

One Mile Dam Aboriginal Community Dinah Beach Road Stuart Park - David Timber says

## **WE WILL NOT BE MOVED**

### **City tank farms to go, but campers fight to stay put.**

By John Loizou

*The Darwin Sun*, Wednesday, May 5, 2004, pp.1-2

An Aboriginal camp on prime inner city real estate plans to fight any move to relocate its residents. The 3.2ha One Mile Dam camp in Stuart Park is next to a tank farm which is earmarked for removal to East Arm.

The pledge to stay put has been made by David Timber, 51, who has lived in the camp at the bottom end of Dinah Beach Road (off Duke St) for 18 years.

Mr Timber last week launched the Kumbutjil Association to represent the community's estimated 100 residents. He said the residents had lost faith in the Aboriginal Development Foundation (ADF) – the holder of the perpetual special purpose lease to the land.

Mr Timber accuses the ADF and its executive director Bernard Valadian of planning to evict the residents because their camp will be out of place amongst the high rise, high-density accommodation planned for the area following the removal of the tank farms.

He also accuses the foundation of neglecting to maintain and develop the camp that was originally intended for an Aboriginal population that visits Darwin for several reasons, from the need for medical treatment and work to a holiday.

Mr Valadian denies both accusations.

But he conceded he was working with Government planners to incorporate the campsite into a "precinct for the entire area" and that this could include "public parkland", to complement new residential housing.

He also hinted that the residents could be re-located.

But he insisted any decision, including the possible redevelopment of the camp would be made after consultation with the residents.

The outcome of the challenge will decide whether most of the land becomes Aboriginal-owned "public" park or a permanent city for people like Mr Timber, who live in corrugated iron huts with their collective ablution block on the banks of the freshwater One Mile, or Railway, Dam.

"We want to talk for ourselves," said Mr Timber, who last week launched the association at a corroboree to celebrate the granting of the lease to the land by NT Lands Minister Marshall Perron 25 years ago. "We don't want to just sit here doing nothing.

"We'll be looking for support and we've got a lot of outside help in trying to establish relationships with a lot of organisations. He (Mr Valadian) doesn't talk to us," said Mr Timber.

"These negotiations were done without our knowledge."

Mr Valadian said his foundation, which also administers camps for about 250 mostly transient Aborigines at Palmerston, Knuckeyes Lagoon and Adelaide River, provided One Mile Dam with electricity, sewerage, water and had always met demands for any emergency work.

It had not spent money upgrading the basic dwellings because the residents would not pay rent.

### **Payment**

"The policy is to encourage responsibility through a sense of ownership," said Mr Valadian, whose foundation was provided \$290,000 by the ATSIC this financial year to help provide accommodation for transients from as far away as Alice Springs and Katherine.

The maximum expected payment was \$50 a week, he said.

Mr Timber argues that he will pay the rent when the improvements are made.

A spokesman for Lands Minister Dr Chris Burns has said that the Martin Government has no intention of resuming the land or interfering with the decision about its fate.

"It's up to the indigenous people themselves," he said.