

PIANO PLAY-A-THON – Sunday 1 August, 2010  
Supporting  
UTOPIA VEGETABLE GARDENS IN THE OUTBACK



We are very pleased that this year the Piano Play-a-thon will be supporting an initiative in the Northern Territory for the production of fresh fruit and vegetables in Aboriginal communities. The establishment of self-sufficient vegetable gardens will be an enormous benefit to families in remote areas.

Utopia, a former cattle station in central Australia (approximately 240 kms northeast of Alice Springs), was handed back to the Anmatyerr and Alyawarr people as Aboriginal freehold land in 1979. Small family groups live at several outstations close to their ancestral land in an area roughly 1800 square kilometers. Commercial artwork was introduced to Utopia in 1977, and motifs of Dreaming stories, cultural heritage and the flora and fauna of the surrounding landscape are depicted through paintings. The community at Utopia is widely recognized as encouraging and establishing significant contemporary artists, most famously, Emiy Kngwarray who proved an important model and teacher for many artists still working at Utopia today.

There are thirteen outstations within the Utopia with Camel Camp in the south-east being the home of the Ngal and Kunoth families, about 40 people. It is very isolated being over 50 kms from the only shop within Utopia and about 225 kms from Alice Springs, the main source of fresh foods. There is considerable underground water and there is already an effective bore and water storage system.

The work to establish the first garden will involve fencing, turning and cultivating the soil, bringing in necessary sold additives and humus, construction of garden beds, selection and purchase of appropriate plants and transportation to Camel Camp, and implementation of the watering system including a solar watering controller. There is a project manager to oversee the construction, purchase of appropriate hand tools and establishment of an ongoing relationship with an Alice Springs supplier.

The responsibility of continuing the garden will be undertaken by the Ngal family. It is hoped that there will be some commercial benefit for families who could provide the store with any excess fruit and vegetables.

Citrus trees will also be grown in and around the houses at Camel Camp with the benefits of the fruit, shade and beautification.