

11 SEP 1974



Thanks! from Jack....

I would like to thank all the tribes of the Bunbalung, Walung, Gunavidji, Gunwingu, Gokaria, Gorokunse, Nakara and many small different speaking languages. I'm thinking about that I am staying around in Maningrida without Job. I have a few brothers, but we all got a few different ideas.

I have to live in here just for a little while, say three or four years, because I have to finish my life stories to be printed at Melbourne or in Canberra as my book. And also I have to pay the loan back to the Office of the Department of the Aboriginal Affairs in Darwin.

These brothers were Don Gundinga, Jimmy Djamanba, Jimmy Murdug, Joe Gardari and myself Jack Mirritji. David Bulpilil at present having a good holiday in Sydney. George Giwidjili and John Buwanga is at Bamyili. Ronnie Barayuwa is also at Katherine. Most of our sisters are living in the bush or in the Mission at Milingimbi or in the outstation at Nangalala.

I can't tell their names because I am not allowed to tell or hear it swearing by another people. Otherwise I'll throw my spears on them. I don't know why but its an Aboriginal law, sister killing.

Before leaving this town, I will go down to the cemetery, then dug out the graves and picked up the dead bodies who had been died my relations during the long wet seasons times ago. I will then take them home to be buried again in the ground or keep it in the special dilly bags or in the suitcases for about many meons. Later on I will make a ceremony for them and I will store them in the hollo log (bonepole) to put it upright which could be stands there for all the time as where they belong to.

In my country is a big devil devils areas and spirits of a great ghosts lands. My country is called Djapididjapinmi near a creek surrounded by mountains. It is not far from east of Maningrida. My people who lived there partly naked before or after their ancestors about the plenty of thunder storms ago. For all the times when I lived in the bush we lived by the law of the Maddyin, the old times Jinang law and the rules made by custom and tradition.

J. Mirritji.

Letts' Letter.....

24th July, 1974.

Mr. Dan Gillespie,
Maningrida,
via Darwin, N.T. 5791.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 19th July, 1974, enclosing a copy of the "Maningrida Mirage" of 28/6/74, which I received today.

The sub-section of the Ordinance mentioned by Mr. Hunter appears to have no relevance to Maningrida. It is a special section that only applies to Rifle Clubs, of which I know only two in the Northern Territory registered under the Defence Regulations, namely Darwin and Alice Springs.

Section 13(2) of the Ordinance has to be looked at as a whole, as follows

"13(2) The Registrar or a member acting with the written authority of the Registrar, if he is satisfied that -

- (a) an applicant for a permit to purchase or hire a pistol is a person to whom a pistol licence may be granted pursuant to section nineteen of this Ordinance;
- (b) an applicant for a permit to purchase or hire a high powered firearm is a person to whom a high powered firearm licence may be granted pursuant to that section; or
- (c) an applicant for a permit to purchase a high powered firearm -
 1. is a person who has attained the age of sixteen years;
 2. understands the law relating to the registration and use of firearm
 3. is able to read and write the English language; and
 4. is a member of a Rifle Club

may grant to the applicant a permit in the prescribed form to purchase or hire a pistol or high powered firearm, as the case requires."

Clearly the purchasing of a high powered firearm by members of the general community including citizens of Arnhem Land, is covered by 13(2)(b) which makes no mention of reading and writing.

13(2)(c) only refers to rifle clubs and as these are conducted under strict semi-military type supervision, the age limit is dropped to 16 years.

Section 13 should be read in conjunction with section 19, which lays down the conditions for licensing people for the use of high powered firearms, as follows -

"19.(2) The Registrar, if he is satisfied -

(a) that the applicant -

1. is a person who has substantial reason for requiring a pistol or a high powered firearm, as the case may be;
2. is a person who can reasonable be permitted to have in his possession, to use and to carry a pistol or high powered firearm

as the case may be, without danger to the public safety or to the peace;

- 3. is a person of or over the age of twenty-one years;
- 4. understands the law relating to the registration and use of firearms;
- 5. has not been convicted of an offence against this Ordinance and sentenced to any term of imprisonment for that offence; and
- 6. has not been convicted of an offence otherwise than under this Ordinance, arising out of or in connexion with his possession or use of a firearm, and sentenced to any term of imprisonment for that offence; and

(b) that the pistol or high powered firearm in respect of which the application for a licence is made is safe and fit for use, say, upon receipt of a fee of Fifty cents, issue or renew a pistol licence for a high powered firearm licence, as the case requires, in the prescribed form."

Again, there is no mention of reading or writing.

It seems to me that the Ordinance, as it stands completely satisfies the assurances I gave in November 1972.

While Mr. Hunter's right to re-raise the matter through the "Mirage" is undeniable, I suggest that before he continues to make critical public statements on the matter he might either read the Ordinance more carefully or discuss it with me directly.

Yours faithfully,

Goff Letts MLC

Member for Victoria River.

Hunter's reply...

The Editor
Maningrida Mirage

Dear Sir,

Re Dr. Letts' letter, he had better tell the Police Commissioner.

Yours faithfully,

J. Hunter.

Shoot-up - are licences for beer + guns worth it?

Guns seem to be topical for this week. As licenses are so easy to get out here, it seems natural that guns are used to sort out problems rather than spears, which have to be manually made first. The other night, out of town, in one of the out-stations, guns were used quite freely by a few drunks. Fortunately, it was only the vehicles that suffered. I only hope that the people don't come under fire now because the vehicles are out of action, thus making travelling into the "Happy Club" impossible.

G. Pascoe.

Festival is over...

The Arnhem Festival is over for 1974. In an enjoyable and successful week, Maningrida A team won the trophy for the best school of the Festival. Elcho Island was second and Milingimbi was third. In the Athletics the best boy athlete was Tia, from Maningrida and the best girl athlete was Janice from Nangalala. Maningrida won the trophy for the ball games and also won the Senior boys basketball, the Junior girls basketball and the Junior boys basketball. Elcho Island won the Senior girls basketball. In softball, Milingimbi won the Senior girls while Maningrida won the senior boys. The Junior competition was won by Nangalala who also won the Art and Craft competition. The dancing and singing was non-competitive but an enjoyable night was had. Unfortunately the arrival of the barge forced the cancellation of the Swimming Carnival, because we had no transport. All in all - a very successful week. My thanks to all who made it possible.

Bob Hale.

Chit-Chat...

The Mirage takes the opportunity to wish Fred Luff a very happy birthday. Sorry that we are late Fred, but all the best just the same.

The Crocodilus Launch is up the river for a while. We hope to have some news from them soon.

A new sister has arrived for the hospital. Sister Lacey seems keen to stay and take over the leprocy side of things.

Even though they have gone, we would like to say a fond farewell to the Careys. Sister Cec will be sadly missed by some of her faithful hospital staff. It is sad to see such worthwhile people go.

Culture breakdown...

One day, an aboriginal man got himself pretty drunk and angry. He walked off into the bush and lost himself. Two parties went out to look for him. One was led by aboriginals and the other led by a European. The latter party found him several days later. He was in a very bad shape. He was starved and dying from thirst. The European had to carry him for about 2 miles to the waiting truck. How very sad to note the rapid decline in the aborigine - to the state where he can get himself lost in his own country and nearly die of hunger and thirst. And we think that the beer we give them is making them more equal to us!! Perhaps those who fight for the right for aboriginals to drink are really trying to wipe them out.

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