



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Alice-designed appropriate technology helps community and tourists**

Traditional owners have used their rent income from the Finke Gorge National Park to put two mobile phone hotspots, developed by the Centre for Appropriate Technology, along the notorious Boggy Hole access track to the park.

Last year they raised with the Central Land Council's community development unit their longstanding concerns about being unequipped to rescue bogged visitors. The CLC helped them make a plan to fund emergency phone access.

CAT's hotspots capture signals from mobile phone towers and amplify them to a usable level, extending mobile coverage into areas where previously there was none. "It helps tourists and other people call for help when they get bogged," outstation resident Kunmanara Ungwanaka said.

"It's keeping them safe and giving us privacy and less worry. Not knocking on our door calling for help at night in languages we don't know."

"Of all the things the traditional owners could have spent their collective rent money on they decided to prioritise a project that helps the wider community. It's a win-win," CLC Director David Ross said.

Mr Ross said the CLC's community development program asked CAT if it could test the feasibility of deploying the mobile hotspot technology along the Boggy Hole 4WD track.

CAT combined knowledge of satellite antenna and mobile technologies to create the hotspot, and has also developed a mobile survey rig for field testing.

"The key with the hotspot is knowing where to locate it. In some places there is simply no mobile signal. In others, there is a signal but it is too tiny for a hand-held phone to work and this is where the mobile hotspot comes in," said Andrew Crouch Technical Officer at CAT.

After traditional owners helped CAT to survey and choose suitable sites they decided to spend some of their rent money on the hotspots, a shade structure and signs about the location of the hotspots.

"The hotspot is rugged, reliable and needs no power, no solar panels and no maintenance. Aboriginal people in the CAT Enterprise workshop fabricate and install it," CAT's new CEO Dr Steve Rogers said.

"We're working on the technology to stretch its performance even further. This is appropriate technology at its best, developed in partnership with Aboriginal people to meet an identified need and a great example of the next generation in the CAT product line."

Ms Ungwanaka said while the hotspots are already being used by visitors they will also help to promote the fledgling Red Sand Hill Arts Centre, where one hotspot is located.

"We can call anywhere, Germany, anywhere with this one," she said. "We want tourists going to Boggy Hole to visit the Red Sand Hill Arts Centre that our community is starting up."

The CLC's community development unit works with the traditional owners of 16 jointly managed NT national parks who use their rent income to benefit their communities.

CAT Ltd is an Aboriginal not for profit company delivering the enabling technologies that support community and economic development.

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