Return to Country (R2C)

Cairns City Police Beat
Queensland Police Service
Senior Sergeant Gary Hunter

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Community to Cairns

Reasons for Travel:

- Medical
- Prison release / court release
- Sorry business
- Community violence
- Alcohol restrictions
- Shopping
Return to Country
RC2 program time line

- Aug 2012: Qld Gov’t local Fares scheme ceased
- Nov 2012: QPS/Skytans partnership
- Oct 2014: QPS/Skytans Partnership ceased
- Jul 2015: QPS/DTMR partnership
- Nov 2016: 45 people supported
- Aug 2012: 140 people supported
Fares cutback leaves residents stranded

THE scrapping of subsidised flights to Cape York has forced police to suspend a program that has reduced the number of homeless people in Cairns. Almost 50 people who were stranded in the city have returned to their remote communities since February, as part of the police-led Return to Country campaign. But the program has been suspended since last month when the State Government axed the Local Fares Scheme, a subsidy which discounted Skytrans flights to Cape York and the Torres Strait to $99.

Staff from the office of Police Minister Jack Dempsey were in talks with local police late yesterday trying to find a way to keep the program active. About six people on the program’s books remain in Cairns because the airfares come out of their welfare payments and they cannot afford the regular rates.
Skytrans pull back support
Homeless lose return flights

THE fallout from the collapse of Skytrans could continue to hurt Cairns for years to come following revelations that -Regional Express (Rex) -donates twice as much to -political parties as it does the communities it services. When the Government scrapped the “Return to Country” program that took itinerants off the streets of Cairns and returned them home.
Interviews with 37 (from 140) R2C participants from Cape York Indigenous communities were overwhelmingly positive. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to reunite with family, friends and culture; and many were particularly indebted to the R2C program as it removed them from potential harm. Leaving Cairns meant breaking substance misuse cycles with associated criminal activities.
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Outcomes

• The R2C project successfully assisted the return of 140 stranded or homeless participants to their home communities.

• Reduce the prevalence of homelessness in Cairns area by 3.4%.

• Of the 140 participants, 10 have returned to Cairns, a failure rate of 7%.

• All other participants interviewed reported stable accommodation in their communities and overwhelmingly positive reports about the R2C program.

• The study underscores the importance to government of providing support for services to homeless people.

• Fewer itinerants reduces the utilisation of urban health and social security services.
Economic evaluation of ‘Return to Country’: A remote Australian initiative to address indigenous homelessness

The total cost of the R2C program for 140 participants amounted to AU$ 135,831; equivalent to AU$ 970 per participant. Staff time was the largest cost component accounting for more than 46.5% of the total cost (see Table 4). Of the 140 participants, QPS records indicated that 10 (7%) returned to Cairns during the study period.
Economic evaluation

JCU Cairns

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<th>Cost Component</th>
<th>Mean Cost, AU$</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Set-Up</td>
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<td>Training</td>
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<td>Variable</td>
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<tr>
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R2C Process

- Identify participant willing to return to home community (must have been a resident)
- Conduct inquiries with community to ensure suitability – Accommodation available/welcome in community
- Arrange for medical clearance through indigenous health service and obtain care pack
- Finance inquiry with Centrelink to ensure sufficient funds – $99 fare
- Obtain approval from partner agency – DTMR
- Flight availability – Rex/Hinterland/Westwing/Skytrans
- Arrange accommodation – Diversionary Centre
- Transport to airport – guide to departure gate
R2C Process

R2C SET-UP

RECRUIT:
- Self-referral
- By Police Liaison Officers

ASSESSMENT/SCREENING

SOCIAL SECURITY

AIRLINE

MEDICAL CENTER

DIVERSIONARY

AIRPORT

POLICE FOLLOW UP ON SUCCESSFUL RETURN
Conditions

- Voluntary program
- Police referral
- One way flight – Cairns to community
- One time use only
- $99 paid by participant
R2C publications


Questions..