



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

**Minister for Indigenous Australians
Member for Hasluck**

The Hon Peter Dutton MP

**Minister for Defence
Member for Dickson**

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

7 October 2021

25th Army Community Assistance Program Heading To East Arnhem Land

The Northern Territory's Gapuwiyak and Banyala communities are next in line to receive significant community infrastructure upgrades as part of the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Programme (AACAP).

AACAP is a Commonwealth Government initiative between the Australian Army and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). It aims to improve infrastructure, health, living and economic conditions within remote Indigenous communities.

Next year, the programme will be in its 25th year of delivery and the Gapuwiyak and Banyala communities in East Arnhem Land will host the AACAP team.

Engagement started in 2020, providing the time to form a collaborative partnership with the community leaders for shared decision-making on the project's scope.

Key among the community-requested projects is a new \$4 million Arts and Community Centre in Gapuwiyak, co-funded by a \$2 million contribution from the Northern Territory Government.

Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP, said the rolling programme of remote works delivers much needed improvements according to the priorities of each community.

"AACAP continues to be one of the most innovative programs we run, where we get to see rapid developments and skills transfer in places where engineering and construction work can be difficult," Minister Wyatt said.

"The National Indigenous Australians Agency provides around \$7 million and the Department of Defence offers a similar amount of in-kind support, ensuring projects really have a lasting impact on the community.

"As well as the Arts Centre, the Gapuwiyak community will have an independent youth facility, and an upgrade to parts of the barge access road for all-weather access to secure the delivery of supplies.

In the Banyala homeland, around 100km away, a new community store will be built.

“The current Banyala store is small, without storage and has unreliable power that can affect the freezers. Thanks to the Army, the new store will have more reliable power providing improved food security. This means fewer trips to Nhulunbuy, which is around 180 kms away, will be required to replenish stock” Minister Wyatt said.

Minister for Defence, the Hon Peter Dutton, said as well as the engineering project management, construction, and vocational training, the Defence team will deliver a range of targeted specialist support, including Army health, dental and veterinarian services.

“AACAP also provides Defence the opportunity to rehearse its deployable project management and construction capabilities, while supporting the Government’s ‘Closing the Gap’ objectives. Indigenous Australians have been part of the Australian Defence Force throughout its long history and this is a way for Defence to recognise that sacrifice and strengthen ties with these remote communities” Minister Dutton said.

“From improvements to roads and access, construction of community centres and schools, health clinics and vocational training, the Australian Army has a range of skills to improve the liveability of some of Australia’s most remote communities.

“While the engineers do their work, Defence also works with communities to offer health and dental check-ups and basic medical training, veterinary support and training, and helps build the skills and employability of the local community so that the benefits last for a long time after the Army depart.

“Army is proud to support AACAP into its 25th year, delivering infrastructure and bringing tailored training and health programs to more communities every year.”

Gapuwiyak and Banyala will be the 48th and 49th communities to receive the benefits of an AACAP project since the program started in Bulla, NT, in 1997. This latest round of projects is set to start construction in May 2022, with completion around November 2022.

The current project at Pormpuraaw on Queensland’s Western Cape is in the final stages of completion. The works at Pormpuraaw include a 10-unit independent living facility for Elders, a men’s shed, and the sub-division of lots to prepare for future housing developments.

Media contact:

Minister Wyatt: Marie Hogg, Senior Media Adviser, 0431 299 518

Minister Dutton: 02) 6277 7800

Authorised by Ken Wyatt AM, MP, Member for Hasluck.