



Media Release

for immediate release

News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 9 May 2017 page 1 of 3

For further information please contact MacDonnell Regional Council, Communications Officer Darren Pfitzner by phone 08 8958 9608 or email media@macdonnell.nt.gov.au



Areyonga heading “overseas” for awards ceremony



Proud residents of Areyonga will fly from the Northern Territory to Tasmania to attend the national Tidy Towns awards ceremony this week, hoping to win the *2017 Australian Tidy Town Award* for their remote community.



Accompanied by MacDonnell Regional Council staff, among the travellers are community leader and Local Authority member Daphne Puntjina, Local Authority member Joy Kunia, and Local Authority Chair and Council Civil Worker Jonathon Doolan. Travelling a three day return journey to attend the gala event in Triabunna, Tasmania – the Local Authority members are the effective committee of the MacDonnell Regional Council in the picturesque community.



Daphne Puntjina said “ We love this country. That’s why we’re looking after it.”



Nestled in the West MacDonnell Ranges, Areyonga’s 235 residents were overjoyed when their community was named *Territory Tidy Town* at last year’s Northern Territory Keep Australia Beautiful (KAB(NT)) awards. Winning the major *Territory Tidy Town* award qualified Areyonga to represent the Northern Territory at this year’s national Tidy Towns awards. The awards ceremony announces the *2017 Australian Tidy Town Award* along with awards in six categories.



“ MacDonnell Regional Council staff, community elders and residents demonstrated great community pride and leadership in local sustainability practices and education, and set a wonderful example for other remote townships to follow,” KAB(NT) CEO Heimo Schober said.



The KAB(NT) awards recognised the hard work done by remote and regional communities to reduce rubbish and encourage sustainability. Healthy, proud communities are major secondary benefits. At last year’s awards, Areyonga was named winner of the *Dame Phyllis Frost Litter Control and Prevention Award*, *Best Medium Community*, *Territory Tidy Town Award*, and received a commendation for the *Community Participation Award*.



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The people of Areyonga have a long commitment to the values of Tidy Towns as a continuing part of their community culture. The community was named *Territory Tidy Town* in 1993 and 2003 before winning last year's award. Also in 2003, community leader and local Tidy Towns stalwart, Daphne Puntjina was named the *Tidy Towns Citizen of the Year* for her efforts at that time.

Recently she said " We started Tidy Towns in 1993 – that was our first one. Today everything is clean and healthy for kids and old people too."

During April the national Tidy Towns judge Jill Grant visited Areyonga to compare it to the other state and territory finalists, assessing them against six award categories in readiness for this year's *Australian Tidy Towns Awards*.

Areyonga School's curriculum includes bilingual classes taught in English and Pitjantjatjara by veteran teacher, Tarna Andrews. Through her classes, Tarna helps children grasp the importance of recycling and the damage litter causes the country and the environment. Areyonga will be a strong candidate for the *Environmental Education Award*.

School children also participate in 'emu bobs' each Friday, collecting litter and cleaning around the community. Children are also encouraged to recycle drink containers to earn cash, courtesy of a local container buy-back scheme that refunds the ten cent deposit per container collected. This drastically reduces the amount of litter found around the community and makes Areyonga a contender for the *Litter Prevention, Waste Management and Resource Recovery Award*.

Known on the ground as MacYouth, MacDonnell Regional Council delivers its youth program in partnership with other agencies to develop young people's self-confidence and life skills.

MacYouth promotes clean-ups around their recreation hall, sporting and other facilities, helping Areyonga stay clean and healthy and putting the organisation in the running for the *Young Legends Award*.

Residents of Areyonga often come together as a community to meet with numerous stakeholders, develop projects, celebrate events, participate in sporting activities or attend church. Having formed as a mission settlement, the church along with traditional cultural practices are central and strong bonds of the community. Areyonga's cohesion will see it considered for the *Community Action and Wellbeing Award*.

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Areyonga community will be one of the first Northern Territory communities to come online through the *10MW Solar Energy Transformation Program*. Incorporating a hybrid solar/diesel power station to reduce reliance on diesel power generation, The NT's PowerWater Corporation is transforming the way power is delivered in remote communities. The hybrid power generation system will reduce fuel consumption by 15% and see Areyonga in contention for the *Environmental Sustainability Award*.

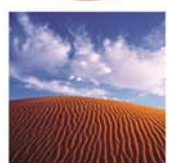
MacDonnell Regional Council communities have had a strong showing in the *Heritage and Culture Award*, and Areyonga will be no exception. People in Areyonga have a strong connection to both the church and the country. Christian beliefs and practices taught by the missionaries exist alongside traditional practices. Aboriginal law and cultural activities for both men and women are still in practice.

“ Our thoughts and best wishes are with the Areyonga representatives travelling to the awards, ” MacDonnell Regional Council CEO Jeff MacLeod said.

End.

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or Keep Australia Beautiful Council NT, CEO and Territory Tidy Town judge Heimo Schober by phone 0407 186 461 or email to ceo@kabnt.org.au



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