skidding up and down this road and in front of our camp. We are frightened they will run over us when we are sleeping. We talked about a fence or barrier for our protection.

Who should we talk to about this to make sure this can be done? Other things we talked about was water, rubbish collection and a place to toilet and shower. Can you make time to come and sit down with us and talk more about these things.

Johnny Balaiiya 14/5/04

"I'm the person, one person, when I'm staying here. I sit here for 4, 5 year myself and I have one dog and especially family, Tommy and Michael and, sometime Helen staying here every year. That's my full nephew just come and visit to me - come from Maningrida, come and see me. I'm not dead but I'm alive one, him still look me because full family (customary obligations and responsibilities) to from my niece and from my grandpa all this mob - because I remember from my niece, all the kid, this one and him brother again and sister, they know me. We know together."

I used to camp here but I still look after im (Country). Please, well might be sometime when you can't change your mind because you got to still write me down and I'm still full time and I'll keep im this place here from .. I'll call it my word. This is Darwin Larrakia but I still look after im. Just like Maningrida camp but I look after im to..That's the real one story."

From

Helen Mardarlidj, Evan Maragumba, Tommy Malangana, Gilbert Hayes, Jill Cooper, Johnny Balaiiya

Friday 14th May