

CONCERN AS HUNDREDS FLEE VIOLENCE IN NT COMMUNITY OF WADEYE

The Guardian (Wed 4 May 2022 14.44 AEST)

Labor senator Malarndirri McCarthy has called for support for those affected by unrest in the Northern Territory community of Wadeye.

A federal senator has raised concerns about the Northern Territory's response to fatal ongoing intra-family violence in a remote Indigenous community.

One man died after reportedly being speared in the head in Wadeye, 400km south-west of [Darwin](#), and 37 homes were extensively damaged by fire during the unrest.

It left hundreds of people displaced from the community of about 3,000, with reports women and children fled to the bush with little more than blankets.

Senator [Malarndirri McCarthy](#) said people were in "desperate situations" and basic humanitarian needs were not being met.

"This means shelter, food, sanitation, and medication," McCarthy said in a statement on Wednesday.

"It's unacceptable what is taking place in Wadeye, in terms of hundreds of people being forced out of town and into surrounding homelands and bush camps."

The Northern Land Council (NLC) echoed the concerns about the impact of the violence and said it was working to help families affected by the unrest families.

"Government has a clear law and order responsibility," a spokesperson said in a statement.

The NLC said all levels of government had failed to fix overcrowding in remote communities, which was a contributing factor to tensions.

"The answers lie in more support for homelands as well as opportunity for mediation of family disputes, before they escalate to intra-family violence," the NLC said.

The NLC said it had provided \$100,000 for essential items, including temporary accommodation, food, nappies and personal hygiene products.

NT deputy chief minister, Nicole Manison, visited Wadeye on Tuesday to meet with community leaders, public servants and police.

Manison has previously said "huge" amounts of government resources are provided to the community on an ongoing basis and the unrest was due to historic tensions.

Wadeye, formerly known as Port Keats, is a large remote Aboriginal community of about 4,000 people, 400km south-west of Darwin. There are 22 clan groups living in Wadeye who are traditional owners for areas in the surrounding region.

The township is currently closed to the public without a permit.

With an estimated 10 people living in each home in remote NT communities and 37 homes damaged, more than 350 people could now be displaced.

CONCERN AS UP TO 500 FLEE NT VIOLENCE

7 news (Wednesday, 4 May 2022)

Concerns have been raised about the Northern Territory's response to a violent feud between rival clans in a remote Indigenous community.

One man has died after reportedly being speared in the head in Wadeye, 400km southwest of Darwin, and up to 80 homes have been extensively damaged during the unrest.

Another 37 homes were destroyed by fire over the past two months, with police reportedly told not to leave the station compound when the violence escalated.

It's left up to 500 people displaced from the community of about 3000. Women and children have fled to the bush with little more than blankets. Others were evacuated to surrounding communities or Darwin.

Federal Senator Malarndirri McCarthy says people are in "desperate situations" and basic humanitarian needs are not being met.

"This means shelter, food, sanitation, and medication," she said in a statement provided to AAP on Wednesday.

"It's unacceptable what is taking place in Wadeye in terms of hundreds of people being forced out of town and into surrounding homelands and bush camps."

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NT Deputy Chief Minister Nicole Manison visited Wadeye on Tuesday to meet with community leaders, public servants and police.

The NT government says it's coordinating a multi-agency response with NGOs, the regional council and local Aboriginal organisations.

Food and other essentials, such as sanitation, shelter, bedding, clothing and fuel, are being supplied to displaced people.

Staff are also assessing housing repairs.

Historic tensions between clans have allegedly caused the unrest in the community formerly known as Port Keats. It was established as a Catholic mission in 1935 after traditional owners in the area murdered three Japanese fishermen.

Wadeye is now one of the largest Indigenous communities in the NT and home to about 20 clan groups and seven language groups.

It's also situated in the second-most disadvantaged region in Australia, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

A 2019 survey found 57 out of 400 homes in Wadeye were seriously overcrowded and about 30 per cent of the population was chronically ill.

A media visit to the permit-only community was planned for Wednesday but it was cancelled after traditional owners asked reporters to stay away.

A video published on social media and confirmed to be of unrest in Wadeye shows more than a dozen people smashing the windows and walls of a building during the night as onlookers yell and scream.

Other photos show youths armed with axes posing in front of burning homes and empty streets strewn with debris.

Police have previously said rioters have used a range of weapons, including crossbows, steel bars and spears.

Officers have arrested 21 people in Wadeye for violence, criminal damage and engaging in riotous behaviour since the beginning of March.

The NLC said it had provided \$100,000 for essential items, including temporary accommodation, food, nappies and personal hygiene products.