# Good news story for website

Ramingining January 2017

Shaun and Zhenia were invited to meet with the newly formed Cultural Authority of Ramingining in January. During the meeting with elders they looked at some of the foundational questions regarding Australian constitutional law such as what is the Constitution, how was it formed, and how is it structured. Two members of ARDS were also at the meeting, and their help in facilitating discussion was invaluable to the NAAJA CLE team. This session paved the way for us to think more deeply about the best way to facilitate discussions, and helped CLE understand what kind of information regarding constitutional recognition is most important to Yolngu people in Ramingining (and more broadly North East Arnhem Land).

The sessions informed further research which was undertaken around experiences of Indigenous Peoples in other countries such as Canada, the United States and New Zealand.

Galiwinku March 2017:

Shaun and Zhenia had a number of meetings with the Makarr Dhuni in Galiwinku in early March. During one of the meetings they played two of the instalments of the NAAJA/Dhawu-dhawu radio series. Listeners enjoyed the series and gave manymuk feedback – asking if they could play the series over the local Galiwin’ku radio so that all community members could listen!

The series lay the foundations for future discussions around the proposed changes to the Constitution. From our previous sessions on  Constitutional Recognition the CLE team have learned that it is important to allow sufficient time for participants to discuss the fundamental and foundational principles of Australian constitutional law and how those laws fit into everyday experiences. Once this groundwork has been made, more detailed discussions around the proposed changes to the Constitution and what those changes could mean for Yolngu people could be facilitated.

Katherine Law Week + STARS

The CLE team travelled to Katherine/ Beswick in May and  participated in Law Week activities at the Katherine Courthouse. A number of organisations set up stalls including: the Witness Assistance Service, Strong Bala Men’s Group, NAAFLS, Community Corrections, the Palate Project, YMCA and Jesuit Social Services

Students from STARS, Clontarf and the legal studies class from Katherine High School came down to the Courthouse to join in the activities and free BBQ. There was a mock court with two students as co- Judges, two junior counsels for the defence and prosecution and all other students sitting as jurors in the trial, returning verdicts of guilty or not guilty

There was a Youth Justice Reinvestment Forum where students from Katherine High Legal Studies class participated in discussions around Youth reinvestment initiatives in Katherine. They were invited to contribute their views and experiences during the forum and to contribute to ongoing discussions about future policies and laws which affect young people in the Territory.

Following the Justice Reinvestment information session the Law and Justice Manager gave a presentation on the Bilata Legal Pathways Program and spoke about the program from its humble beginnings to the opportunities it has helped create for young Indigenous students- including mentoring workshops, meeting distinguished guest speakers at Bilata events and a Bilata representative traveling to London to promote the Program abroad. A number of students took forms to sign up and those who were involved in the mock court were particularly keen!

Earlier in the week the CLE team ran two sessions with the year 8 and 9 STARS girls at Katherine High. The sessions focused on rights and responsibilities when interacting with police, and rights when in police custody and in the interview room. The session finished with a mini mock court which seemed to set the STARS girls up well for the moot in the Katherine Courthouse as two of them volunteered to be junior counsel in front of a courtroom full of people and they played the part well!

CLE and Civil Collaboration

In April 2017 the CLE team and NAAJA Civil worked collaboratively to deliver legal education training to the CDP men’s group in Wadeye. The session ran for almost two hours, with 30 participants and two supervisors providing interpreting assistance.

The session focussed on unpacking the Centrelink CDP framework, participants’ rights and obligations when put on ‘activities’, payment suspensions, and who talk to if you need help.  Participants were engaged, asked questions and spoke in general about how the system affects the community and ways in which payment suspensions negatively impact families.

After the session some participants requested to speak with a civil lawyer privately to talk about their own story.

NAAJA has made submissions to the Senate Standing Committees on Finance and Public Administration commenting on the effectiveness of the Community Development Program. Collaboration between CLE and Civil meant that more community members could be reached to discuss the key legal messages around participants’ rights under the Program and allowed NAAJA civil to gather information from a large group which were referred to in submissions.