Overview

- The Queensland Drug and Alcohol Council (QDAC) was established in 2010 to expand alcohol and other drug services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Far North Queensland.
- QDAC’s primary purpose was to establish a modified Therapeutic Community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
- The program is the first in Australia to be specifically funded by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) to operate as a Therapeutic Community.
Brief History

- 2010: QDAC came into being as a subsidiary of the Gold Coast Drug Council (GCDC)
- 2010: The QDAC Advisory Group was formed
- 2010: The QDAC Shopfront was opened in Bunda Street, Cairns
- 2011: The site of the Therapeutic Community was finally decided upon
- May 2012: The Therapeutic Community accepted it’s first residents.
- May 2012: QDAC, GCDC and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation of Queensland (ADFQ) merged under the banner of Lives Lived Well
Naming

• The Therapeutic Community was initially named “Wadakin” (Place of Healing) in consultation with Traditional Owners of the land
• Opposing Traditional Owners suggested that the name “Wadakin” would attract evil spirits
• “Wadakin” was dropped until a more acceptable name could be found
• The program was named QDAC Mareeba Therapeutic Community in the interim
• All parties agreed on the name of “Shanty Creek Therapeutic Community” in July 2013
Shanty Creek Therapeutic Community

Funded by the Australian Government

Officially opened on 13 August 2013
Program Overview

- Currently funded for 20 beds with the potential to increase
- Priority given to ATSI clients
- High prevalence of physiological and psychological health issues
- Program duration of 6 months with the option of a further 6 months in transitional housing
- A shorter program of approximately 3 months can be negotiated in some circumstances
- Bed occupancy for September, 2013 was 84.5%
- Average length of stay for all residents in the program as at 30/9/13 was 8 weeks and 6 days (Range: 4 days – 30 weeks)
Staged Approach

- Willy Wagtails (minimum of 4 weeks)
- Scrub Turkeys (minimum of 10 weeks)
- Barramundi (minimum of 10 weeks)
- Eagles (minimum of 3 weeks)
- Owls (living out of program)
Modifications

- Non-hierarchical system – senior residents have additional privilege without traditional status
- A less structured program that is often dictated by “Murri time”
- Minimal in-house consequences
- A strong emphasis on Men’s Business and Women’s Business
- Art and craft as recreation and not as a structured part of the program
- Campfire
Challenges

- The transient nature of ATSI People
- The influence of Elders
- Sorry Business
- Aftercare
- The ability to recruit and retain appropriate staff
The Therapeutic Community model of treatment fits well with ATSI cultures

- ATSI people are far more accustomed to all aspects of communal living than their European counterparts
- Community issues are generally discussed at length before being dealt with in a no-fuss manner
- Celebration and ceremony are an inherent way of life
- ATSI cultures are built around spirituality
- ATSI people embrace a holistic view of health and healing